

Reviews

MUSIC

BBC SSO with Carolin Widmann

City Halls, Glasgow



WHAT to programme alongside a 70-minute symphony? If you're Ilan Volkov, conducting the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, with Bruckner's colossal, monolithic Seventh in the second half of your concert, you go for something – well, quirky, as Volkov himself admitted in his free-flowing pre-concert interview.

Volkov's choices for his two openers were indeed quirky, and bracing, too. CPE Bach's miniature Symphony No. 6 came from before symphonies really knew what they were, and Volkov delivered a gloriously lithe, buoyant account, switching direction on a sixpence and driving on a slimmed-down BBC SSO ensemble with boundless vigour. He followed it with Stravinsky peering back to the Baroque in his ascerbic Violin Concerto, given a splendidly characterful account by Carolin Widmann. Strongly projected and with impeccably chiselled articulation, Widmann managed to balance an

apt sense of ironic detachment with rich, impassioned playing, slithering through the second movement and finding a moving rawness to the slow movement. Despite the odd passage where conductor and soloist didn't quite agree on the tempo, it was a thrillingly fresh, thought-provoking reading.

Then came the Bruckner, and monolithic isn't really the word for Volkov's thoughtful, detailed performance. Yes, he sometimes gazed in wonder across Bruckner's expansive musical vistas, but he also sculpted details and phrases tellingly, moving things on with an understated sense of drama. The BBC SSO players responded with energy and conviction – and a superb richness to their sound, with double basses prominent – and very present – behind the brass at the back. An immensely powerful, very human performance.

DAVID KETTLE

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Melissa Etheridge

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall



NOT that she needed any excuse, but US roots rocking