

## JAMES WILLSHIRE PIANO RECITAL

The second concert in Carlisle Music Society's superb Recital Series featured an interesting and varied programme given by the young pianist James Willshire. The first half began with a neatly played Bach Prelude and Fugue followed by Beethoven's late Opus 110 sonata. Late Beethoven is never straightforward or without its problems which include combining and projecting great depth with structural continuity. More melodic significance could have been given to the opening movement's many sweeping arpeggiated passages and greater clarity to the trio of the second movement. The Chopin group that followed was accurately played but in the Mazurka would have benefitted from a greater sense of the appropriate rhythmic style. The second half was dominated by Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. This staple of the repertoire composed in 1874 was given a marvellous performance with brilliant contrasts and bravura technique which conveyed abundant colour, character and spirit, especially in the lively *Tuileries*, *Ballet of the Chicks in Their Shells* and *The Market at Limoge*. The slower more weighty images of *The Old Castle* and *Cattle* were well paced and conveyed atmosphere and a visual realism in musical terms, while the *Great Gate of Kiev* rounded off the tour in rich, grand and resounding style. *Danzas Argentinas* are three dances for solo piano written in 1937 by Alberto Ginastera. Again, James Willshire clearly enjoyed the rhythmic challenges and superbly idiomatic piano writing and brought off all three pieces with great verve and thrilling vitality.

Graham Robertson