

**MUSIC**  
**SCO: PIZARRO PLAYS**  
**BEETHOVEN**

QUEEN'S HALL, EDINBURGH

★★★★

BEETHOVEN'S *Second Piano Concerto* is basically a juvenile work, written when the composer was in his early 20s so that he could show off his flashy pianism, and drawing heavily on his beloved Mozart and Haydn.

Which made Portuguese-born pianist Artur Pizarro's limpid, sensitive reading with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra all the more remarkable. It's not that Pizarro spent his time searching for hidden profundities in the piece's graceful melodies and sparkling textures – although there was certainly depth in his thoughtful, fragile slow movement. It's simply that he didn't try to find what wasn't there, and gave a beautifully poetic performance where melodies sang, harmonies were subtly shaded, and everything connected with a

sense of elegant balance. Best of all, he seemed to be enjoying himself – and his gleefulness had an infectious effect on the appreciative audience.

Finnish conductor John Storgårds was all precision and crispness in the Beethoven, but he swapped buoyant flicks of the wrist for grand, sweeping gestures in the Mendelssohn *Reformation Symphony* that ended the evening. And the SCO – on lively form – responded with a powerful performance of this ecclesiastically inspired piece, phrases nobly sculpted, and brass and wind glowing in its church chorales. It was just a shame that the Queen's Hall's rather flat acoustics didn't let Storgårds's grandiose conclusion resonate as it should have done.

His opener, *Into The Heart Of Light* by his compatriot Einojuhani Rautavaara, was seething, hyper-Romantic score of high passions, played with breathtaking sensitivity – not least the aching final solo from principal cellist Su-a Lee.

**DAVID KETTLE**