

SCO & Emmanuel Krivine

Usher Hall, Edinburgh



FROM the sublime to the – well, far-fetched, even hallucinatory, might be kinder adjectives for Berlioz's larger-than-life *Symphonie fantastique*, which formed one half of the SCO's all-French high-contrast season finale, alongside the aching restraint of Fauré's sumptuous *Requiem*.

It was a bold combination of repertoire, but it paid off magnificently under the eminently adaptable conducting of Emmanuel Krivine. He was all about the storytelling in a rip-roaring *Symphonie fantastique*, breathing fresh life and spontaneity into the volatile moods of the opening movement's reveries, then increasingly deranged in the ball's seemingly nonchalant waltzes, and playing up the grotesquerie of the closing witches' sabbath with glee. And the SCO players responded with a lithe, agile account, one that highlighted the composer's orchestrations – magical and macabre by turns – brilliantly.

It was a glorious example of orchestral music as aural theatre. But despite all the *Symphonie*'s dramatic high jinks, it was the grace and elegance of Fauré's *Requiem* that really lodged in the memory. The SCO Chorus was on out-

days, after almost two decades in the public eye and a growing, widespread awareness of mental health issues which might once have been dismissed as mere "eccentricity," what he's always been is thrown into sharp focus – that is, a man struggling with profound addiction issues whose illness has been anything but helped by a lifetime working in the music industry.

The other thing about Doherty which is clearly apparent is his tangible and genuine enjoyment of the music he makes, and there's always been something endearingly

standing form, velvety in the opening "Introit," shimmering in the closing "In paradisum," exquisitely balanced throughout, and with impeccable enunciation that conveyed every word. And despite Krivine's slightly idiosyncratic tempos, he delivered a luminous, buoyant account that was touching in its fragility, with Swiss baritone Rudolf Rosen a bronze-voiced presence in two movements.

Nonetheless, though the first half closed with Fauré transporting the souls of the departed to the consolations of paradise, by the concert's end we were dumped in among Berlioz's cavorting ghouls in a vision of hell. A nice touch from the SCO.

DAVID KETTLE