

Choral group in concert

NANTWICH Choral Society is holding its Spring Concert at the town's Parish Church next Saturday.

Under its conductor, Patrick Larley will perform *Messe Solonelle* by the French organist Langlais, together with an appropriate item for Easter — Liszt's *Via Crucis*.

Soloists are Sara Cromwell (soprano), Katie Harvey (mezzo-soprano), John Rowlands Pritchard (bass) and the organist Andrew Mildinhal.

The concert begins at 7.30pm and promises to be a unique occasion.

Tickets are £10 (concessions £8) and are available from Nantwich Information Centre, Sounds Musical in Hospital Street (01270 625579) or on the door.

THE SENTINEL Monday March 29, 2004

REVIEW Music

Nantwich Choral Society

St Mary's Church

GREATLY daring, Nantwich Choral Society presented Liszt's *Via Crucis* — the 14 Stations of the Cross for mixed choir, vocal solos and organ at St Mary's — Church on Saturday night.

Via Crucis is always restrained and devout, yet has a continuous use of experimental harmony (it is very late Liszt) that gives the work a unique atmosphere defying description.

The concert set-up was unusual, the three female soloists singing together from different areas of the church while the solitary bass remained in the pulpit. The mixed choir, under the direction of Patrick Larley, accompanied them with sensitivity, and Andrew Mildinhal was superlative at the organ.

The female trio — soprano Sarah Cromwell, mezzo Katie Harvey and alto Jocelyn Cooper — were deeply moving in the Stations where Jesus falls, and

the bass, John Rowlands-Pritchard, was sonorous and forthright throughout. *Via Crucis* is one of those works that require more than one hearing, though whether any other local choral society will have the courage to follow the Nantwich example is open to question. After the interval, Sarah Cromwell and Katie Harvey rendered two Faure Motets with charm, aided by Mildinhal at the organ. Then the choristers sang the *Messe Solonelle* of Jean Langlais, the blind French composer.

If *Via Crucis* was strange and introspective, *Messe Solonelle* was plain difficult — the *Sanctus*, in particular, must have been dizzying to perform. But Larley kept the choristers to their tasks, and Mildinhal was again a tower of strength at the organ.

Eric Snape