

Choral Society tuning up for celebration concerts



● A sell-out concert brought the latest Nantwich Choral Society season to a close at St Mary's Church

NANTWICH Choral Society is planning a 50th anniversary programme of concerts after ending the season on a high with a sell-out concert at St Mary's Church.

The choir was in fine voice for Gioachino Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, an upbeat piece penned by the Italian composer in 1863 but never heard in his lifetime because he could not get permission to use female singers in church.

The concert was dedicated to a former accompanist, Joy Roberts from Nantwich, who played piano for the society during the first 20 years of its existence and died recently at the grand old age of 102.

It brought the singing season to a close but plans are already being made for another packed programme.

And new members will be welcome to join. Since returning to rehearsals the society has welcomed a crop of singers including a soprano, alto and bass tenor.

Spokesman Anne Harwood said: "The concert brought to an end a difficult but successful year

for the choir as it emerged from lockdowns.

"Membership was down to 30 but is nearing full strength again at 80+ and it was good that the year ended with a very well received performance.

"It was great to see the choir's former director of music, Steve Buckman, at the concert, along with past and current presidents, Herbert Rowsell and John Lea, to remember Joy.

"There were outstanding performances by the four soloists, Sarah Helsby-Hughes, Sue Marrs, Joseph Buckmaster and Jacob Phillips. St Mary's resident organist Simon Russell accompanied the choir on the harmonium and John Gough played the virtuoso piano part flawlessly."

Music director John Naylor said: "The piece is neither small in scale nor solemn in nature. It takes almost 80 minutes to perform, and is full of engaging, lively tunes which contrast with intensely emotional passages. The hard but very enjoyable work in rehearsals led to a very assured performance."

It is 50 years since the society opened its doors as a local author-

ity evening class. Concerts, against the beautiful backdrop of St Mary's, have become a highlight on the town's social calendar.

Society president John Lea, chairman of Mornflake in Crewe, said: "The society has welcomed many keen singers down the decades who enjoy not only performances but a wonderful camaraderie.

"Although difficult, this year has reaffirmed that special bond and we look forward to making the next season a very memorable one."

The choir is now on a summer break. Concerts will begin with Brahms German Requiem in November and continue with Haydn's magnificent *Creation* at the Civic Hall in March 2023.

Also planned is a June exchange trip to the borough's twin town of Macon in France to sing again with their choral society.

New members, as well as returning members, will be made most welcome. There is no audition to join the choir and no fee for the first term.

For more information go to www.nantwichchoral.org.uk