

A musical experience

By IFAN PAYNE

HAVING one's ears unclogged at the Orangery of Margam Abbey on Thursday evening was a provocative, stimulating and happy experience.

Doing the unclogging and cleaning out the musical sensibilities was the Grand Union Orchestra. This is a multi-racial band — musical "experience" might be a more accurate description — and it consists of 19 musicians from almost as many countries.

Where else, I wonder, can the line-up consist of musicians who include a "self-taught multi-instrumentalist, former musical director," an "ex-Halle Orchestra now with the Ludus Dance Company," and one who "learned to play during five years imprisonment under

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President Pinochet."

Even the opening of the concert was unique with a sung introduction which broke into a riotous percussive samba certain to have delighted all Dafos fans. In fact, the influence of Airta and Micky Hart seemed never far from the surface of this concert.

The main work of the evening was *The Song of Many Tongues* which consists of settings of poems from *Wheel Around the World*, a collection by and for children from around the world.

This composition was commissioned by Alternative Arts as an anthem to Back the GLC Anti-Racist Year and was first performed at the opening

concert of the Covent Garden Alternative Music Festival in September 1984.

There were moments which will linger in the memory for a long time, such as the mysterious sounds of Pan pipes contrasted with low, growling brass which gradually evolved into a hymn of mourning.

There were also young musicians who will not be soon forgotten, such as the two high-flying trumpeters, Claude Deppa and Avelia Moisey and the Ghanaian singer and drummer Sarah Laryea.

Sometimes untidy, often exuberant, always infectious, this high-spirited and high energy concert was ear-blasting, which reaffirmed the joy of music as a language that transcends all boundaries and styles.

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