

Family night at St David's Hall

Yoko shines in dull concert

By IFAN PAYNE

ANTHONY Hopkins and the New Symphony Orchestra of London performed the family night concert on Thursday evening and in some ways it was a pretty amiable event all round.

Indeed the players in the orchestra may have been smiling and giggling at each other, but there was nothing to laugh about in their perfor-

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mance, the first violins being most prominent in their ineptitude.

Ensemble, intonation and balance were all awry as the too-prominent leader led them through a performance of Schubert's *Rosamunde Overture* which at times was made to sound like

some rollicking Offenbach overture.

The young Japanese pianist, Yoko Shimoura, was the soloist in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 3. She projected her tone strongly and in the first movement cadenza, freed from Hopkins's rather uninspiring beat, she shaped the solo well.

This feeling for the shape of the music carried over into Shimoura's

affecting solo opening to the slow movement.

The orchestra's attempt to carry forward her deeply-felt poignant concept though beautifully matched by the woodwind, was let down by the insensitive, clumsy string playing.

Miss Shimoura is clearly strong-willed regarding her view of the music but, lovely though it was, Beethoven would hardly have recognised his slow movement falling asleep on itself as it came to a near stop in an excess of poetic pianistic rumination.

Nor would the composer have recognised the anachronistic flying spicato of that Parisian operatic style again which the violins injected into the rondo.

Dissatisfaction with the overall ragtaggle nature

of this performance should not hide the fact though that Yoko Shimoura is on this evidence a pianist of considerable artistry with a lovely tonal command.

In his passable spoken introduction to Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*, Anthony Hopkins called the work a masterpiece. But neither with words nor music could he hide the fact that it remains a rather unsatisfactory sequence of two, dull, slow movements.

Some recent statistics have shown that nationally the audience for this kind of family concert is dropping. One can understand why. The evening was undemanding and pleasant enough, but technically and musically it was a pretty shoddy job.