

NYOS Senior Orchestra 13-IV-2015

Perth Concert Hall,

Recently in Perth Concert Hall the Senior Orchestra of NYOS (National Youth Orchestras of Scotland) started on good form, but later was absolutely superb.

They began with Bartok's Hungarian Sketches. Not astringent or tough these are beautifully coloured works. Evening in the Village began with a mistily evocative clarinet and folkish flute then went on with outstanding clarity and warmth of strings. Bear's Dance was precisely ungainly, with excellent tuba. The third was Melody, nicely articulated violins and wind in open-air textures. The NYOS Senior Orchestra and their conductor James Lowe really scored in humour of A Bit Drunk: the illusion of stumbling, the "boorish" tuba, sentimentality, then the portentous end. They gave alert freshness to Swineherd's Dance, before the falling asleep then the final slam ending.

As a violinist of individuality and ability Daniel Rainey, himself a former NYOS Leader, joined for two Romantic favourites. In Chausson's Poème the soloist's commanding entry settled sight tuning and entry fudges in the opening tutti. His second entry had superb double-stopping. The Orchestra formed a backdrop to the soloist's soaring and musing, plus more strenuous workouts. Together they rose to a terrific sonic and emotional climax. Saint-Saëns' Havaïse began with sinuous swaying, with seamless legato the violin sweet, high on the e-string. Outstanding from Daniel Rainey were the legato, chromatic runs up, up, up and finally down.

If the first half was good, the second positively fizzed! Anna Clyne's <<rewind<< had a dry programme note. In performance NYOS and James Lowe gave this scherzo-like piece a reading of awesome dynamics, moto perpetuo strings of precision, sforzando percussion and menacing trombones. As far as I could tell the loudspeaker track only came in at the end with a few plasticity shearing sounds.

After the sustained calm of the beautiful clarinet playing of Ruaridh Bakke, James Lowe set a seethingly fast tempo for the opening movement of Sibelius' First Symphony: lancing string passages, vivid brass and horns, then mysterious oboe and woodwind, lush Romantic strings, a bardic trumpet and fantastic brass to finish. Covering the gamut again was the very narrative second movement. The Scherzo was marcato, brilliant and forceful. The Finale had again a tense and exciting narrative, with fiery rushing strings, which then became ardently toned, before a triumphant ascent. James Lowe led a magnificently exciting and rewarding performance of this epic work.

Ian Stuart-Hunter