

MUSIC

RSNO: Enigma Variations

Usher Hall, Edinburgh



Young American violinist Benjamin Beilman made a big impression with his immaculate Barber Violin Concerto with the SCO a couple of years ago. So expectations were high for his Sibelius with the larger forces of the RSNO – and it was no less spectacular.

Restless, muscular, agile and deeply passionate, it displayed his impeccable technique to glorious effect, and he played it as though recounting a complex narrative, vividly portraying all its characters and plot twists.

He is still only 29, and clearly a remarkable talent and, equally remarkably, he has been playing the Sibelius Concerto since his early teens. If there's a downside, it's that it felt quite a considered, serious-minded account – not least in his quite deliberate finale, which seldom ventured near the music's skittish playfulness.

But if it felt less than spontaneous, Beilman more than made up for that with sheer fiddle showmanship and unswerving commitment to the music – qualities equally on show in his witty encore of Kreisler's Recitative and Scherzo, whose finger-knotting virtuosity he dis-

patched with nonchalant ease.

The RSNO was on fine form in Sibelius' gritty orchestral writing, though conductor Elim Chan seemed sometimes too eager to push things on, missing a few opportunities for drama along the way.

Kudos to the orchestra and conductor for their recently composed opener – the lyrical *Endless Forms* by Hong Kong-born Fung Lam – even if the results were less than immediately memorable.

Chan closed with a deftly delivered Elgar *Enigma Variations*, sharply characterised though, as earlier, sometimes slightly breathless.

DAVID KETTLE



↑ The RSNO was on fine form under conductor Elim Chan