

Passionate Handel

NANTWICH Choral Society members present a story of jealous love and revenge.

Patrick Larley conducts Handel's *Semele* this coming Saturday, May 9, in St Mary's Church at 7.30pm.

The work contains two of Handel's best loved and most popular arias 'Where e'er you walk' and 'Sleep why dost thou leave me'.

Tina Jones is soprano, Annette Wood, contralto, Richard Roddis, tenor and Richard Paul, bass.

Tickets £8 (concessions £5) from St Mary's shop, society members, at the door or phone 625641.

Crowding in for Handel masters

Eric Snape's
Classical Notes



MIDWAY between opera and secular oratorio, *Semele* undoubtedly contains some of Handel's loveliest music.

The arias include two of the most famous ever written by anyone — 'O Sleep, why dost thou leave me?' and 'Where'er you walk'.

All of which guarantees a big audience at St Mary's Parish Church, Nantwich, on Saturday week, beginning at 7.30pm, when Nantwich Choral Society present this masterpiece in a concert version.

Stephen Buckman must have been a hard act to follow as Musical Director of Nantwich Choral Society, but in Patrick Larley a worthy successor to Stephen appears to have been found.

Patrick, an experienced conductor, organist and solo singer, took over in January and his enthusiasm and ambition for the South Cheshire society show no bounds.

Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* and Bach's *Magnificat* will be sung in November; there's to be a period instrument performance of Monteverdi's 1610 *Vespers* with the Orchestra of the Golden Age and His Majesty's Sackbuts and Cornetts in May of next year while Larley's own composition, *A Millennium*

Mass, has its premiere in May 2000.

But before we get too breathless, back to *Semele*. The Nantwich Sinfonia, led by Joanna Quigley, supplies to accompaniment and four professional soloists have been engaged.

Soprano Tina Jones, a former postgraduate student at the Royal Northern College of Music, sings the title role, with tenor Richard Roddis playing her heavenly suitor, Jupiter.

Bass Richard Paul has a dual part — Cadmus (*Semele's* father) and Somnus, God of Sleep — with Annette Wood, formerly of the Royal Academy of Music, portraying the jealous Juno, wife of Jupiter.

Patrick Larley reports that the choir has launched itself wholeheartedly into the dramatic and exciting Handelian choruses, and that the role of nymphs and swains are being rehearsed with great zest.

But I would expect nothing less at Nantwich, with all those Green Men staring down from high on the walls of the parish church.

In addition to his other enterprises, Larley is starting a youth section of the society in September.



SWEET MUSIC: Nantwich Choral Society's new conductor, Patrick Larley, and accompanist Andrew Mildenhall.

New director handles choir

NANTWICH Choral Society has the 'under new management' tag as it prepares for its next concert, in St Mary's Parish Church on May 9.

Patrick Larley has taken over as musical director, and Andrew Mildenhall is the new accompanist.

Patrick, who lives near Wrexham, takes over the reins from Stephen Buckman.

Andrew, who is also the parish church organist, is from Worleston. He succeeds Joy Roberts, who has been the society's accompanist for all of its 25 years.

Patrick introduces a touch of drama into the May production with a concert performance of Handel's opera *Semele*. It will feature the Nantwich Sinfonia, led by Joan Quigley, and four professional soloists, Tina Jones, Richard Roddis, Richard Paul and Annette Wood.

During a break from rehearsals, Patrick said: 'The choir has launched itself wholeheartedly into the dramatic Handelian choruses, and in their roles as nymphs and swains, are singing with considerable zest and sparkle. They are obviously enjoying themselves!'

Tickets for the concert are £8, or £5 concessions, and are available by phoning 01270 625641, St Mary's Church shop, or on the door.

Bold start for Choral Society under Patrick's new baton

NEW musical director Patrick Larley is obviously destined to take Nantwich Choral Society in fresh directions, and he made a bold start by conducting Handel's secular oratorio, *Semele*, with infectious enthusiasm at St Mary's parish church on Saturday night.

This was a sprightly performance in true 18th century style: buoyant and graceful.

The voices were good, there was a sensitive harpsichord continuo (by Andrew Mildinhal), and the young players of the Nantwich Sinfonia - led by Joanne Gulgley - deserve praise for their vibrant accompaniment.

Larley is one of those conductors not afraid to sing along with his choristers, and he spurred them to some fine efforts - very

REVIEW By Eric Snape

energetic, very Handelian.

Tina Jones made a fluent *Semele* and gave a sensuous rendering of the famous aria 'O Sleep, why dost thou leave me,' while Annette Wood was an imperious Juno, clear and catty.

Richard Roddis displayed an easy tenor tone as Jupiter, his 'Where'er you walk' coming over with passion and sincerity, and Richard Paul doubled effectively in the roles of Cadmus and Somnus.

Although less experienced than the other soloists, Katie Harvey showed promise as Iris. In all, an entertaining performance of an undoubted masterpiece.