

Anticipate a firebomb of orchestral and human voices

NANTWICH Choral Society and members of l'Ensemble Vocal Arpège de Mâcon will be joining together to sing a complete performance of Karl Jenkins's *The Armed Man - A Mass For Peace* next Sunday evening at St Mary's Church, Nantwich.

Nantwich Choral Society has an established reputation as one of the leading such societies in the North West of England, and recent performances with their conductor, John Naylor, have met with considerable critical acclaim and excellent support from local audiences.

Their forthcoming concert, which features local mezzo-soprano, Susan Marrs, is greatly anticipated and is set to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the twinning of Crewe and Nantwich with Mâcon, France.

CLASSICAL Music

Liz Rowley

Karl Jenkins has established himself as one of the UK's leading contemporary composers. His *Mass For Peace* was a special commission by the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds for the Millennium celebrations and was initially dedicated to the victims of the Kosovo crisis.

The Armed Man is an observation of war and peace expressed in a bold fusion of musical styles including classical, folk, Gregorian chant, rock rhythms, 16th century polyphony, and a Muslim Call To Prayers.

It will be performed on Sunday with an ensemble of some of the North West's finest professional musicians.

The work examines the gravity of conflict and suffering and is seen, like Britten's *War Requiem*, as an anti-war peace.

The text, written in French, English, Arabic, Greek and Latin, includes classical poetry (from Swift, Tennyson and Kipling), biblical quotations and words from the traditional Christian mass, as well as Muslim, Hindu and Japanese resources.

Although *The Armed Man* dwells on many of the horrors of war, it concludes with an optimistic vision that, 'better is peace than always war'.

The Armed Man premiered in



WAR AND PEACE: Karl Jenkins.

London in April 2000 and received a phenomenal response from the audience. *The Times* branded it, "a firebomb of orchestral and human voices" while *The Independent* noted the, "prolonged shouts of approval from the audience".

Nantwich Choral Society have enjoyed a brilliant season which has seen them perform Jenkins's mass in Mâcon with members of the French ensemble in May.

The concert on Sunday will last approximately one and a quarter hours.

Information: *The Armed Man - A Mass For Peace*, can be seen at St Mary's Church, Nantwich, at 8pm on Sunday July 22. Tickets are available from Sounds Musical. Call 01270 625579.

SOLOIST RETURNS TO MARK TWINNING



■ Soloist
Susan
Marrs.

The powerful music of an anti-war oratorio brings soloist Susan Marrs back into the arms of the Nantwich Choral Society, writes Liz Rowley

I have sung with the choral society twice in the past," says Susan, who lives in Nantwich with her husband Cameron Paterson, and their two children Callum, aged 10, and Finlay, eight, "but I haven't performed this specific piece before."

The piece she refers to is Karl Jenkins's *The Armed Man: A Mass For Peace*, which Susan will be performing alongside the Nantwich Choral Society and some of the North West's leading professional musicians, on Sunday, July 22 at St Mary's Church, in Nantwich.

"I sang Handel's *Messiah* with the society in February this year, and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* last year, so I am very much looking forward to singing with them again."

The Armed Man is an anti-war piece written by the Welsh composer in 2000 as a dedication to the victims of the Kosovo crisis.

"It's actually written for four soloists," explains Susan, "soprano, alto, tenor and bass, but for this performance it will just be myself."

"Some of the other solo parts have been put into a suitable key for me, so I can portray them to the audience because the words of this mass are so important."

"The part that I sing at the end of the work for example, is extremely emotional, as I try to understand why my life has been spared when my friends have all been killed."

Susan has been a freelance artist since graduating from London's Trinity College Of Music in 1993, where she won The Ricordi Opera Prize and The Trinity College Singing Department Prize. In addition, she also works as a singing tutor both privately and at Eaton Bank School, in Congleton.

"I've been singing since I was about 17," she says, "but I didn't go to college until I was 23. At the time I had a job working for Hambro's Bank in London, and almost lost sight of just how much singing was part of my life."

"I had auditioned for a place at Trinity College in the past, but it wasn't meant to be at that time. I think I was too young, but after a while my Mum suggested I audition again and this time I was given a place."

Susan's roles since graduating have included work with the Extra Chorus at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where she was a member for 12 years, and with the London Voices, a select group of freelance musicians. Karl Jenkins's *The Armed Man* is a special piece for the society to perform because it celebrates the 50th anniversary of the twinning of Crewe and Nantwich with Mâcon in France, and the performance will feature members of l'Ensemble Vocal Arpège de Mâcon.

■ The *Armed Man* will be performed on Sunday, July 22, at St Mary's Church, Nantwich. Call 01270 625579 for tickets.