

**BBC SSO/Volkov, Weill:
The Seven Deadly Sins**

City Halls, Glasgow

★★★★

With mention of Brecht and Weill, raunchy 1930s cabaret, and sin in the title, you might have expected something sleazy, if not downright dirty.

What conductor Ilan Volkov delivered, however, in his performance of that great duo's "ballet chanté" *The Seven Deadly Sins*, with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, must have been the most squeaky-clean account heard in a while – immaculately balanced, tripping along amiably, seldom stormy or suggestive.

It meant that Brecht's bitterly satirical anti-capitalist message – in which sins are subverted to become virtues in an all-consuming quest for profit – came through loud and clear.

But there was also the sense that in being so well-behaved, the performance was – well, missing something.

It's not an easy piece at the best of times – more agit-prop than opera, and with characters more symbolic than truly human.

And Canadian soprano Measha Brueggergosman, charismatic and full of attitude though she was singing twin sisters Anna I and Anna II, struggled to project over Volkov's bright, vibrant orchestral sounds with her beautifully rounded, honeyed operatic tone.

A snarl or two might have done the trick – although the all-male quartet from Syner-

The latest BBC Scotland comedy to be turned into a big stage show, after *Still Game* and *Burnistoun*, and prior to Rab C Nesbitt's adaptation at the Hydro, *Gary: Tank Commander*, is disappointingly, the least of the transfers so far. Greg McHugh has performed panto and his perma-tanned, endearingly daft squaddie is easily big and glowingly camp enough to command an arena. Featuring production values that arguably surpass the television series, which shot its Iraqi and Afghan bases in Scottish quarries, *Mission Quite Possible* lights up the exterior of the Hydro in military green and brown and serves Gary's beloved cheesy pasta in the foyer's foodstands. Most impressively, it opens with a helicopter scene to rival *Miss Saigon*'s.

Otherwise though, McHugh and director Simon Hynd have

gy Vocals fared better as the twins' despairing family.

But it was a typically enterprising, provocative evening from Volkov nonetheless, and two real discoveries came in the first half, in a pair of exquisitely strange short works by Ferruccio Busoni, Weill's teacher, balanced precariously between opulence and ominousness, and given astonishingly sensitive, utterly committed performances by Volkov.

They made a fascinatingly languid counterpart to Weill's acidic musical brittleness, all delivered with admirable care and precision.

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