

MUSIC

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Matthias Pintscher

City Halls, Glasgow



It was a typically intelligent, interconnected programme that Matthias Pintscher brought for his all-contemporary Hear and Now concert with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. Not only in its distinctive central European slant – with composers from Hungary, Austria and Germany – but also in the clocks and clouds of Ligeti's febrile San Francisco Polyphony fascinatingly reflected in the multi-layered textures of Olga Neuwirth's playful Masao/Clocks without Hands, getting its UK premiere. And in way that the witty subversion of historical expectations in both of those pieces found its own reflections in Henze's gruff, muscular Seventh Symphony.

But what also united the three performances was Pintscher's astonishingly sensu-

al, full-blooded accounts, full of broad, sweeping gestures that drew immaculate playing from the orchestra. His conducting was so demonstrative, in fact, that his baton went flying right into the second violins near the start of the Neuwirth piece.

Neuwirth's piece was the highlight of the evening, in fact – a dream-like, almost hallucinatory creation drawing on memories of her grandfather and his Austro-Hungarian heritage, as well as the expansive Danube, that in musical terms wove oom-pah brass bands and stratospheric gypsy fiddling into its dense orchestral tapestry. It was thoroughly entertaining stuff – not quite tongue-in-cheek, but self-aware all the same, and given a performance that crackled with conviction. Beforehand, Pintscher's Ligeti was just as wonderfully tactile, although the Henze Symphony felt a bit four-square and straight-laced in comparison – despite its roof-raising climaxes. It was a gripping evening of discoveries nonetheless.

DAVID KETTLE