

Society facing big task

BACH'S St Matthew Passion has claims to be regarded as the greatest music ever written, and Nantwich Choral Society's performance of it in St Mary's Church a week tomorrow is arousing interest far beyond the bounds of South Cheshire.

The St Matthew Passion must be the biggest challenge the Nantwich choristers have ever faced, but if their conductor, Stephen Buckman has faith in them that's a guarantee of quality.

Choir

Robin Green is to sing the role of Evangelist, with Philip Ravenscroft having the part of Jesus. Other soloists are soprano Diane Charlesworth, contralto Georgina West, tenor Paul Phoenix and bass Garry Coward.

The Nantwich Choral Society will be joined by the Horsham Chamber Choir and the Chamber Choir of Newcastle-under-Lyme School, with the Nantwich Sinfonia supplying the accompaniment.

This monumental performance begins at 6pm and there will be an hour's interval.

Bach to the future

NANTWICH: The Choral Society is to present Bach's great St. Matthew Passion for the first time in its history. They will be joined by Horsham Chamber Choir for the event in Nantwich Parish Church on March 30.

REVIEWS

Passion landmark for area's music

THE St Matthew Passion is a work so demanding that it is rarely heard live these days, so Nantwich Choral Society's presentation of Bach's supreme masterpiece to a packed audience at St Mary's parish church on Saturday night was an undoubted landmark in the history of this area's music.

The sheer logistics involved were breath-taking - three choirs, six soloists, orchestra and continuo in a performance lasting four hours, with an hour's interval. Yet there was never a boring moment in a bustling interpretation by conductor Stephen Buckman that put emphasis on dramatic intensity rather than poetic meditation.

There were flaws: not all the solo singing was reliable, and the

Nantwich Sinfonia suffered some unaccustomed lapses. But the choristers - from Nantwich Choral Society, the Horsham Chamber Choir, and Newcastle-under-Lyme School Chamber Choir - achieved commendable cohesion in the vast web of interlocking sound.

Robin Green's performance as the Evangelist was very fine; warm, supple and full of authority. Philip Ravenscroft's Jesus, too, was richly memorable.

The soprano, Diane Charlesworth, had a light, fresh tone that readily shaded into the required pathos, while Paul Phoenix was a clear, competent tenor.

Geoffrey Walker directed the Newcastle School choir.

BY ERIC SNAPE