

Music

Brilliant mayhem

Don't Shoot Me I'm Only
the Piano Player
David Scheel
Adelaide Festival Centre
Sunday

DAVID SCHEEL's home-town audience has welcomed him back with open arms. It was standing room only for his first Adelaide performance in 13 years and his first solo performance here.

His is a unique craft. Technically brilliant on the piano, he mischievously takes classic pieces and rewrites them, showing how they would sound if played by Mozart, a Russian composer, a Spanish composer, a Sony Walkman, in modern avant-garde style (which nobody would understand but for which he would receive an Arts Council grant), and in swing.

All pieces were played exceptionally well and were hilarious. From there to "something to keep everyone happy" - Scheel plays Rachmaninov, jazz and a "golden oldie", all at the same time.

Amid all this mayhem, Scheel gives a truly funny stand-up performance as he intertwines the music with witty social commentary. His material is topical, starting with a mention that the State Government had "rejected all the sensible suggestions for a decent State slogan" and moving to Helen Demidenko, Jacques Chirac and the royal family.

Scheel also has an amazing ability to transform an audience. When he played Grieg's Notturmo and a composition of his own "inspired by the fountains of Italy", the crowd was mesmerised by Scheel's delicate touch.

But he is unpredictable - another of his own works starts as a classical piece and turns into a comedy routine as pieces from well-known tunes pop up.

Scheel presented *Waltzing Matilda* first as a waltz, then with modern lyrics and then offered an explanation of the bizarre origin of the lyrics, shedding new light on our national song. Scheel interacted well with a receptive audience and, with four given notes, he was able to compose a piece of music on the spot. He is a master of improvisation, accents, comedy and downright beautiful music.

Sarah Thomas