

MUSIC

SCOTTISH OPERA: DON GIOVANNI

THEATRE ROYAL, GLASGOW

★★★

RICHLY sumptuous and vividly told, Thomas Allen's rather tame new *Don Giovanni* for Scottish Opera seems to want to have it both ways, and feels uneasily balanced between surface sparkle and its dark heart of sexual obsession as a result.

There's a grim seriousness to the eponymous Don's womanising activities – we're in no doubt about their sordid nature – but Allen still manages to raise a few indulgent chuckles from the audience.

Likewise, Simon Higlett's sets, with sepulchral corners and lowering shadows, are perched precariously between stylised symbolism and more mundane naturalism. And the sinister masked figure who beckons us into the action at the very start

is a masterstroke, but to use the same figures as scene-shifters seems simply wrong-headed.

Despite any misgivings about the production's tone, however, it's all conveyed with compelling strength and clarity.

Jacques Imbrailo is darkly compelling as the Don, and his recitatives with the grubby Leporello (a persuasive Peter Kalman) are taken at a pleasingly speech-like lick.

Barnaby Rea bristles with anger and lust as Masetto, and in one telling scene with his fiancée Zerlina (a smouldering Anna Devin) suggests that the Don isn't the only one with kinky ideas.

Lisa Milne is a tower of simmering fury as Donna Elvira, and the orchestra under Speranza Scappucci gives a rich, vivid, crisply articulated account.

Solidly acted and beautifully sung and played, it's just not a production that offers many fresh perspectives.

DAVID KETTLE