

Creating a strong impression

By IFAN PAYNE

REVIEWS

ONE of the problems for today's serious composer is that so much vital and exciting music-making is occurring in areas other than those associated with the traditional field of "classical" music.

Thus a case can be made for Kate Bush's *Ninth Wave* as being the most exciting of recent song titles.

From the point of view of instrumental and textual imagination, of musical stimulus and emotional depth, *Ninth Wave* exists on a level that seems all but unobtainable for those working in classical academic composition.

It says much, then, for the stylistic eclecticism of Professor Ian Parrott's new song title *No Complaints* that it creates such a strong impression on first hearing.

The premiere of *No complaints* was included in yesterday's Tuesday lunchtime concert in St David's Hall given by baritone Lyn Davies accompanied by Richard Simm, pianist.

Composers frequently write work for particular performers but in this case *No Complaints* was commissioned by Lyn Davies with funds provided by the Welsh Arts Council and the premiere performance was scheduled to coincide with Professor Parrott's 70th birthday.

The text for the cycle consists of selections from the work of a variety of poets but all centre on the

theme of the self-confidence and protestations of mankind contrasted with the quiet acquiescence in suffering of the rest of the natural world.

Musically, *No Complaints* may be thought of as a post-modernist work with stylistic references to Debussy, Satie, Sondheim, Gilbert and Sullivan and gentle Chinoiserie.

The two Sondheim-like songs, *The Psychoanalyst* (a fine comic song, tinged with Gilbert and Sullivan) and *Advice to a Young River* (settings of poems by A S J Teffimond and Jane Wilson respectively) held up particularly well as individual items.

Yet the work as a whole formed a coherent cycle; a coherence which was enhanced by Lyn Davies's even vocalisation and intense, concentrated interpretation and also by Richard Simm's well characterised accompaniment.

As a consistent interpreter of contemporary Welsh music, Lyn Davies is an artist of considerable interest and unfailingly musical presentation. His wide ranging and adventurous programme on Tuesday not only included songs by Handel and Schubert but also a deeply-felt performance of Mansel Thomas's *Y Bradd*, a strong interpretation of D Vaughan Thomas's *Berwyn* and Parrott's *Flamingoes* with its strikingly-mincing, stilted-bird, piano-pecking introduction.