

## CLASSICAL

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### **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/ John Wilson, Benjamin Appel**

City Halls, Glasgow



Young British conductor John Wilson earned his stripes with his authentically colourful accounts of classic Hollywood film scores, with his own John Wilson Orchestra. But he's an equally fine conductor of more traditional classical repertoire, as his bracing afternoon concert with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra ably demonstrated.

Not that there was much "traditional" about the gargantuan, kaleidoscopic Symphony in F sharp (surely receiving its Scottish premiere) by Korngold, the Austrian child prodigy who fled Vienna when the Nazis arrived, became one of Hollywood's most successful screen composers, and wrote this

often overwhelming symphony on his return to his homeland in 1950. There were nods to Dukas, Shostakovich, Debussy, Weill and plenty more in this demanding score – which sounded, not surprisingly, a bit like the soundtrack to an imaginary film. But Wilson carried it all off magnificently in a sharply defined, thoroughly convincing performance that propelled you breathlessly from one vivid scene to the next, conveyed with bristling commitment by the BBC SSO players.

Before the interval, Wilson had opened with a lustrous Mendelssohn Hebrides Overture – maybe a little on the slow side, but that only allowed you to wallow in his exquisitely balanced watery imagery. Austrian baritone Benjamin Appel followed with exceptionally beautiful, sensitive accounts of Schubert songs orchestrated by Reger, Liszt and others – his traversal of the famous horror story of Der Erlkönig was especially chilling. It was a shame, then, that Wilson's rather enthusiastic accompaniment some-

times simply drowned him out. Still, it was a challenging but deeply rewarding concert.

**DAVID KETTLE**

## MUSIC

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### **Elvis Costello**

Festival Theatre, Edinburgh



For those fans investing in a slice of late-period Elvis Costello live action – and there were many of them here – it's an all-or-nothing experience. Anyone hoping for a cheery, nostalgic run-through of the wide range of punk-pop hits Costello wrote around 1980 will be... well, not disappointed, because Costello is an astute curator of his own legacy and most of them appeared here.

Yet every other Costello rock appeared too: the latterday rock anthropologist delving into genres from Creole blues to Southern gospel and Irish folk; the capable crooner who duetted with Burt Bacharach; and Declan MacManus, his real identity, Irish-Liverpudlian son of music hall