

SCO, Enrique Mazzola and Vilde Frang

Usher Hall, Edinburgh

☆☆☆

A RADIANT musical dawn made for a wonderfully appropriate – and sonically resplendent – opening to the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's new concert season. It came in the form of Nielsen's *Helios Overture*, given a stylish, sharply defined account under returning guest conductor Enrique Mazzola – a performance that had all the warmth and caressing energy of the sun's rays (even if the SCO strings occasionally sounded a little overpowered by the luminous horns and brass).

Mazzola's interpretation of Sibelius's *Third Symphony* that followed was simply exquisite: high-definition without being finicky, kept buoyant with a gentle sense of propulsive energy, fresh, unfolding with organic inevitability. There was a supple flow to his lightly dancing slow movement, and

it offers a unique sense of how it feels to leave one world for another; to recognise very little, to understand no word of written or spoken language, to long for loved ones left behind, and to be scared to death by a

an immense sense of momentum generated as the finale approached its sonorous conclusion.

Together, they made for a magnificent first half, and the SCO players responded enthusiastically to Mazzola's precise direction. After the interval, however, things took a bewildering turn. Star Norwegian soloist Vilde Frang was the show's big sell in Beethoven's *Violin Concerto*, and it felt like two worlds colliding: one of graceful elegance and almost Rossinian wit from Mazzola and the band; the other of Brahmsian indulgence and wallowing emotion from Frang. There's no doubting her clean, nimble playing, nor her vivid musical personality, and her non-heroic approach to the *Concerto* was admirable. But rather than vulnera-

bly human, Frang's Beethoven sounded simply self-indulgent – and entirely at odds with Mazzola's bracing directness. It was, as they say, very much a concert of two halves.

At the core of the show, though, is the company's beau-

DAVID KETTLE**COMEDY****Kevin Bridges: The Brand New Tour**

Playhouse Theatre, Edinburgh

☆☆☆☆

A STAND-UP roughly half his life, it's easy to forget that the prodigious Kevin Bridges is just 31. He might still be mining memories of his adolescence, brushing off the so-called "fat shaming" he endured as a teen, putting it in the give-and-take context of playground insults. But he's open and specific about the