

Review

Opera

DIDO AND AENEAS - PURCELL
ST MARY'S CHURCH,
NANTWICH

NANTWICH Choral Society celebrated the music of England's greatest composer, Henry Purcell, in a very English way on Saturday night.

The setting, St Mary's Parish Church, was ideal. The production was refreshing and civilised. The audience was receptive. Purcell would have

relished the occasion. The performance was of Dido and Aeneas, Purcell's only true opera and a work of exquisite subtlety and beauty that gives tantalising glimpses of what he might have achieved if he had lived longer. It was a semi-staged presentation — that is, the costumed main characters made entrances and exits. This meant that the audience became imaginatively involved in the drama. Victoria Shone made a dig-

nified Dido, and her rendering of the lament "When I am laid in earth," had a rare poignancy. Christopher Larley was a lyrical Aeneas and duetted well with Victoria. Sarah Cromwell, as Belinda, supported her mistress in her tribulations, while the Sorceress, Annette Wood, and her attendant witches had a high old time as they cackled through the casting of spells.

ERIC SNAPE