

Ideal venue for concert

THE Central Methodist Church in Nantwich proved an acoustically - ideal venue for the third concert of the enterprising Nantwich and District Choral Society on Saturday evening.

Under the able conductorship of Michael Bax, choir, organ and orchestra — with Margaret Henshall, Hazel Cumming, Tudor Morris-Jones and Christopher Jones filling the principal parts — presented the Mass in C major (sometimes nicknamed 'The Coronation,' for no valid reason) by Mozart.

This work of about half-an-hour's duration was round and rousing in its chorus work, particularly in the Credo which featured the principals and the admirable woodwind at their best.

Excellent intergration was achieved by the orchestra and there was some telling and tasteful registration on the part of the organist.

Margaret Henshall is a delightful soprano and her solo work came over well. Mozart was a little unkind to the other principals in giving them little or no opportunity to display any virtuosity, though in combination they achieved a nice tone balance.

The second and more important of the two works in the programme was Benjamin Britten's cantata St. Nicolas written in 1948 for the centenary of the famous Lancing College at Shoreham.

Like many of Britten's works this makes demands on both performers and audience if they are to get to grips with it. The title role requires a tenor voice of special quality, and John Corbett added to his already considerable stature as a soloist in his sensitive treatment of a difficult part.

High commendation is also due to Simon Crookall who sang the part of Nicolas as a boy and later joined his two brothers Andrew and Jonathan in a processional trio of touching charm and innocence.

It is recorded in fact that the innocence of children was the mainspring of Britten's inspiration in this work. The orchestra was highly efficient and Britten makes great play of cymbals, tympani and even a tambourine.

Special praise is due to two lady pianists for a most

professional treatment of the tricky, contrapuntal line they have to follow. The choir were a closely co-ordinated unit and they were most ably supported by a semi-chorus of members of Crewe College of Education choir somewhat unnecessarily housed rather out of sight of the audience in the gallery.

Michael Bridger was in absolute command on the conductor's podium throughout.

Full marks to the Society for providing the audience — who were called upon to sing two hymns included in this work — with some excellent programme notes. But the Society had no need to be so self-effacing as to conceal the identities of the conductors, the skilled organist, the outstanding pianists, the leader of the orchestra who did a superb job, and other instrumentalists from as far afield as Chester and Stafford.

Memorable occasions in the history of this still youthful Society are worthy of a fully documented souvenir programme if only to make a critic's task easier in according personal credit where it is due.

C.M.A.