

THE CRITICS

More pearls from local composers

This South African Music Guild concert — the third in a series of performances of works by South African composers — was a brief and winning testimony to the strength of local music and the viability of playing it live.

Arnold van Wyk's piano duet "Poerpasledam" (To Pass The Time), written in London in the years 1944 and 1945, is an eclectic bag that yields a pleasing gift every time you dip into it. It is made up of musical pearls strung in a pretty row. In style the work is well informed by French piano music of the early 20th century — most tellingly by Debussy and

MUSIC . . . by PAWEŁ STEPHAN

CONCERT: South African Music Guild (Johannesburg Art Gallery)

Satie.

Cells shift in pace and mood and tonal colour — "introduction" rumbled in the lower range like a coming storm, relieved by cloudbursts of percussive chords; which gave way to "theme", that melodically skittered along a polished rhythmic floor scrupulously maintained by the dual pianists Hennie Coetzee and Martie van Rensburg. Then we were led — in the succeeding modules — down darker passages, impregnated with the odour of "La Cathedrale Engloutie" (The Sunken Cathedral) from Debussy's "Prel-

udes" — this especially redolent in the muted chimings.

At times the sadness of Satie's "Gymnopédies", at times the glittering arpeggios that introduce Ravel's "Gaspard de la Nuit" came to mind.

Not an easy work — it's a textbook of styles — but Coetzee and Van Rensburg did not put a foot, or hand, wrong.

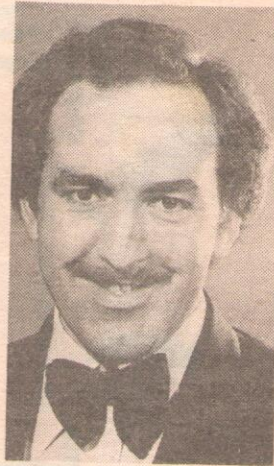
Waldo Malan's "Nege Miniature" was awarded first prize at the Amfest Music Composers competition in the categories Best Composition and Best Performance. The original performers — pianist Malan and tenor Dana de Waal — proved on this afternoon that the dual honour was well earned.

"Nine Miniatures" is a song cycle taken from poignant poems by Salomi Louw.

The music shadowed the words — when "n sagte dag" was sung the piano delicately dripped notes; the drama of the feelings in the miniature "Tuis" was clothed in jagged, cutting phrases as powerful and unsettling as those in Olivier Messiaen's cycle "Harawi". De Waal's muscular, affecting voice filled the Philips Gallery. "Onthuis" was lyrical, gathering energy in the electric vocal tour de force.

I'm sure Waldo Malan's "Miniatures" will endure, they're finely brushed with detail and precision.

To close was Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph's "Four 'Minim' for Cello and Piano", a Hebrew devotional piece. The con-



Dana de Waal

use of the cello — it eschews the instrument's rich sonority in favour of a more aggressive sound: harsh sawing and buzzing; thwacking pizzicato accents with an oriental source.

The cello is extended — this demanding task handled with deceptive ease by Marian Lewin — to yell out dissonant overtones. At one point the instrument is asked to "walk" like a jazz bass.

Zaidel-Rudolph's piece is another that flaunts every trick in the stylistic book. It's a powerful experience, particularly effective in the contrast between the feminine delicacy of the piano writing and masculine muscle of the cello part.

Both performers, Lewin and pianist Sini van den Brom, are to be commended. All musicians in this mini-concert played with commitment, skill and powerful enthusiasm — this is essential if new works are to grab and hold the public's attention.

● SAMG's next concert, in the same vein, will be



Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph