

Brahms Test Passed

By JOHN HORNER

There was a pardonable strut of triumph in the last few lines of the finale at the Burnside Town Hall last night when the local symphony orchestra, having cleared the last hurdles carefully, knew it had the Brahms Symphony No.1 in the bag — its first so far as I know — and all was over bar the shouting.

Conductor Robert Cooper approached his big task with becoming circumspection, taking great care in the ominously striding introduction to give his players time to produce their weightiest tone.

Even so, the strings could not quite dominate the wind, but a sufficient intensity was built up to set the long argument going with dignity and purpose.

The conductor's grip and understanding never slipped. There were no disasters and many pages of very creditable playing, including a lovely third movement.

The players were always stretched but the choice of the work was fully justified.

Difficult in a more transparent way was the Mozart E flat Horn Concerto with Rosalie Butcher. The crucial cold start was cautiously negotiated and the playing settled down to musicianly reliability with a cool sense of style and humor.

Here, too, Mr. Cooper's orchestral instinct ensured a properly understood lightness and steadiness.

The orchestra warmed

up on the Eric Coates Four Centuries Suite and the Faure Pavane.

It was lucky in its six double basses, even if they did not always agree in pitch.