

Orchestra's best side

By IFAN PAYNE

THE BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra have an affinity for some select works which they have made their own through repeated exceptional performances.

The *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story* is one such work. Following Wednesday evening's performance in St David's Hall, Gershwin's *Piano Concerto in F* promises to become an equally impressive showpiece.

From an instrumentalist's point of view, the work is a delight to play, so it is easy to understand the orchestra's obvious enjoyment of the music.

This was added to the equally joyous and characterful pianism of Peter Donohoe along with the verve of Andrew Davis's conducting, so that the result developed into an engaging performance

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which was full of vitality.

The common understanding and evident shared pleasure of conductor and pianist kindled during the beautifully-paced and shaped adagio, a movement which also contained some notable muted trumpet work aptly reminiscent of late nights in smoky cellar bars.

Sparks from the orchestra smouldering off the adagio jumped the break into the concluding allegro.

Fanned by the occasional marvellously-apt stride piano passage from Donohoe, the movement blazed brightly throughout.

It must be hoped that orchestra, pianist and conductor will have

opportunities to perform this work together again, so that it fulfills its promise of becoming one of the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra's exhibition pieces.

Peter Donohoe again showed his feelings for jazz rhythms when he played Gershwin's *I Got Rhythm* as a zestful, but all-too-brief, encore.

The fire was evidently still burning in the belly of the orchestra after the interval, and the concert concluded with a performance of Dvorak's *New World Symphony*.

Under Andrew Davis's direction, this performance was notably not only for some exquisitely-balanced muted front-desk string playing during the largo, but also for being played with much of the character and panache that had been missing from Copeland's *Appalachian Spring*, which opened the concert.