

The catchy refrain of *Precious Time* swathed his cry from the heart in swirling melody, but the highlight of their set proved to be the brilliant *Pelican*, Weeks's euphoric vocal soaring over its stop-start stabs of punk jaggedness.

JAY RICHARDSON

## RSNO NEW YEAR CONCERT

SHENZHEN CONCERT HALL,  
CHINA

★★★★★

FOR its traditional Hogmanay musical feast, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra relocated to the sunny southern Chinese city of Shenzhen – actually the mid-point of a five-concert Chinese tour that started in Guangzhou and has yet to take in Beijing and Macau.

And under conductor Peter Oundjian, they conjured a magical evening combining Viennese favourites, traditional Scottish tunes and even a nod to their Chinese hosts in Li Huan Zhi's glittering *Spring Festival Overture*.

Oundjian's Strauss waltzes were wonderfully charismatic – full of grand sweeps, yet sharply etched with authentically Viennese touches. His syrupy-smooth *Die Fledermaus Overture* was truly a summons to the ball, and his *Blue Danube* gracefully poignant. Oundjian was touchingly faithful to the idiom, and the orchestra responded with elegance and bite.



**Peter Oundjian: Magical feast in China for Hogmanay**

The Viennese classics went down well with the Chinese audience – but not as well as the Scottish tunes. Peter Maxwell Davies's *An Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise* drew snorts of laughter when guest leader Zsolt-Tihamér Visontay took a slug from a bottle of whisky before embarking on a tipsy fiddle solo, but young piper Iain Crawford earned gasps when he emerged from the audience in a stately reading of the piece's concluding bagpipe solo.

Six pipers from the National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland took up positions behind the RSNO for a glowing account of Phil Cunningham's *Cathcart*, and a selection of reels had the audience clapping along.

A final *Auld Lang Syne* – sung in Scots and Chinese – brought a multicultural Hogmanay celebration to a fittingly warm and friendly ending.

DAVID KETTLE