



Reviews

Limerick concert hall opens

SO/Colman Pearce
University Concert Hall, Limerick
Michael Dervan

Rivers of Paradise.....John Buckley
Piano Concerto No 3 (Emperor).....Beethoven
Symphony No 9 (New World).....Dvořák

ORCHESTRAL music with narrator is quite a perilous undertaking, as John Buckley's *Rivers of Paradise*, commissioned for the opening of the University Concert Hall in Limerick on Saturday, amply demonstrated. A simple list of the sources of Buckley's chosen texts — Donne, Newman, anonymous 17th-century Irish, Einstein, Galileo, Kepler, Shakespeare, William Carlos Williams, Marlowe, TS Eliot (taking up two pages in the printed programme for a 15-minute work) — gives a sense of the insurmountable challenge the composer created for himself.

The finger-wagging lecture which the assembled texts created would probably have sounded less portentously inflated without the self-consciously kaleidoscopic illustration of the music, the music more straightforwardly and agreeably celebratory without the burden of the weighty texts. The two speakers, Bill Golding and Bernadette Comerford, handled their task with the particular, awed gravitas that tradition deems appropriate to this sort of undertaking, and the National Symphony Orchestra under Colman Pearce ably highlighted the music's moments of sharp-edged brilliance.

Both Colman Pearce and the soloist, Barry Douglas, pressed quite hard in Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto*. But the result was more imperious than imperial, the assertive, considered grandness of the piano playing rarely matched by a sense of nobility from the orchestra, and with more than a few of the joins between soloist and orchestra clumsily handled by the conductor.

The performance of Dvořák's *New World Symphony* was also limited in its appeal. Mr Pearce here, as often in the past, showed a peculiarly single-dimensional perception of the orchestral writing of one of the 19th century's greatest composers. This failure to distinguish between orchestral foreground and background produced a sense of ongoing plateau which severely limited the expressive range of the music.

Trisha Yearwood
The Gaiety
Joe Breen

THE PERILS of after-midnight shows in Dublin were brought home to Trisha Yearwood at the Gaiety Theatre early yesterday. With her band silent, she was squeezing the last ounce of emotion from one of her many ballads before a hushed and admiring audience when a drunken voice drifted through the stillness of the theatre "Ah, shut up, willya".

Caught unawares, she did. But as the audience squirmed in collective embarrassment, she gathered herself and finished the song strongly. It was one of those foolish incidents that could put off a less experienced act. But Ms Yearwood is not of the faint-hearted brigade. One of the emerging rock-influenced stars of Nash-

The Taoiseach, Mr Reynolds, with the US ambassador, Mrs Jean Kennedy Smith, and the president of the University of Limerick, Dr Edward Walsh, look down at the atrium of the new £15 million foundation building at the Limerick campus, which was officially opened yesterday. Photograph: Liam Burke

Concert hall complex opened

From Arthur Quinlan, in Limerick

THE TAOISEACH, Mr Reynolds, and the US Ambassador, Mrs Jean Kennedy Smith, officially opened a £15m foundation building at the University of Limerick yesterday. The building includes a £5.2m, 1,000-seat concert hall with full symphony orchestra capability, the first purpose-built hall of its kind in the country.

The building also has 250- and 50-seater lecture theatres which include advanced research areas for faculty and post-graduate students, as well as art galleries, library and accommodation for the Hunt Museum.

Mr Reynolds said that it was the largest privately funded educational development in Ireland, and the largest in the history of the State. In addition to the £5.12m State investment there were a number of private contributions — mainly from the US — amounting to £10 million which had enabled the project to go ahead.

The American ambassador said she was extremely proud of the university's strong American connection. "I commend the participation of prominent Americans in the University of Limerick foundation and the generosity of the American benefactors."

The ambassador said that in addition, the university's ties to Cornell University and the Glucksman Ireland House at New York University, demonstrated America's strong and continuing commitment to Ireland and to education.

Mrs Kennedy Smith recalled the visit to Limerick 30 years ago of her brother, the late President of the United States, when he said that although Ireland was not the land of his birth, it was the land for which he held the greatest affection.