

Christmas with Doncaster Choral Society

For their Christmas presentation Doncaster Choral Society alternate Handel's *Messiah* with a carol concert; this year's at Priory Methodist Church (13 December), as usual, was the turn of the carols. In addition to the pleasure given by the alert, well-balanced singing under Alan East's direction, I was impressed by the careful selection giving examples from the many and varied periods of carol composition: the "early" period, when carols were dancelike (not always, though, as the surpassingly beautiful *Coventry Carol*, not in this programme, is hardly so), through the sentimental Victorian era (though some of the tunes were earlier) to more modern effusions, represented most notably by John Rutter (who could leave him out and what did carol concerts do before they had him?). In addition there was Berlioz's shapely, now very popular *Shepherd's Farewell*, not, properly speaking, a carol but a chorus from his oratorio *The Childhood of Christ*, very smoothly done here. Ron Law's piano accompaniments added to our pleasure.

The Society's guests were, unusually, a brass band, Strata Brass (conductor, David Hirst) from South Yorkshire, who accompanied the audience carols and produced a firm, rousing sound in mainly seasonal items of their own: two marches by notable Salvationists Eric Leidzen and Eric Ball; two clever arrangements by Sandy Smith of Christmas tunes and Darrol Barry's *Christmas Bolero* which neatly combined more seasonal melodies with the rhythm and occasionally the tune of Ravel's popular orchestral showpiece.

All in all, an entertaining confection which would, I am sure, certainly please the reasonably sized audience and which cheered up a miserable day, weather-wise.

Orpheus