



← **Carmen Lynch has a refreshingly caustic world view and a real joke writing talent**

gow gig, she will return to the Edinburgh Fringe once again.

JAY RICHARDSON

MUSIC

SCO & Pekka Kuusisto

Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

★★★★★

IT'S a thing of wonder that a concert programme themed around war and death could feel so fulfilling, even uplifting. Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto had come up with a high-concept offering for his collaboration with the SCO. His applause-free first half, run straight through, felt like

a playlist of short, conflict-related works, but one that was carefully and fascinatingly balanced between light and shade, chamber and orchestra pieces, with a brusque though nuanced account of Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin* providing a framework on which to hang Kuusisto's eclectic repertoire.

He and SCO principal cellist Philip Higham brought a folksy rawness to the first movement of the same composer's *Sonata for violin and cello*, and the violinist joined a trio of SCO principals bowing wine glasses for the ethereal "God-Music" section of George Crumb's *Black Angels*. Most mesmerising, however, was SCO principal clarinetist Maximiliano Martín's solo "Abîme des oiseaux" from Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* – brilliantly articulated, blending fantasy and grit, it gripped the hall with its fearsome intensity.

After the interval came the wild invention of Biber's *Battalia*, bracing in its bar-room and battle evocations yet aching as its soldier ultimately breathes his last. After that, despite the bounding energy the Kuusisto brought to the opening of Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony, the famous stage walk-offs of its finale could only point towards one thing. It was a brilliantly conceived, thought-provoking evening – somehow both wildly entertaining and deeply moving – showcasing exceptionally fine playing from Kuusisto and the SCO.

DAVID KETTLE

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