

BIRMINGHAM POST THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2017

MUSIC REVIEWS

Orchestra of the Swan

Birmingham Town Hall



THIS country seems to have a tradition of producing great cellists, and among the latest of these is Laura van der Heijden, BBC Young Musician winner in 2012.

In this well-attended matinee, she gave us Tchaikovsky's Variations On A Rococo Theme, her virtuosity so effectively understated in the service of expressiveness.

Her wonderful on-loan Hill instrument radiates with maroon-coloured tones, and the orchestral timbres from the Orchestra of the Swan, not least the chattering woodwind refrain, complemented them well.

The fluid give-and-take between soloist and orchestra was confident, Webber's conducting mentorly attentive to van der Heijden. This was a lovely account of what must be admitted is not one of Tchaikovsky's masterpieces.

And the work is an obvious homage to Mozart, whose music framed this programme. Eine Kleine Nachtmusik had zingy outer movements, affectionately phrased, while the Romanze was given with an attention to detail and articulation which gave this often dismissed movement genuine status.

Finally we came to the awesome Symphony No.40, the G minor, which has so often plodded along with full symphonic forces doggedly mindful of its stature as one of the world's greatest symphonies. No plodding here: Webber's tempi were absolutely right, his clarity of texture refreshing, and the winds, not least the splendid horns, added detail we don't always hear.

Christopher Morley