

THE SCOTSMAN

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'SCIENTOLOGY' PIANIST FAILS TO IMPRESS

By Conrad Wilson

The interest of last night's recital by the Cairo-born pianist, Mario Feninger — sponsored by the Hubbard Academy of Personal Independence at the Freemasons' Hall, Edinburgh—centred principally on the presence of some rare pieces by Busoni, and secondarily on the effect which the pianist claims, the practice of "Scientology" has had on his keyboard technique.

Without having heard any other scientology-inspired pianists, and thus having no standards other than the normal ones by which to measure him, one can only report that Mr Feninger played excessively loudly for much of the evening, that he seemed to have given little thought to the acoustics of the hall, and that he treated almost every work in the programme—whether by Scarlatti or Chopin—as if it had been written by Liszt in one of his barn-storming moods.

BULLDOZED

A transcription of the slow movement of a Marcello concerto—its chords ground out as if on the Albert Hall organ, its fine-spun melodic line bulldozed out of existence—set the tone of the evening. Thereafter Mr Feninger brought his technique more vigorously into action and for a while one was able to derive a certain enjoyment from his bull-in-a-china-shop approach to each piece.

But the roughness of his playing, his willingness to leave phrase-ends unmoulded, his apparent lack of interest in such not unimportant matters as dynamic contrast and style, soon took their toll on one's ears. The Busoni pieces passed in a general haze of noise, and by the time he reached Chopin's B flat minor scherzo he seemed less an executant than an executioner. Still, it was plainly to the taste of his quite large and predominantly youthful audience (containing very few of the faces one regularly sees at Edinburgh concerts), who awarded him a standing ovation for his efforts.