

MUSIC

BBC SSO & Javier Perianes

City Halls, Glasgow

★★★★

IF THOMAS Dausgaard and the BBC SSO's concert of Spanish-inspired music by Debussy, Ravel and Falla brought some Iberian sunshine to a drab March evening in Glasgow, it was the primal, unforgivingly bright light of the Mediterranean at noon. That was no bad thing, though, as Dausgaard threw aside any sense of soft-focus musical tourism and instead set about what felt like a forensic examination of these exotic, colourful works, sharply chiselled and hard-edged.

There were moments when his Debussy Images seemed almost too violent – the opening chords of *Ibéria* shuddered around City Halls – though he negotiated and balanced the composer's intricate, ever-changing textures expertly, and with buoyant, restless energy. Likewise, the guitar-strum chords of Falla's *Three-Cornered Hat Dances* had a striking rawness and bite, and his Ravel *Alborada del gracioso* that opened the concert's second half generated an increasingly desperate, manic energy, as if its eponymous jester were snarling through a rictus grin.

Things calmed down for Spanish pianist Javier Perianes's fluid account of his compatriot Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, despatched with an almost casual nonchalance, his tumbling cascades of notes impeccably articulated, his more assertive passages muscular and fiery. Dausgaard closed, however, with an increasingly delirious performance of Ravel *Rapsodie espagnole*, its obsessive repetitions sounding increasingly claustrophobic. Though perhaps slightly monochrome

OPERA

Scottish Opera: *Katyá Kabanová*

Theatre Royal, Glasgow

★★★

THERE'S a chilling paradox expressed in Stephen Lawless's new production of Janacek's *Katyá Kabanová* which informs both its strengths and its weaknesses: it's the sense that this is a tale that changes everything, yet changes nothing.

As the action gets going, the grey inhabitants of an isolated Soviet town (the original Russian setting is advanced to the 1970s) scuttle soullessly across an enormous steel bridge, like figures in a Lowry painting. Underneath, amid the reeds and mudflats of the River Volga, the human tragedy of the *Katyá* (Laura Wilde) unfolds. Then, at the climax of the piece, a link is inferred as *Katyá* hurls herself from the bridge's rusting girders and into the waters

in its musical theme, it was a thrilling evening nonetheless: Dausgaard clearly has a natural passion and empathy for this music, and the SSO crackled with electricity. But in the end, it was the music's darkness and grotesquerie that stuck in the mind.

DAVID KETTLE

MUSIC

Scottish Ensemble, *Continental Drift*

Summerhall, Edinburgh

★★★★

IN THESE kind of cross-cultural, east-meets-west performances, there's always a balance to be struck between education and simple entertainment. In