

Lively welcome for conductor

Banbury Symphony Orchestra and its supporters welcomed new young conductor Christopher Waltham for their Autumn Concert last Tuesday and they chose a programme of music by 19th century composers.

The concert opened with the overture *Le Carnaval Romain* by Berlioz. Although not lengthy this is, nevertheless,

large-scale in conception and calls for hard work and a high degree of virtuosity from the orchestra. The players responded well to these demands, apart from a slight tendency to raggedness in the opening bars.

After this French opening, the orchestra turned to Russian works. These consisted of the short but lively *Gopak* by Mussorgsky, just before the interval, and afterwards the much larger *Borodin Second Symphony*. This work again made high demands on the orchestra which gave a sustained performance of high quality.

Soloist Janet Edmunds, a welcome return visitor and already well known as a performer in Banbury musical circles, further enhanced her reputation with excellent performances of Verdi's *O Don Fatale* and *Softly Awakes my Heart* by Saint Saens. Her singing of these two arias displayed not only first-rate technical competence but also a fine dramatic quality.

The concert ended with Johann Strauss's *Thunder and Lightning Polka* which received a well-earned encore.

Christopher Waltham's background as music scholar at King's School, Canterbury and later at Worcester College, Oxford, is impressive, and was matched by his skilful conducting of the concert. — A.J.



Guest soloist, Janet Edmunds looks over the evening's musical score with orchestra leader, Lawrence Farbrother (left) and the new conductor of Banbury Symphony Orchestra, Christopher Waltham.

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