

□ NANTWICH Choral Society describe the concert on Saturday, November 22 as a rare combination of the modern masterpieces Tippett's 'A Child of Our Time' and Vaughan Williams's 'Dona Nobis Pacem'. The concert in St Mary's Church, Nantwich, will have a high emotional content, the pieces being written in 1938 as Europe began to realise the growing danger of war. Tickets are available from St Mary's Church Shop. Society members and on 01270 625641, priced £8, concessions £5. The programme begins at 7.30pm.

Classical Notes
with Eric Snape



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An emotional programme for Bookman's final season

NANTWICH Choral Society opens its season at St Mary's Parish Church on Saturday, November 22 at 7.30pm, with a programme charged with emotional content.

It comprises Vaughan Williams' optimistic *Dona Nobis Pacem*, premiered in 1938 and composed to highlight the growing danger of the European war, and Tippett's utterly pessimistic *A Child of Our Time*, inspired by a political event of the same year which gave the Nazis an excuse for one of the cruellest and most brutal pogroms.

The society has done both before. *A Child of Our Time* was, indeed, one of its finest achievements.

Soloists at the concert will be Fiona Motherway (soprano), Marjorie Seddon (contralto), James Gilchrist (tenor) and David Campbell (bass).

Conductor Stephen Buckman is to leave

Nantwich Choral Society at the end of 1997 after spending 15 particularly fruitful years with them.

Now living in Sussex, Stephen will continue to compose and write, and aims to conduct chamber choirs in the main. He is also to research into philosophy related to music and the other arts.

Joy Roberts, who has been the society's accompanist for the past 25 years, is also retiring.

An accomplished pianist in her own right, Joy joined the choir at its inception as a WEA class way back in 1972.

So the society begins 1998 with a new conductor, Patrick, Larley, and a new accompanist, Andrew Mildinhall. Its remaining concerts this season are — Saturday, Dec 6 (7pm): Handel's *Messiah*; Saturday, Dec 20 (7.30pm): *Carols for choir and audience*; Saturday, May 9 (7.30pm): Handel's *Semele*. All at St Mary's Church.

Great man refused to compromise

IT is to be hoped that the death of Sir Michael Tippett last week sparks off a new and serious interest in this strangest and most visionary of English composers.

For he saw the way of the future, if any musician did. Yet how often in recent years has his name appeared on the programmes of our local concerts?

Nantwich Choral Society performed his best-known work, the oratorio 'A Child of our Time', at St Mary's Parish Church last November.

The Lindsays could always be relied upon to pre-

miere his late string quartets, and once, a few years ago, he conducted one of his own works at the Lichfield festival — too frail to stand, he sat perched on a chair high above the orchestra.

But I can't remember anyone featuring many of his mould-breaking orchestral works, which are not so listener repellent as many critics would have us believe.

If you can take to Walton and Britten, his two great contemporaries, you can take to Tippett.

His music incorporates spirituals, jazz, boogie-woo-

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gie and blues. It is raw and elemental, reflecting as no other British composer does the turbulent times of a tempestuous century.

The love of the English countryside, a dominant theme among Tippett's great predecessors — Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Delius — is almost completely lacking in his music.

Instead there is a rawness, a darkness and an unwilling-

ness to compromise — all qualities that modern audiences profess to admire.

So come on, you concert planners.

Why not tackle — like the Nantwich choristers — 'A Child out of Our Time'? Or even (being very daring) 'The Mask of Time'?

And the Triple Concerto, the Concerto for Double String Orchestra, and even a symphony or two, must surely be well worth the occasional airing.

The operas can look after themselves. Like Britten's, they will certainly intrigue and enrapture audiences of the 21st century and beyond.

● Sir Michael Tippett (right)

Motherway makes it a night to remember

CONDUCTOR Stephen Buckman is nearing the end of his 14 years with the Nantwich Choral Society, and it was deeply moving to hear them perform two 20th century English classics under his direction at St Mary's Parish Church in the town on Saturday night.

The first, Vaughan Williams's cantata *Dona Nobis Pacem*, had eloquent singing from the choristers highlighted by a surpassingly sweet solo from the Australian soprano Fiona Motherway.

REVIEW by Eric Snape

A real sailor of the high Cs, Motherway has great vocal range. And her ethereal exchanges with the choir in this sombre music were breathtaking. The bass soloist, David Campbell, offered sensitive support.

Motherway and Campbell were joined by two other soloists, Betley contralto Marjorie Seddon and tenor James Gilchrist, in Tippett's oratorio *A Child of Our Time*, and all four sang passionately in this most tragic of works.

So did the choir, urged on by the perfectionist Buckman, though the aggressive passages occasionally sounded ragged. There was nothing wrong with the tender sections, though, and the negro spirituals placed at key junctures in the text brought an air of emotional relief as choir and soloists wove voices.

There was fine accompaniment by the Nantwich Sinfonia throughout.