

Music



Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra with Alison Balsom & Boris Giltburg in Plymouth (review)

29th March 2009

Brahms's Haydn Variations is a great work, but not one that really starts a concert off with a bang.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra conductor, Petri Sakari, coaxed a well-shaped performance from the orchestra, where the almost clinical nature of the acoustics accentuated the linear clarity and attention to detail, particularly in the final Passacaglia.

If this didn't quite raise the roof, then the rest of the evening certainly did.

Russian-born pianist, Boris Giltburg, gave a simply stunning virtuoso performance of Shostakovich's immensely difficult First Piano Concerto.

Unusually, the work is scored only for strings, and includes a solo trumpet part.

Here the BSO's outstanding string section, under the inspired leadership of Ruth Rogers, coped admirably with the bristling difficulties, as did Alison Balsom, pictured, in her equally demanding trumpet part.

Alison, who combines the looks of a top fashion model with the technique of one of the best brass players around today, effortlessly swapped the neoclassical world of Shostakovich for the sinuous sensuality of Piazzolla's Libertango, here finely supported by the orchestra's eminently sympathetic accompaniment.

Dvorak's Sixth Symphony isn't the composer's best-known, but Petri Sakari's superb reading made a strong case for its reappraisal, particularly in the fiery third-movement Furiant.

The programme wasn't overly popular, but everyone present enjoyed a wonderful display of top orchestral playing, which they will surely have to savour until such times as the BSO can return.

PHILIP R BUTTALL