

## **Review: National Youth Orchestra of Scotland**

IN PULLING off Strauss's mighty Alpine Symphony with an assurance that kept the audience riveted from beginning to end, the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland yet again proved itself to be an orchestra capable of reaching the highest peaks of musical excellence.

### **National Youth Orchestra of Scotland**

#### **Usher Hall, Edinburgh**

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With considerable stamina required all round to sustain the continuous 50 minutes of lavish scoring – Wagner tubas, two sets of timpani, cowbells and all – conductor Michael Francis placed and paced his huge orchestral forces to ascend and descend in dramatic reflection of the Bavarian mountain views and natural environment which were the composer's inspiration.

In contrast, Sally Beamish's Trumpet Concerto, a NYOS commission from 2003, is inspired by urban landscapes and city life, although at times it seemed more other-worldly and elusively mysterious. Written for Swedish trumpeter extraordinaire Håkan Hardenberger, it also sounded appropriately celebratory for a concert marking the orchestra's 35th birthday. Turning to the bright and breezy side of Johannesburg, the rhythmic vitality of Walton's festival overture dedicated to the South African city was decisively brought to life by Francis and the ideal orchestra for it.

Without overplaying the mountain theme, the players heard on Saturday at the Usher Hall are those currently on the heights of the NYOS pinnacle. Legions more have passed through the ranks over the years with the support of countless parents and teachers. Hundreds of even younger instrumentalists are setting out in the foothills right now. Lots of congratulations and happy birthday to all of them.

Seen on 02.08.14 by Carol Maine