

Lorenzo's minimalist, quickfire stage direction and Claire Haslin's super-efficient musical direction from the piano.

As well as some old favourites – Handel's *Lascia ch'io Pianga* from *Rinaldo*, *We're called Gondolieri* from *The Gondoliers*, or the famous duet from Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* – such lesser-known gems as *Tarquinius' Aria* from Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* and Gareth Williams' highly imaginative *Until the Glass Shattered*, specially written for this tour, take us beyond the usual operatic expectations. Never a dull moment.

**KEN WALTON**

Seen on 24.02.14

● On tour until 5 April

**MUSIC**  
**RSNO CHAMBER SERIES**

ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL,  
GLASGOW

★★★

THERE'S some music that positively blooms in the resonant, boomy acoustic of a cavernous church – a Baroque concerto, for example, or a piece of modern, meditative choral music. Then there's other music that really doesn't – like, unfortunately, most of the repertoire in the Royal Scottish National Orchestra's otherwise superb string chamber recital in St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow.

It wasn't that the playing wasn't good – in places it was exceptionally fine, beautifully balanced and delivered with passion and seemingly unstoppable energy. It was just that much of the time, you simply couldn't hear it clearly.

Take the opener, the exquisite

Sextet from Richard Strauss's opera *Capriccio*. The six RSNO string players gave a ravishing account, beautifully balanced between formal clarity and heart-on-sleeve indulgence – first violinist James Clark was especially fine with some nicely evocative portamento. But with the several-second decay of the space, Strauss's lush harmonies tended to muddy into a generic-sounding mush.

There was plenty of detail that went unheard in the Mozart C minor string quintet, *K406*, which came next – in the follow-the-leader canonic minuet, for example, it was hard to decipher who was leading, who dragging behind. But it was a seething, passionate performance of an angry, turbulent work, with strong contrasts and gloriously assertive playing – even if the acoustics tended to smooth over the account's sharp corners.

The closing Tchaikovsky *Souvenir de Florence* was a masterclass in energy conservation, building from an already tempestuous opening to thrilling, breathless conclusion – and so vivid that it broke through any acoustic difficulties.

**DAVID KETTLE**

Seen on 23.02.14

**THEATRE**  
**SINGIN' IN THE RAIN**  
EDINBURGH FESTIVAL THEATRE

★★★★

PRIME seats at the Festival Theatre for the next two weeks are the front rows of the stalls. That's where the splashes land as the heavens open and understudy Matthew Malthouse performs the famous Gene Kelly