

BBC SSO/Nicholas Carter

City Halls, Glasgow



For an afternoon offering, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra's heartrending concert under Australian conductor Nicholas Carter packed such an emotional punch that it left you drained for the evening ahead. That intensity began in the music itself, with two moving war-inspired (not that you'd necessarily know) works by Ravel and Vaughan Williams, separated by Barber's arch-Romantic Violin Concerto.

It took a while for Carter's performances to warm up to that level of emotional intensity, though. In Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin* – written in memory of friends who had perished in the First World War – he was the consummate craftsman, picking apart the composer's exquisite textures with expert care, but not necessarily grappling with the fragile emotional heart of this elegant, sophisticated music.

Vaughan Williams's transcendent Fifth Symphony appeared during the darkest days of the Second World War, but there were moments early on when Carter seemed intent on disregarding its almost hidden conflicts. But his searing slow movement suddenly cracked open to reveal the work's raw emotion, and his closing *Passacaglia* was a quietly devastating summation of what had gone before.

In between, young Russian violinist Valeriy Sokolov gave a bright, sharply articulated account of Barber's Violin Concerto, carefully paced and showcasing his impeccable technique – but it still felt a little cool. He gave his all, however, in a radiant, bristlingly athletic encore of Kreisler's *Recitativo and Scherzo*.

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