

Music



REVIEW: Russell Watson

20th April 2011

The Voice is back, goes the media hype surrounding Russell Watson's latest UK tour. Russell himself says that, following his latest health setbacks, his voice seems to have gone from a V8 to a V12 in terms of 'engine' size.

Well, judging by his quite superb performance in front of a packed Pavilions audience, it's now turbo, if not super-charged, as well.

The choice of repertoire was just right, with an ideal mix of musicals, Italian love songs, classical numbers, a Sinatra set, old standards, and a generous bunch of encores which the standing ovation simply demanded.

Variety was there, too, in the delightful form of newly-discovered Gloucestershire youngster, Mary-Jess, who was particularly impressive in her take on Sarah Brightman's role in Phantom of the Opera's Say You Love Me duet, where hers and Russell's voice blended perfectly.

The National Symphony Orchestra, impeccably led by Lizzie Ball, under Robert Emery's assured baton, was on stunning form, too, with the lushly inventive arrangements adding much to the lavish, and well-controlled sound.

But the true appeal of the evening goes far beyond the music and the first-rate visual presentation. Russell still comes over as an immensely sincere lad from 'up north', with no artificial airs and graces, and a genuinely heartfelt appreciation of someone who has overcome life-threatening illness, with great courage and determination – a wonderful inspiration to us all.

PHILIP R BUTTALL

