

MUSIC**SCO: MR SUZUKI'S BACH**

QUEEN'S HALL, EDINBURGH

★★★★

MR Suzuki's Bach, the SCO's concert was called – understandably, since Japanese conductor Masaaki Suzuki is world-renowned for his performances of the Baroque giant's music. "Mr Suzuki's Mendelssohn" just wouldn't have sold – and yet it was his Mendelssohn that provided the evening's real revelations.

Right from the first piece – Mendelssohn's remarkably assured *Sinfonia no.8*, written when the composer was just 14 – Suzuki was bright, brilliant and bracingly fresh, sculpting the air in front of him to eloquently shape the music's phrases, and goading the orchestra on to an urgent, white-knuckle performance. It was hardly the most profound music, but you wouldn't have guessed from Suzuki's searing account. And the SCO responded with exceptionally fine playing – crisp, clean and full of character. Principal viola Jane Atkins delivered the slow movement's yearning melody with poise, and the full band raised the roof with a radiant finale.

Suzuki was more sober in his Mendelssohn *Reformation* Symphony which closed the programme – as befits the work's religious themes – but he was no less compelling, even if the orchestra's extended and slightly over-enthusiastic brass section did tend to drown out detail elsewhere.

There was Bach, too, of course – and what a contrast. The Cantata *Ich habe genug* deals with a longing for death, yet Suzuki's brisk, beautiful account never wallowed. Baritone soloist Peter Harvey, although supple and expressive, disappeared within the texture at times, but the plangent obbligato oboe line supplied by SCO principal Robin Williams cut through clearly with breathtaking expressiveness.

DAVID KETTLE