

Rahbari fulfils Iranian promise

HARMONIC music is alien to the indigenous music of Iran and it was only as recently as the 1920s that Vaziri founded in that country an orchestra on Western lines.

Of the few Western composers who have taken an interest in Iranian music, Henry Cowell's *Persian Set*, composed in 1957, is perhaps the best known through the recording conducted by Leopold Stokowsky.

To date Iran's most visible proponent of Western music has been Loris Tjeknovorian who was born in Born in 1937 of Armenian parents, and who became known for composing and conducting exotic and striking music.

It was, then, of more than passing interest to hear at St David's Hall last night the Cardiff debut of both the Iranian-born conductor Alexander Rahbari and of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

The particular insights that Mr Rahbari's background might bring to the music of Rachmaninov raised expectations that were fulfilled to a considerable extent.

In the event his interpretation of Rachmaninov's *Symphony No 1* displayed a firm grasp of structure and a clear vision of a large-scaled conception. He is a conductor of measured musical weight and gait who is sensitive to both the work's emotional climaxes and the more mercurial moments of the central movements.

The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra played with refined tone in the quieter music and responded sensitively to Rahbari's willingness to take his time but endeavoured to lose the thread

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of the musical argument.

Wisely the conductor plunged straight into the concluding movement before the spell of the preceding larghetto was broken and showed that he drives a taut and towering final allegro.

In retrospect the playing of Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No 4* which opened the programme had been all the more disappointing for its out-of-focus quality.

Despite the ardent pianism of Joaquin Aicharro the performance suffered from fuzzy balance and ensemble and a lack of grip on the structure of what is not one of Rachmaninov's most immediately appealing works.