

Robin Gregory reviews the Eastbourne Symphony Orchestra's tenth film concert

The Eastbourne Symphony Orchestra's tenth biennial film concert at the Congress Theatre on 5 October was also the last event of the town's fifth annual Victorian festival. No Victorian film featured, of course, but the festival atmosphere sat well with this musical high-spot in the calendar. Compere Tim Marriott, Director of Drama at Eastbourne College, was welcoming and audible, bringing an informal ease which is not easily achieved in a large theatre.

This year brought a considerable improvement in the technical quality of the film clips, played on full-sized cinema screen: the result of digital technology no doubt. As usual, Roy Galloway, of the Curzon Cinema, provided the excerpts. The orchestra, ably led by Lisa Wigmore, responded with assured and idiomatic playing. Musically, the first half was varied, from the conventional filmic sound of Elmer Bernstein (*The Magnificent Seven*) and John Williams (*Indiana Jones*) to the genius of Saint-Saëns. Outstanding solo contributions came from Chris Cheung and Gilbert Lam (piano) and Alvin Au (xylophone). The moving violin tune from *Schindler's List* was exquisitely rendered by James Wicks, another College pupil, and a recent winner in their Young Soloist of the Year Competition. Claire Huckle with her singing and dancing team brought a real show-biz sparkle to the hair-washing sequence from *South Pacific*.

The second half was devoted to Ken Russell's enigmatic film about Tchaikowsky, which provided an excuse (if one were needed) to invite Eastbourne born and educated and now internationally renowned pianist John York to perform the never-hackneyed B flat minor concerto. It was a thoughtful account, occasionally lacking power from the strings but with some beautiful flute-playing in the slow movement, and a commanding presentation from the soloist.

Conductor Graham Jones had everything under firm control, and another landmark in his long association with Eastbourne's music-making was enthusiastically received by a large audience.

(Two pix: one is John York pictured with (some of) the orchestra; the other is Eastbourne College's Claire Huckle (left) with her students, ready to perform *I'm gonna wash that man right outa my hair* from *South Pacific*)