

Choice Was Justified

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By JOHN HORNER

Dr. John Black, that mighty musical persuader, put another notable milestone behind him (and us) last night when he persuaded his City of Burnside Symphony

Orchestra to learn Bruckner's 70-minute 7th Symphony, and induced a full house to come and listen to it.

In spite of its difficulty and length, the bulk of the symphony is slow, giving amateurs a sporting chance of reasonable accuracy.

The first two movements were slow, lasting 22 and 25 minutes respectively. With short intervals after each, it was an hour before we reached an allegro.

I sensed no impatience anywhere.

After the powerful scherzo and the finale (speeded up a little, I suspected, as a reward for our good behaviour), we felt that the long session had achieved something notable, while the concert which began with Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel" overture, ended rather sooner than usual.

Naturally, no one would mistake the Burnside Orchestra for the Vienna Philharmonic.

Nevertheless, the attitude of conductor and orchestra to their work was earnest and lofty enough to justify their temerity in embarking on such a task.

Dr. Black's handling of the work showed that he knew it backwards, well enough to disagree over the tempi with famous conductors who have recorded it. He gave it unity, rhythm and purpose.

The Humperdinck was a wisely chosen introduction, difficult to pull off daintily but setting exactly the right period atmosphere of orchestration.