

MUSIC
SCO/LLYR WILLIAMS
QUEEN'S HALL, EDINBURGH
★★★★

THERE'S something quite striking about the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's sound when its players perform without a conductor – as they did in this energetic, engaging concert, directed by violinist Alexander Janiczek from the concertmaster's desk. The players seem freer to be more responsive to each other, with more give and take in their playing, and there's a greater sense of the orchestra as a collection of soloists – all of which combines in vivid, highly characterful accounts that sparkle with freedom and confidence. It paid off magnificently, especially in the two Mozart works that formed the concert's backbone.

The concluding *Prague Symphony* bristled with energy

and good humour – in an extrovert first movement the players somehow managed to blend nobility with mischievousness. But it was the Piano Concerto No 23 just before the interval that really left its mark. Welsh pianist Llyr Williams can be wilfully wayward in his interpretations, but here he dared to be simple: there was a pristine clarity to his playing, and a fortepiano-like lightness and transparency, even on the Queen's Hall's concert grand.

Williams returned for a high-definition account of Janáček's *Concertino*, playing up its ear-tweaking textures with a sextet of SCO soloists – his first-movement duet with principal horn Alec Frank-Gemmill was breathtaking, every note heavy with meaning. It was truly an evening that allowed the SCO players, and their soloist, to shine.

DAVID KETTLE