

Reviews

MUSIC
ROYAL SCOTTISH
NATIONAL ORCHESTRA:
NAKED CLASSICS

GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL

★★★★

IT'S not often you get to clap your hands, slap your thighs and jangle your car keys in a classical concert – and certainly not at the same time. But that was presenter Paul Rissmann's ingenious solution to explaining Stravinsky's notoriously tricky rhythms in the Royal Scottish National Orchestra's latest Naked Classics concert, on the composer's scintillating 1910 ballet score *The Firebird*. Even better, it worked.

The tried and tested Naked Classics format remained the same as ever: a first half in which Rissmann picked the piece apart and explained how it works, then a complete performance in the second half. And as ever, Rissmann's insights were spot-on, and pitched at just the right level for an audience that gratifyingly mixed newcomers



Paul Rissmann picked apart the notoriously tricky *The Firebird*

and aficionados. His opening explanations of major thirds, minor thirds and tritones may have been a bit forbidding for some, but his witty but informative commentary kept everyone entertained and engaged – with helpful input from RSNO players and conductor Christian Kluxen.

After the interval, Kluxen's performance was bright and eager, full of vivid effects and rhythmic suppleness. Things might have occasionally felt a little directionless outside the

piece's big dramatic moments, and the *Infernal Dance* seemed rather hard-driven, but his shapely conducting ensured his account was warm and vibrant. And the players of the RSNO – hugely expanded for the evening, and spilling from the crammed platform to offstage trumpets and Wagner tubas – were on fine form. Brass snarled, strings glowed and percussion clattered gleefully. It was a heady mix of sly education and sheer pleasure.

DAVID KETTLE