

Review: Music

Friday 18 July 2014

NYOS Senior Orchestra

NYOS Senior Orchestra

Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh

Michael Tumelty

WHAT a cracker of a concert on Wednesday night in Greyfriars Kirk from the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland's Senior Orchestra, delivered by the seniors (up to age 19) with that intoxicating mix of organisation, iron discipline and the magnetic flair of playing that is off the leash, bringing the music roaring from the page and into vivid life.

Master of ceremonies was conductor James Lowe, now resident in Berlin, where he is picking up good work; and he was exactly the right man for this job, though even he had to line up with the youngsters at the ironing board at the back of the kirk to freshen up his concert shirt before the show.

Under the relaxed but commanding direction of Lowe, the NYOS Seniors produced a fluid and lyrically-memorable account of *The Banks of Green Willow*, a lovely pastoral essay by George Butterworth, a great hope of English music, shot by a sniper at *The Somme*, while the structural intricacies of Cesar Franck's *Symphonic Variations* dissolved into clarity at the hands of soloist Benjamin Grosvenor, whose pristine and pellucid pianism made this potentially ungainly little piece seem economical and cogent, thus raising a question about its neglect.

To Peter Longworth's fascinating NYOS commission, *Ludi*, Lowe brought needlepoint precision and atmosphere, and the young musicians gave it right back to him in the third (and best) account I've heard of this terrific wee piece, before they all cut loose in a tremendously full-blooded and richly-coloured performance of Glazunov's *Fifth Symphony*, whose bronzed climaxes put the limited acoustic of Greyfriars to some test. An electrifying performance: bravo the Seniors.