

1995

EVENING SENTINEL, Monday, April 3, 1995

The nature of Haydn's music

HAYDN was a great lover of nature — indeed, listening to his pure and guileless music is often like taking a walk by the river on a fine summer's day.

Birdsong is reflected again and again in his melodious scores, which enshrine an innocence that was soon to be swamped by a host of tormented romantic composers and never really recovered.

All of which makes Haydn the right man to evoke the delights of the Garden of Eden, a feat he accomplished most lovingly in his secular oratorio *The Seasons* which is to be performed by Nantwich Choral Society in St Mary's Church on Saturday (7.30pm).

Haydn wrote *The Seasons* as a sequel to *The Creation*, and together the two brought his career to a glorious close. They owe much to Handel — whose music intrigued Haydn on his frequent visits to London — and both are arranged in the form of arias interspersed with choral episodes.

The St Mary's performance of *The Seasons* is to be directed by Stephen Buckman, who has been Nantwich Choral Society's conductor for the past 12 years.

Stephen is primarily based in London and drives 400 miles to Cheshire each week to take charge of rehearsals.

On Saturday the choir will be joined by a trio of top-class soloists — soprano Catrin Ley, tenor Robin Green and bass Philip Ravenscroft.

CLASSICAL NOTES



WITH
ERIC SNAPE

Joyous and exciting fare from choir

NANTWICH Choral Society's version of Haydn's last oratorio, *The Seasons*, provided a joyous and exciting occasion at St Mary's Church on Saturday.

It was splendid in its robust directness, and everywhere instinct with the love of nature that played so important a part in the composer's life.

Freshness

Driven unswervingly by Stephen Buckman, the choir characterised the music admirably in all its adventurous moods.

And there was an open-air freshness that reached a terrific climax in the Hunting Chorus of Autumn, which embellished boisterous horn calls to send the pulse racing.

The three soloists entered into the spirit of the thing with the same sense of animation.

Philip Ravenscroft demonstrated the right rustic approach, and if the other two – soprano Catrin Ley and tenor Cato Fordham – had voices that sounded perhaps too cultured for the all-pervading bucolics, there was no faulting their stylish tones and clear narration.

The orchestra, the Nantwich Sinfonia, was very good. Birds and animals were conjured up all over the place, and the summer storm had remarkable, even Wagnerian, violence.

St Mary's Church at Nantwich is notable for the Green Men carved on its walls. They must have had a ball.

EVENING SENTINEL, Monday, April 10, 1995

The Chronicle April 12, 1995

Choral singers are smash hits at show

I WOULD like to congratulate the Nantwich Choral Society on their rendering of Haydn's *The Seasons* at their splendid concert given at St Mary's Church, Nantwich on Saturday.

To the conductor, Mr Stephen Buckman, three soloists, harpsichord player and orchestra – you were all great.

The next 'smash hit' – namely Faure's *Requiem* – takes place on Saturday, May 6, and is augmented by a German choir.

I would commend this work to all who appreciate popular classical music, even though they may have reservations about choral singing.

FRANK WOODCOCK,
Jubilee Gardens,
Nantwich.