

New opera company make a triumphant debut

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Berwick's most recognisable and famous building was a fitting setting on Friday evening for the inaugural performance by a new opera company formed by a Berwickshire musician.

The acoustics in the town's Georgian Guildhall did full justice to the performance of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* by six young professional singers and an orchestra of local players.

They had been brought together by Peter Keenan, who created the group Opera dei Lumi after becoming hooked on Mozart's operas while studying music at York University.

Friday's concert was the third in a series of four in the Berwick Festival Opera over two summer weekends. Devised by Matthew Rooke, artistic director of The Maltings, it aims to bring top quality operatic performances to a smaller, more intimate, venue.

Musical director Peter had brought together sopranos Catrin Woodruff, Allegra Giagu and Jessica Conway, tenor Kieran White and baritones Jacob Robson and John Hol-



Founder and conductor Peter Keenan. Picture by Gregory Keenan

land Avery, all extremely talented young singers obviously familiar with Mozart's masterpiece. Their voices – no microphones necessary in the high-ceilinged hall – stunned and thrilled the sell-out audience who gave them a rapturous reception.

Sung in Italian, there was an English translation which

could be followed in the programme, but that was to miss the graphic facial expressions and acting of the singers. We had a rough idea of the mad-cap story of how two soldiers test the love of their sweethearts and decided instead to simply enjoy the music for its own sake. The evening was a real triumph.