



← **Miloš Karadaglić's performance was strangely unconvincing, reticent rather than confident**

MUSIC

Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Joseph Swensen

Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

★★★★★

WHILE Edinburgh Uni students prowled South Clerk Street dressed as walking corpses and blood-smeared vampires, inside the Queen's Hall, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra devoted its Halloween to Czech sunshine, warmth and positivity. This was one of the ensemble's most unashamedly joyful, upbeat concerts, propelled along with eager energy by Joseph Swensen, who seemed in his element in the blithe good spirits of Suk's opening *Serenade for Strings*, elegantly shaping its aching melo-

dies and building quite a passionate head of steam in its slow movement. Brisk and buoyant, it was a delight from start to finish – unchallenging, perhaps, but delivered with humour, high spirits and touching sincerity.

Equally high-spirited was Swensen's closing Dvořák Fifth Symphony, from a bouncing first movement to a suddenly urgent, turbulent finale, whose unexpected descent into minor-key darkness only prefigured an eruption of light at its glorious conclusion. Swensen seemed genuinely moved by the rapturous reception he received.

In between, however, came perhaps a nod to the mayhem outside the Hall, in Janáček's sinister *The Fiddler's Child*, a grisly musical tale of ghostly violinists and inexplicable child murder. SCO Leader Stephanie Gonley made for an eloquent, committed concertante soloist, in playing of huge character and passion as the ailing fiddler, and Swensen proved an excellent musical storyteller in Janáček's switch-back, restless tale, taking enormous care over the all-important details and articulations of this evocative score – not least with the SCO's quartet of viola players, who responded to the prominence the composer gave them in assured, thoughtful playing. A thoroughly captivating evening.

DAVID KETTLE

Insurance,
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