

Reviews

MUSIC

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra & Martyn Brabbins

City Hall, Glasgow



On paper, it looked like an unconvincing combination: the classical elegance of Haydn; the jazzy wit of Ravel; the iconoclastic lyricism of Tippett. And there were moments in the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra's bracing concert when you found yourself wondering what any of these pieces had to do with each other. What brought them together, though – alongside the BBC SSO's committed, incisive playing – was the drive and vigour of visiting conductor Martyn Brabbins.

That drive and vigour were there in his elegantly sculpted Haydn *Le matin* Symphony – poised convincingly between the heft of a modern symphony orchestra and the brittle liveness of a period band, and showcasing the considerable solo talents of several BBC SSO players to marvellous effect.

They were there, too, in Brabbins' sleek, no-nonsense

accompaniment to French pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet's pleasingly hard-edged account of the Ravel G major Piano Concerto. Bavouzet had some wonderful pianistic tricks up his sleeve – a supple, singing right hand against a determined left, for example, or a machine gun-like precision in Ravel's intricate figurations that meant every note counted.

And they were there most of all in Tippett's First Symphony, the opener in Brabbins' two-season survey of all Tippett's symphonies with the BBC SSO, as rugged as it was shapely. With its uncompromisingly dense counterpoint, it's not an easy work to fall in love with immediately, but Brabbins drove his lean, muscular account forward with such bristling conviction that it swept away any doubts.

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Amy Macdonald

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Despite the vociferous appeals of the evening's most eager