

Organ 'imported' for St. John Passion

THE Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society performs Bach's St. John Passion in the Assembly Hall on Sunday (3 p.m.) for the first time in its 66 years history, so far as can be traced.

This magnificent work, which bears comparison with the great St. Matthew Passion, is written in the same style and is being produced as nearly as possible using the forces which would have been employed by Bach.

There will be a small string orchestra with two flutes, two oboes, harpsichord and an antique chamber organ.

Anthony Gould, director of music at Tonbridge School and conductor of Tonbridge Philharmonic Society, is to play the harpsichord continuo. In addition there will be viola da gamba and cello continuo.

SIX SOLOISTS

Six soloists are headed by Peter Bamber who signs the difficult and long role of the Evangelist and Thomas Allen who takes the part of Jesus. Instead of a contralto the society has engaged a distinguished counter tenor, Paul Esswood, who is performing this work and St. Matthew Passion at important concerts in London during the season.

The other soloists are: Marion Milford (soprano), Michael Goldthorpe (tenor), and Christopher Field (bass). The conductor is Trevor Harvey.

One of the difficulties of performing Passion music of Bach's period in the Assembly Hall in the past has been the lack of an organ, but this has been overcome by engaging Guy Oldham, who owns and maintains a fine pipe organ, of the authentic type. The audience will be invited to inspect it at the end of the performance.