



**Classical
Notes
with ERIC
SNAPE**

A WORLD premiere at St Mary's Parish Church, Nantwich. That must be a red letter day.

The work is *A Mass of a Thousand Ages*, composed by Patrick Larley, conductor of Nantwich Choral Society, and it is to be performed on Saturday, April 8, (7.30pm), with Larley conducting.

It is a celebration of the New Millennium Choral Society and takes as its theme a phrase from one of the great hymns: "A thousand ages in Thy sight are like an evening gone."

Through the words of the Latin Mass, Patrick has set four specially commissioned poems by Eleanor Cooke, Jonathan Hill, Philip Owens and Jan Purcell.

The work is a meditation on the importance of the millennium looking both back and forward in time searching for spirituality in an increasingly materialistic world.

It requires considerable forces. In addition to soloists Sarah Castle (mezzo-soprano) and Richard Strivens (bass), Nantwich Choral Society, the Millennium Winds and Nantwich Youth Choir will also be involved — the youth choir voices symbolising the crucial role the younger generation has to play in the years ahead.

Patrick Larley is one of the area's best known and busiest musicians, freelancing and combining a career as a singer, harpsichordist, organist and conductor with teaching and composing.

St Mary's has already been the setting of one of his works this season — *Sinfonia Nativitatis*, a piece played by Manchester Camerata — and his oratorio *Stone Circles*, a history of the canal town in music, was a big success for Stone Choral Society.

Nantwich Choral Society

St Mary's Church

NANTWICH Choral Society launched a winner when its musical director, Patrick Larley, founded the Nantwich Youth Choir a couple of years ago.

The youngsters added much to the performance of Larley's new work, "A Mass of a Thousand Ages", which the composer conducted himself on its premiere at St Mary's Church on Saturday night, adding the touches of playground innocence so essential to music of this character.

"A Mass of a Thousand Ages" was commissioned by Nantwich Choral Society, and in it Larley sets the words of the Mass in a contemporary setting, making them relevant for the time of the New Millennium. Four poems, all read in the church by the authors before the performance began, are also used. The piece had two soloists, mezzo-soprano Sarah Castle and bass Richard Strivens, in addition to Nantwich Choral Society and the Youth Choir. And the Millennium Winds provided the accompaniment with Andrew Mildinhal at the organ.

Larley's Mass is a melodious, deeply reverent work. Making use of plainchant, folk tunes, drones and dissonance, the music is highly dramatic, and the poems, by Jan Purcell, Philip Owens, Jonathan Hill and Eleanor Cooke, have an integrity befitting their subject.

Both soloists rose to the solemnity of the occasion and both choirs sang with utter conviction, the counterpoint between them being remarkable.

Mass of enjoyment marks millennium

by BERYL PATEMAN

NANTWICH Choral Society performed a specially commissioned Mass of A Thousand Ages on Saturday as part of the town's millennium celebrations.

Their Musical Director Patrick Larley wrote the work, a full setting of the Latin mass interspersed with four poems penned by local writers.

The choir was joined by the Nantwich Youth Choir and Millennium Winds for the major musical event staged in St Mary's Church.

The arrangements for future main Millennium Events are reported to be "coming to fruition".

Millennium Committee Chairman June Garner revealed that the Community Play is bang on target with just a few roles to fill.

- The script is written, and dynamic director, Tony Cottrell, has staging, publicity and programme arrangements in hand.

- War time evacuees in Guernsey have been contacted in the hope they will take part.

- The music has been written by well known entertainer Peter Skellern who will be overseeing rehearsals himself.

- A sponsor has been found for the ambitious fire pictures planned.

- Extra temporary toilets have been ordered and a hospitality

suite lined up.

"There is a lot going on and the play is beginning to take shape," said Mrs Garner.

Also on target are plans for a firework display to round off the year 2000 in the same spectacular style as the town welcomed it in.

Also progressing well are plans for a Civic Fun Day on May 13, with magic shows for children of all ages and a tea dance in the afternoon; Nantwich Christian Council's Grand Carnival on June 11 and a concert at Reaseheath by the Acton Operatic Society and South Cheshire Orchestra on June 24.

Details of all the town's main millennium events can be found in a special Events Guide.