

MUSIC

Vienna Tonkünstler Orchestra & Angela Hewitt

Usher Hall, Edinburgh



SELDOM can Beethoven's Emperor Concerto have sounded so fleet-footed, light, airy and – well, human. Yes, it's a grand, imposing utterance, but in the hands of Canadian pianist Angela Hewitt was refreshingly brisk, tender, even vulnerable – a world away from the pompous swagger that the piece often elicits. There was a sense of easy-going flow and bright transparency to Hewitt's lightly pedalled opening movement, and while some rather percussive staccato chords in her slow movement might have gone a little too far, her elegant dance of a finale brought things to an impeccably balanced conclusion.

Conductor Yutaka Sado kept things pushing ever

onwards, with bright, characterful playing from the Vienna musicians. And his uncanny sense of restless forward motion came into its own after the interval, when he conveyed the inexorable acceleration across the first movement of Sibelius's Fifth Symphony with remarkable majesty. Like Hewitt's human-scale Beethoven, however, Sado brought a light, breezy touch to the finale's famous "swan theme" – it could perhaps have done with a little more grandeur, in fact, but he pushed things on nimbly nevertheless to the intensity of the Symphony's mighty closing chords.

The concert's only bit of swagger came in the opening Dance Episodes from Bernstein's *On the Town*, just as cocksure and self-confident as they needed to be, and showing off the Orchestra's burnished strings and velvety woodwind to great effect. Johann Strauss II's *Tritsch-Tratsch Polka* made a thoroughly Viennese encore, nonchalantly delivered.

DAVID KETTLE