

**Welsh Proms at St David's Hall**

# Promenade of empty 'fantasy' gestures

By IFAN PAYNE

**REVIEWS**

MUSIC OF all styles should of course be fun, and attainable by anyone who wants to experience it.

It is a pity, though, that a series of largely pops concerts (Beethoven's 9th Symphony excepted, but only just) is mis-labelled with the name "proms", as in Welsh Proms.

For this surely trades on the name of the popular series at the Royal Albert Hall.

But given that that series has developed an international reputation for variety and adventurous programming — witness John Cage's fascinating *Roratorio* the other evening — our local version would appear to offer a diet filled out with too many musical equivalents of bits of pineapple and cheese speared onto a cocktail stick.

Except, that is, for Monday evening's concert at St David's Hall which presented a world premiere and followed that with what is surely one of the loveliest of all string concertos.

In the circumstances, then, it must be regretted that at first hearing Adrian Williams's *Leaves From The Lost Book* seemed such a dull work, which would hardly grip the interest as the main

title music for a *Lord of the Rings* type film, which it sounded like.

Either Owain Arwel Hughes's conducting was insensitive to orchestral atmosphere and instrumental balances or the work was filled with the most banal and empty of supposedly fantasy gestures.

Others may have found it more rewarding, I simply felt sorry for the amount of work involved to so little effect.

Cellist Julian Lloyd Webber's solo line of Elgar's Cello Concerto glowed brightly in his lovingly phrased performance.

The orchestral presentation was similarly conceived in sympathetically quiet-hued tones.

But the lack of dynamic shading (with far too many of the composer's dynamic markings being ignored) and of rhythmic vigour robbed the performance of an emotionally and musically more significant stature.

The performance of *Scheherazade* must be mentioned for James Clark's lustrous playing of the violin solos as well as for some exciting, well-disciplined trumpet playing.