

SEC, Glasgow MICHAEL TUMELTY

SNO Proms

WHEN an institution like the SNO Proms transfers, of necessity, to a new and relatively untried venue, there is a certain amount of breath holding to see if the audience goes with it.

It now seems safe to assert that the large prom following — between 2000 and 2500 — has followed the orchestra to the Exhibition Centre. Saturday night's concert was a sell-out — even the weather submitted and allowed a respectable June evening.

Whether or not a real, lively prom atmosphere can be generated in Hall 3 will emerge over the next fortnight, but the success of the traditional formula of tried and tested pop classics with the SNO conducted by Sir Alexander Gibson, is indisputable.

The critic ought to observe that the first half items — the Poet and Peasant Overture, the Sorcerer's Apprentice, and the Nutcracker Suite — might all have been delivered with a more appropriate prom panache.

He also ought to observe, however, that the audience, to judge from its enthusiastic responses, didn't seem to mind a bit.

Nor did the capacity crowd appear to object to the fundamental flaw of Hall 3 — that it fails to channel and direct the sound, allowing it instead to dissipate and be swallowed up in the cavernous auditorium.

The principal effect of this is a complete lack of power and sheer volume — badly required but sadly lacking at various crucial points in Sir Alexander's spacious account of Dvorak's New World Symphony.

Meanwhile, out in the concourse, no stalls except those of the SNO. But the youngsters of the Motherwell and District Concert Band, who inadvertently contributed to the closing bars of the New World (pity they were in a different key), gave a terrific display, romping through arrangements of Glenn Miller and Andrew Lloyd Webber.

McLellan Galleries, Glasgow

PETER HEPBURN

The Glasgow Group

THE noise heard on entering this show comes from the video installation by "Pictorial Heroes."

Using social violence and urban decay as its theme, this confused piece of bombast is accompanied by some crass self-advertising in the Press Release inappropriately framed beside it.

In its contradictions this work symbolises much of what is irritating about the exhibition as a whole.

An originally admirable policy of inviting younger artists has resulted in wild divergences of style and attitude which combine with an unhelpful catalogue and inept labelling to leave the visitor baffled and frustrated.

Necessarily such a show must be difficult to hang but some of the combinations here are hard to understand.

In the large back gallery, James Spence's painting of boxers is hung beside Peter Howson's drawings — perhaps as a joke on the latter's pugilistic self-portraits — but the joke is reversed as Howson's rude energy makes Spence look feeble.

There is a disturbing lack of control in Howson's work but his

commitment is sincere and he makes Anda Paterson's, technique-laden attempts at similarly depressed figure subjects look flashy and patronising.

At the other end of the room, Kate Whiteford's work has a colour-sizzle and panache which make surrounding works appear pedestrian.

In Gallery One, Douglas Thomson's paintings are not all sufficiently resolved but they still dominate the effete work of Dawson Murray and Tom McKendrick opposite and the crudities of Brian Kelly and George Wylie nearby.

Lyceum, Edinburgh MARY BRENNAN

Pygmalion

TRANSFORMATIONS are an integral part of the Lyceum summer season. Later this month Shakespeare's *Dream*, with its altering enchantment, entered the rep, but first comes Eliza Doolittle's translation from flower girl to society lady.

Hugh Hodgart's production of *Pygmalion* is merry, elegant and above all shinningly and invitingly articulate in its communications of Shaw's social commentary.

There is, for instance, no mistaking the felt depth of critical reproach in Eliza's exchanges with Higgins over his patronising attitude towards her and her future: Penny Bunton — here making her professional debut — is an attractively elfin-featured Eliza whose resilience and resourcefulness emerge with as much conviction and convincing naturalness as those newly-groomed vowels. It is her pithy, clear-sighted appraisal of what defines a person's status in a society corseted by its attitude to class — ultimately you are what you are treated like — that leaves Higgins exposed as the privileged, self-centred baby he is.

Neil Cunningham's Higgins gathers definition in the course of the play. The charismatic quality of his rudeness — nicely reinforced by Vari Sylvester's disapproving but indulging house-keeper — allied with an irascible enthusiasm for "projects" such as Eliza gradually merge together in a kind of smart Alick petulance that only his mother, or Eliza, choose to challenge.

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