

The City of Carlisle Orchestra presented an excellently-planned programme of three nineteenth-century pieces at their Summer Concert on 30th June. Never averse to a challenge, they began with Brahms' Academic Festival overture, a tricky piece, if for no other reason, for its very busy character and clever syncopation. As Leon Reimer's programme notes observed, three of the four student songs which punctuate the piece are treated in a quirky and unpredictable way, surely because Brahms wanted to make fun of the heavy four-square rhythm of most of these pieces - and fun it is, though the cellos particularly have to work frantically hard to make it so. They succeeded, and all was resolved in the splendid bombast of *Gaudeamus Igitur* - to which I always think the audience should be provided words and invited to join in.

The second piece was Ferdinand David's Trombone Concerto, the solo part being played by Nicolas Kent, performing in front of two of his erstwhile teachers. (Literally in front: they were there behind him, playing.) They had every reason to be proud of their pupil, who is master of a remarkable range of styles, from lyrical accompaniment to the most agile of scales and arpeggios. As a horn player I envy him in particular those splendidly strident low notes. The balance between soloist and orchestra was also excellent.

The second half of the concert was taken up by Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony. The orchestra rose to this new and stern challenge, which has something for every individual instrument and for almost every combination. The introduction with low strings and clarinets was intensely moving, and this level was kept up by all parts throughout, with this reviewer particularly impressed by horn and bassoon solo work and by the tremendous vitality of the upper strings. Their conductor put them through a huge variety of tempo changes and they were always with him, keeping up the intensity even through some of the later passages of the last movement where rhetoric seems (to me) to prevail over the composer's imagination (and I did check this out with other orchestras when I got home). The applause which greeted all the performers at the end was richly deserved.

Keith Maclennan