

ST. DAVID'S HALL, CARDIFF  
(March 17, 1984)

HALLÉ ORCHESTRA

Conductor: Jacek Kasprzyk. Soloist: Nigel Kennedy (violin)

After the recent Polish *In the South* we have another Polish-led Elgar performance, this time of the *Violin Concerto*. I have to admit, though, that the interest centred on the young British soloist, Nigel Kennedy.

It is a pity when extra musical factors impinge upon one's enjoyment of a concert, but music, like the rest of life, is fully integrated with its environment. Thus it was somewhat of a distraction to have to watch so many members of the orchestra indulging in giggling fits throughout. There was distraction also in Jacek Kasprzyk's visually puzzling (a static left hand, a stiff right wrist) style of conducting which left me wondering how he communicated dynamic changes, for example, to the players. That he did not always manage to communicate was evident from the false start on

the part of the concertmaster towards the end of the *Allegro Molto* of the Elgar work.

Where the performance of the concerto was concerned, the orchestral introduction was presented in a matter of fact manner. The moment Mr. Kennedy started playing, however, he took hold of the performance and, from his very first entry, held the music back, savoured every moment that could be held back and charged at all the music that needed to be moved along a little more quickly.

The violinist wears his musical heart on his sleeve and this high emotion-ism combined with his musicality and pure tone allowed him to grip the attention throughout. It must be said, though, that his self indulgence, as during the slow movement and the cadenza, bordered on the narcissistic: taking him onto musically treacherous ground where the beautiful tone is lovingly caressed for its own sake rather than for the sake of the music.

The influence of one of his teachers, Dorothy Delay, is to be heard in the big, romantic, singing tone and pure intonation that the violinist brings to so much of his playing. Only the roughness of tone that occurs during fast passages when the bow moves over the string quickly and under pressure detracts from a technically most appealing performer. He is certainly a violinist to keep an eye on, one who has a distinctive and stimulating musical personality.

The concert opened with a crisp reading of the Overture to *Nabucco*, though the tempo and dynamics tended towards the rowdy rather than the exciting. The tempo at which the first movement of the final work on the programme, Mozart's *Symphony No. 40 in G minor* was performed, being closer to the *allegro* than to the *molto*, introduced a respectable rather than stimulating performance of the work.