Orchestra is given rapturous welcome

– MUSIC –

HOUSE FULL notices and a sense of expectancy marked the first Ulster Hall concert given by the Ulster Orchestra last night.

If the players were tensed up by a sense of occasion so were their auditors and the rapturous welcome extended to Northern Ireland’s first full time orchestra outside the BBC reflected a feeling that Maurice Miles and his musicians led by Janos Fürst deserve the highest encouragement.

The eccentricity of the arrangement of the National Anthem was a slightly off putting start to the concert but the felicities of Mendelssohn’s overture, Fingal’s Cave, dispelled the first doubts and Wagner’s Siegfried Idyll revealed a beauty of tone and a capacity for subtleties in interpretation that were very moving.

Powerful

The latter work however was not as well integrated as it might have been and throughout the evening one was conscious of lapses in co-ordination that will have to be ironed out before we can feel that the orchestra is making the best of its potential.

A powerful performance of Beethoven’s Third Piano Concerto in which John Ogdon showed the qualities of greatness that we have come to expect of him was followed by a delightful presentation of Schubert’s high spirited Sixth Symphony.

One would like to hear more effective string playing especially in the upper sections. Fourteen violins should be capable of a richer sound and greater boldness in attack.

Perhaps one is expecting too much that an orchestra which has played together for such a short time should show a higher standard of ensemble but for the future we must judge the Ulster Orchestra by the standard it is setting for itself – the highest.

RATHCOL