

Orchestre Philharmonique at St David's Hall

Bright flashes and a gaily Gallic finish

By IFAN PAYNE

REVIEW

IT IS nice that city twins stand for something. A window and the Melos Quartet from Stuttgart and now puppets and the Orchestre Philharmonique des Pays de Loire on Wednesday evening from Nantes.

I wonder what Mozart would have made of a trumpet concerto had he composed one. We shall never know. His pupil Hummel, however, gave us the next best thing and here to play it was Monsieur Soustrot, a large man clutching a small trumpet and dressed in an op art black-and-white jacket.

Despite its many attractive gestures the concerto is an inconsequential work, all the more so when, despite Bernard Soustrot's persuasive playing, the orchestral balances were as muffled as here.

Mark Morris had written a lovely and insightful programme note regarding Debussy's *Prelude a L'Après - Midi D'un Faune* pointing out how much we now take for granted a work that must once have sounded surprising exotic. Under the baton of Marc Soustrot this particular faune had a somewhat troubled dream in a reading that lacked sensuous grace

and the stillness of the sun-drenched languid Mediterranean afternoon.

Similarly with Ravel's *Daphnis Et Chloe Suite No 2* the images conjured up by Morris's note were more evocative than those presented by this French orchestra's rather more pedestrian presentation where the dawn broke with all the mystery of Queen Street on a Saturday morning.

Nor did the orchestra command the fullness of tone necessary for the many emotional heavings of the score. Thus instead of Morris's *Melancholy is matched by the hesitant rhythms of the dance* the orchestra simply got bogged down as though musically stepping through treacle.

On the credit side the dance that followed did have the necessary flashes of bright plumage and it all did come to a gaily Gallic conclusion. So all's well that ends.