

Scottish exports to China aren't all that commonplace, certainly not in a musical context, but there's one taking place that could cement musical relations between the countries for years to come. The National Youth Orchestra of Scotland take with them to the Far East an excellent musical pedigree, astute performance skills and youthful vivacity that will be China's gain for a three-concert tour. As a sort of farewell, NYOS performed a magnificent programme in Perth Concert Hall, a programme with a distinct Scottish twang.

Erik Chisholm's first piano concerto, *Piobaireachd*, abounds with the Scottish snap, bagpipe drones and ethereal atmospheric moments akin to a misty Highland mountain. The essential "Scottishness" extended to the keyboard, with Danny Driver executing an intense interpretation that was mirrored, along with some marvellous moments of lyricism, by conductor Rory Macdonald.

The concert had opened with a work that exploded into action, one that never fails to excite and one that showed off the scintillating, enthusiastic and exhilarating side of NYOS. Shostakovich's *Festive Overture* is a wonderful curtain raiser from the opening brass fanfare straight through to the helter-skelter finale and I don't think I've heard such a highly-charged and dynamic performance.

Rachmaninov's *Second Symphony* is a work that tests everyone to the full. Exposed solo passages and strength-sapping technical demands required all 112 players on the stage to be at their very best and I have to say the NYOS performance ticked every box. The *Adagio* was exactly as it should be, beautifully serene, and the final movement was a complete triumph.

I'm sure NYOS will come back from their tour more experienced. If they come back more proficient, that will take some doing.

Garry Fraser, Perth Courier