

Sparkling recital sets pace for summer

By IFAN PAYNE

THE Summer Serenade lunch-time concerts at the University College, Cardiff, opened the season with a sparkling recital yesterday by the University Ensemble.

Desmond Bradley's *Violin Sonata* had originally been advertised on the programme, but in the event violinist James Barton, accompanied by Martin Jones, presented a noble and fluid performance of Vitali's *Chaconne in G minor*.

This is a work not often heard in concerts these days, but the attractiveness of the music can be gauged by its proliferation on record in versions by Accardo, Elman, Francescatti, Grumiaux, Heifetz and Sammons, to name but a few of the 40 or so performers on disc.

REVIEW

The recital continued with a notably fresh, sensitive yet powerful reading of Debussy's *Cello Sonata* played by Sharon McKinley, accompanied again by Martin Jones.

From feather-light, transparent tone to clouds-of-rosin-thumped pizzicatti, Ms McKinley presented a thoroughly gripping performance of this mercurial music.

In the five years between 1803 and 1808 Beethoven produced a series of works which were extraordinary for their combination of daring melodic invention and musical tension: *Fidelio*, *Symphony No 5*, *Piano Concerto No 4*, and the *Rasumovsky Quartets*.

That tension was broken by the more genial *Symphony No 6*, and the screws were not to be

turned down tight again until the 1820's, a period which included the final piano sonatas and last quartets.

The *Piano Trio Op 70 No 1*, "The Ghost" falls into that extraordinary five years, and in the University Concert Hall James Barton, Sharon McKinley and Martin Jones were most effective in re-creating that combination of attractive melodiousness and edgy tension which is so much part of the character of this music.

The University Ensemble set a high standard to start this lunchtime series.

The next concert, of music by Haydn and Beethoven, is at 1pm on Wednesday, May 1, and this is followed by a programme of music by Berlioz, Saint-Saens and Tchaikovsky to be performed by the University College Orchestra on Thursday, May 9.