

Halle, Frankly engaging

By IFAN PAYNE

THE Hungarian pianist Peter Frankl has already had a long and distinguished career on the concert platform, as well as on records.

In addition to his orchestral and solo performances he has formed a notable partnership with the violinist, Gyorgy Pauk.

Last night Frankl was at St David's Hall, Cardiff with the Halle Orchestra, conducted by James Loughran to perform Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 21* and fulfilled all—and more—of his reputation.

The performance did not elicit the most elegant orchestral playing that you will ever hear.

REVIEW

Not did the reading plumb the depths of the music. Rather, it was a performance which presented all of the fresh-faced buoyancy of the 29-year-old composer.

An engaging, unpretentious, well-balanced and proportioned performance, it was filled with mock heroics and a sprightly, martial air which pervaded the outer movements and Frankl rightly drew smiles from the instrumentalists around him with his musically-playful finale.

The beautifully-poised first movement *Cadenza*

was a foretaste of the more extended, affecting stillness achieved by the pianist during the central *andante*.

Manchester is not, I think, noted for being the waltz centre of Europe but, for the second half of this Martini-sponsored concert, the Halle attempted to transform brown Taff into the blue Danube, with a sequence of Strauss polkas and waltzes.

The readings were most notable for being exercises in precision, two relative rarities providing fireworks.

Shortly after watching Siegfried so magnificently forge his sword on the operatic anvil, that same "instrument" created an almost equal sensation during Joseph Strauss's *Feuerfest Polka*.

The second rarity, Johann Strauss Junior's *Cuckoo Polka* provided an opportunity for a star turn by percussionists with a "cuckoo" impression.

If the waltzes tended to be leaden-skirted, the polkas certainly went with a suitable thunder and lightning as the Halle brought a touch of rollicking, fun-filled Manchester to snow-blown Cardiff, on the Taff.