

Gig review: NYOS Senior Orchestra, Edinburgh

by *DAVID KETTLE*

FULL marks to whoever put the programme together for the NYOS Senior Orchestra's energetic summer concert – it served as the ideal vehicle to showcase the orchestra's playing in chamber-like intimacy, sparkling modernism and big, blazing Russian tunes. It was hard to believe that they'd put it all together under conductor James Lowe in just four days – and equally hard to believe that nobody in the orchestra was older than 19.

Greyfriars Kirk

Okay, it took the players a while to feel at ease with the opener, Butterworth's languid *The Banks of Green Willow*, especially as its chamber-like scoring left so many of them exposed – but there were moments of pure poetry, and a beautifully soft sheen to the string playing. Peter Longworth's Commonwealth-inspired *Ludi* had been commissioned specially for NYOS's 35th anniversary concerts this summer. Its tricky hocketing rhythms and unusual effects made no concessions to the players' youthfulness, and the musicians duly responded with a sprightly, thoroughly convincing reading.

At 21, pianist Benjamin Grosvenor – the soloist in a muscular account of Franck's *Symphonic Variations* – is hardly any older than some of the orchestral musicians, and he gave a commanding performance, matching teeming detail with strength and power.

It was the concert's closer, though – Glazunov's seldom-heard *Fifth Symphony* – that showed what the orchestra was capable of, with a broad sweep to the spirited first movement, a witty, helter-skelter scherzo, and a brilliant finale in which brass and timpani really let rip. It's a neglected work, but there can have been few performances more persuasively enthusiastic than this.

(Seen on 16.07.14)