

Soloist rescues night of Copland

**Haffner Orchestra,
Ashton Hall,
Lancaster**

review

THERE are many, many people who know more about classical music than I do, but after years as a journalist, I think I know a real-life drama when I see one.

And boy, was there was real-life drama at the Ashton Hall on Saturday.

The Haffner had been due to be accompanied by the baritone Adrian Clarke on Copland's 'Old American Songs' and arias from Mozart's 'the Marriage of Figaro'.

Clarke had rehearsed with the orchestra the night before, but just hours before the performance he became too ill to perform.

What to do? Could the show go

on? A frantic call was made to another soloist David Stout. Yes, he could step in...but there were problems. First, David was in Windsor - around four hours away. Second, there were 10 Copland songs and he was only familiar with four of them.

But none of that deterred this super-hero baritone. A mad dash up the motorway, a quick rehearsal with the orchestra and he was ready.

And what a performance. Members of the packed audience used words like "amazing" and "brilliant" and David's rendition of 'I Bought Me A Cat' - complete with farmyard sound effects - practically had them rolling in the aisles. At the end, David gave a big



SUPER HERO: David Stout admirably steps in at last minute for Haffner Orchestra.

sigh of relief, as applause echoed around the hall. There'd been hardly any preparation and a last minute motorway journey...you would never have known. It was a fine display.

The late change also failed to knock the Haffner and its charismatic conductor Natalia Luis-Bassa off their stride.

They bought to life the fairytale stories of Ravel's mother Goose Suite and the splendour of Haydn's Symphony No.100.

What with musical stories of Beauty and the Beast, magical Oriental tales, the genius of Mozart, the pomp of Haydn, not to mention the real-life triumph of the Haffner's stand-in baritone, it was an exciting, memorable evening.

**Tim Padfield, of BBC Radio
Lancashire**