

Unforgettable performance

THE CONGRESS Theatre should have been packed for an Eastbourne Sinfonia concert on Sunday night that gave all it promised and a good deal more.

There was a reasonable house for an ordinary Sunday night. But look what was on offer — Eastbourne's premier orchestra on top form, with an opportunity to hear Caroline Dale, one of the most exciting young cellists of our time, and pianist Julian Saphir, a young man on the way to a brilliant career.

With the opening overture conductor Graham Jones showed his faith in a now established string section. The sustained sound of angry wasps at the opening of Vaughan Williams' incidental music to Aristophanes' play, *The Wasps*, called for intense concentration and studied bowing. It was brilliantly done.

The folk song melodies which followed, teased the memory with faintly recognisable snatches; like a musical, high quality crossword.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to be at the finals of the Duke of Devonshire award needed no further introduction to Julian Saphir. It was interesting to hear him play again his winning entry, E. Dohnanyi's *Variations on a Nursery Song*; this time with an orchestra better than its best.

We had again from this young man a sparkling display of technique, coupled with a twinkling appreciation of the humour of the piece. That his Royal College of Music teacher, Phyllis Sellick, was in the audience seemed to bother him not at all. It is perhaps too early to speak of virtuoso performance but it could certainly be said that the promise of a brilliant future shone from the Congress stage.

The appearance of cellist Caroline Dale with the orchestra may perhaps be taken as an instance of the respect in which the Sinfonia is held in the musical world.

This outstanding instrumentalist — youngest person to be elected Associate of the Royal College of Music — and busy recitalist on her way to international fame, has made the Dvorak Cello Concerto in B minor particularly her own.

On Sunday night with an orchestra and soloist in complete accord we had an unforgettable performance and a torrent of deserved applause.

Rikki Warburton