

NYOS Junior Orchestra

Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh

Five stars

I'VE never believed in exercising literalism in this star-award system we (and others) employ to append some sort of personal, however experienced, value judgement at the top of a review. Does its use imply that one gig with a five-star-review was, by definition, better than a completely different event which received "only" four stars? Of course it doesn't: everything is evaluated in its own right. And nor do we count wrong notes.

String that lot together, and what we had from the Junior Orchestra of the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland on Saturday was a phenomenal display of musicianship. I literally thought, on the night: "These musicians are between eight and 13 years old; what they are achieving here tonight, in a sold-out Greyfriars concert, where the buzz is electric, is genuinely outstanding."

Everything they did, guided and released by the charismatic New Zealand conductor Holly Mathieson, from MacCunn's Land of the Mountain and Flood to Gliere's little-known, gloriously-melodic Horn Concerto, came soaring off the page. Horn soloist Diana Sheach's playing of the Gliere was a wonder to hear. I don't know if it's a masterpiece, but she made it feel like one: what conviction.

The Juniors' playing of John Maxwell Geddes' Dances at Threave had such meat, lilt and grace in its various sections that my left foot was giving it laldy, while my grin was close to inane. The band revealed a bit more to Debussy's Marche ecossaise than some do, and their foot-stomping finale, In the Hall of the Mountain King, was a right thumper. A great night, every one of you: bravo; everyone in the orchestra should feel proud.

Michael Tumelty, The Herald Scotland, Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2015, Arts & Ents