

Mr. Rose

Wednesday, December 13th, 1961

THE BANBURY A

## The Banbury Symphony Orchestra



Mr. Malcolm Sargent conducts the Banbury Symphony Orchestra at the College Theatre, on Tuesday week. Part of the Orchestra is shown in this "Advertiser" picture.  
The report of the concert appeared last week.

OUR MUSIC CRITIC RECALLS—

# A Memorable Event in Banbury's Musical History

THERE was no doubting the support which Banbury gave their own newly-formed Symphony Orchestra at their first public concert on Tuesday week.

The Technical College Hall was overfilled, and it was refreshing to find that the organisers had under-estimated numbers and had to provide extra chairs and over-flow accommodation.

Even the spacious car park was insufficient.

The programme began with Beethoven's overture "The Men of Prometheus" and it was, perhaps, the least satisfactory item of the programme, but this was no wonder as the orchestra had never before played in the hall—with any resonance that it might have, completely blanketed by the large audience. Thus there was a certain lack of balance, some hesitant entries and a general tentative approach, but this is a difficult work with which to begin a programme.

## MORE CONFIDENT

The well-known Air on a G string by J. S. Bach, found a much more confident orchestra, and one which was more fully alive to the dynamic possibilities of the hall. The pianissimo entries were particularly praiseworthy.

Beethoven's Romance in F, had the solo part played by the Orchestra's leader, Joseph Hutchings, who gave the understandable impression of being rather nervous, which had an adverse effect on his intonation. Of his feeling for the music there was no doubt, and the orchestra provided a most sympathetic accompaniment. It was a musical experience which overcame minor imperfections.

On either side of the interval were two pieces for a Brass Consort—two Almandes, one by Giles Farnaby and the other by Nicholas Guy. While the brass section was mostly fully competent to deal with the technical problems there was a lack of style and feeling for the period, with the result that neither of these pieces really made the right impact. Excessive vibrato was the main defect, a lack of sufficient "punch" in the top brass being another.

whose vision was responsible for the formation of the orchestra, and whose patient guiding led to this concert. J.E.G.

## LACK OF RESONANCE

vertiser.

It would be only fair, however, to moderate these strictures as the lack of resonance in the hall must inevitably have had an adverse effect. It seems all architects these days are trying desperately hard to emulate the acoustic properties of the Royal Festival Hall without first considering whether it is necessary or even desirable. Modern music is often well served by such acoustics—but much of the classical corpus loses.

## PRECISION AND ACCURACY

The Orchestra really showed its paces in the next work—Symphony No. 104 (the "London") by Haydn, for it was the evening's best performance. It revealed how much progress the orchestra has made since its first concert. Difficulties were swept aside, and the precision and accuracy of intonation and the complete identification of the performance with the composer's intention made one conscious of nothing but the music. The slow movement was given a reading which compared favourably with performances given by better-known and longer established orchestras.

## A JOLLY WORK

Finally a "Little Suite for Orchestra" by contemporary composer Malcolm Arnold, which has only little significance musically, was a jolly work to listen to.

Here the orchestra had a great time and communicated their enjoyment to the audience who fully appreciated this light hearted work.

## SAUCEPAN LIDS!

They would have shown their appreciation even more, if they had had a collection on the spot to buy the Banbury Symphony Orchestra a pair of cymbals—some of Malcolm Arnold's effects were a little marred by the constant beating of what sounded like a pair of saucepan lids—which was in no way the fault of the percussionists, who responded nobly to the heavy demands made upon them by this score.

## NOTEWORTHY

This was a noteworthy occasion in Banbury's musical history, and several people must have been very proud—Banbury for having produced this orchestra in its midst; the members of the orchestra for giving so many so much pleasure—the Leader (Joseph Hutchings) whose important function in an orchestra is always appreciated by an audience; and, of course, conductor, Malcolm Sargent.

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## Banbury Orchestra's successful debut

THE Banbury Symphony Orchestra was formed a short time ago but until last night had given only informal concerts.

Its first public appearance at the Technical College, Banbury, was an impressive occasion and although there were some uncertainties the playing was generally confident and alive.

The strings produced some odd noises at times but the tone improved as the evening progressed. The wood-winds were particularly good and the brass section played with conviction.

The conductor, Malcolm Sargent, who is a teacher at Banbury Grammar School, deserves the warmest praise for his efforts. His style of beating, which is not unlike that of Sir Adrian Boult, was always clear; he did not make the mistake, which so many young conductors do, of giving over-jerky beats, but used the stick in a flexible way and so kept the music flowing easily.

Beethoven's Overture Men

of Prometheus was played quite well but the members of the orchestra seemed a little shy of giving their best. The Air on a G String by J. S. Bach was shaped beautifully and played with sympathetic understanding.

Joseph Hutchings gave a very creditable account of the solo violin part in Beethoven's Romance in F and the brass section showed their paces in two delightful 17th century English pieces.

The best playing of the evening came in Haydn's London Symphony. For this, the conductor chose some sensible unhurried speeds and each movement was given with style.

Malcolm Arnold's Little Suite for Orchestra made a splendidly happy ending to the concert. The performers seemed to enjoy playing this as much as we in the audience enjoyed listening.

BRYAN KELLY

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THE ROEBUCK