



NOW well-established and earning a high reputation for the standard they set, Nantwich and District Choral Society will be performing for the first time at Nantwich Civic Hall on Sunday, March 23.

The choir are pictured in rehearsal for the concert in which they will be supported by Stockport Symphony Orchestra.

The main work in an ambitious programme with an almost wholly nautical flavour is to be "A Sea Symphony" by Vaughan Williams, a choral setting of words by Walt Whitman, conceived on a grand scale and exploring the power and mystery of the ocean. Although of noble proportions the work has its lighter movements, with fragments of "hornpipe" tunes.

The other choral work in the programme is Stanford's "Songs of the Fleet," a setting for baritone and chorus of words by Henry Newbolt.

The Stockport Symphony Orchestra is to complement these two choral works by a performance of Smetana's symphonic poem "Vltava," the story of a river from its mountain source to the sea.

Soloist in the Vaughan Williams and Stanford works is distinguished baritone Christopher Underwood.

He is joined in the Vaughan Williams by Anne Dawson (soprano), now in her fourth year at the Royal Northern College of Music, who has toured as a soloist with the Choir of the European Communities.

The Stockport Symphony Orchestra, formed some time ago, has only recently found a permanent home in Stockport. The players are professional and "serious" amateur musicians.

MARCH 1980

EVENING TO REMEMBER AT CIVIC HALL

NANTWICH Civic Hall was packed with an enthusiastic audience for the latest concert given by Nantwich and District Choral Society, conducted by Michael Bridger.

The Society was joined by the Stockport Symphony Orchestra (LEADER John Phillips) in a well-chosen programme which included two British choral works written earlier this century.

The main work, which filled the second half, was "A Sea Symphony" by Vaughan Williams.

This is an unjustly neglected masterpiece which gives the choir a marvellous opportunity for a sustained "big sing" — something that all choirs love, as Vaughan Williams well knew.

At the same time it provides the listener with a kaleidoscopic interplay of colours and textures, as the large orchestra depicts the varied moods of Whitman's poems.

It is a difficult work, but on this occasion it received a stunning performance. The difficulties of the orchestral score were surmounted with apparent ease.

There was beautiful playing from all sections of the orchestra and the "Waves" scherzo, a real tour de force, made a great impact after the quieter sections.

Fortunate

The Society was fortunate to have as soloists in this work two very fine young singers. The range, power and clarity of Christopher Underwood's voice brought out every detail of the meaning of the words.

Anne Dawson has a soprano voice of exceptional

quality, clear and appealing throughout its range.

This must have been the finest performance given so far by the Choral Society.

Their big climaxes had power without harshness and their more reflective passages were beautifully tuned and well controlled.

The relative shortage of tenors and basses made the impact of those passages for men's voices alone less effective than the composer had intended but, all in all, this was choral singing of high quality.

It is a pity, therefore, that at some climaxes the choral sound seemed submerged beneath the orchestral waves, instead of floating above them. One wonders if the choir might have been better positioned nearer to the audience — perhaps at both sides of the large orchestra?

Before the interval we heard Smetana's "Vltava" and a vivid performance of Stanford's "Songs of the Fleet", again with the impeccable Christopher Underwood as soloist. An evening to remember. — A.R.J.