

# Another Mozart treat

For the second time in a week, Banbury music-lovers were treated to the delights of Mozart on Tuesday.

At the end of last week, The Magic Flute illustrated his delightful opera work and on Tuesday evening at Stanbridge Hall, Banbury Symphony Orchestra's first concert of the year featured Mozart's piano concerto No. 23 in A, K.488.

It was a treat to hear soloist Steven Barlow tackling one of Mozart's most frequently performed works with such confidence. At the same time, he appeared almost embarrassed by the deserved acclaim his effort received.

Technically, the melancholy second movement was the most satisfying for it is in the key of F sharp minor, one which Mozart used only once in his life. However, Steven Barlow clearly enjoyed the concluding Rondo, one of the composer's most effective, and the concerto finished superbly.

To appreciate conductor Christopher Waltham's choice for the concert's opening, one has to be something of a devotee of brass, and Giovanni Gabrieli in particular.

The three canzons employed this time provided a forceful and tuneful reminder of November's concert at St Mary's church and perhaps the audience would agree that the dominant horns, trumpets and trombones are more agreeable in the soaring space of the church than in the old grammar school's modest assembly hall.

Still, it was a bright enough start and the final work of the evening, Brahms first symphony, opus 68, possesses the most joyful and stimulating of climaxes, ideal for such an occasion.

The orchestra worked hard to master the two middle movements, slow and with the tragic reflection of the composer's unhappy love for Clara Schumann. There was some pleasing leadership from Lawrence Farbrother and the players' unrestrained delight in the final movement completed the evening on a triumphant note. — J.R.