

flamboyance-he surely has an anarchic streak – is genuine and compelling in the appropriate context. He teamed up with RSN0 principal cellist Aleksei Kiseliov in his own showpiece, Violoncellos, vibrez!, a tunefully inoffensive, ultimately pseudo-Glass tribute to his former teacher for cello duo and strings. And what an encore – Jimi Hendrix's Angel, sliced and diced with virtuosic panache. I'd have settled for these minus the Dvorak.

Sondergård turned things round in a second half featuring the feverish, enigmatic jubilation of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony. This was a potent meeting of minds, Sondergård building an electrifying line of communication between the searing notes on the page and their red hot realisation by the RSN0, now operating like a well-oiled machine on turbo boost. Pity the Dvorak was a car crash.

KEN WALTON

CLASSICAL

BBC SSO/Ilan Volkov,
Composer Focus:
Anthony Braxton

City Halls, Glasgow, 19 Nov 2016



It felt like Tectonics had come six months early – what with the seemingly indefatigable

Ilan Volkov on the podium, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra playing uncategorisable music that straddled avant-garde and free jazz, and a sizeable audience of young and old attracted by the prospect.

But unlike Volkov's no-holds-barred May weekend, this was a one-off concert devoted to US polymath Anthony Braxton and two of his pupils – and presenting no less than four premieres. Braxton's rugged, uncompromising and unapologetically cerebral music straddles jazz and avant-garde classical – he cites John Coltrane and Karl-



↑ **BBC SSO were conducted**
by Ilan Volkov

heinz Stockhausen as two formative influences. But it was the earlier American maverick Charles Ives that hovered behind much of the music being performed – whether in the thick, cacophonous climaxes of Braxton's tapestry-like Composition No. 27 for huge orchestra, or in the witty, Prince-inspired Uncle, Another Tale from Braxton's pupil Taylor Ho Bynum, with its collisions of popular tunes, which used three separate conductors to slide different sections of the orchestra slowly apart in their tempos.

Braxton's thoughtful double concerto Composition No. 63 – with Bynum on cornet and fellow Braxton pupil James Fei on saxes playing for all they were worth – made for a more overtly free-jazz conclusion. But it was Fei's own rather magical The Loudness of Single and Combined Sounds that stole the show, with its subtle, at times almost inaudible rippling, tolling sonorities. The BBC SSO players were on fine, committed form throughout, whether playing from a score or improvising, and Volkov gave precise, demanding direction, full of conviction.

DAVID KETTLE