

Reviews

MUSIC

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/John Wilson

City Halls, Glasgow



YOU'VE got to admire the sheer chutzpah of conductor John Wilson and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra – not to mention their apparently unflagging energy and stamina.

Just one of Respighi's Roman Trilogy usually provides more than enough Technicolor excess for a single concert. To attempt all three of these exuberant, overwhelming, garish, noisy pieces – Roman Festivals, Fountains of Rome and Pines of Rome – is an astonishing undertaking, and one of perhaps questionable wisdom. It's demanding enough for the players. For listeners, the effect is like going on a switchback rollercoaster again and again and again – wildly exciting, certainly, but ultimately a bit nausea-inducing too.

Nevertheless, these were terrifically assured, convincing accounts under Wilson's determined direction. Shapes



↑ The BBC SSO were on magnificent form under John Wilson

and textures stood out in high definition and high contrast, and his shaping of the pieces' big architecture – especially in the monumental closing Pines of the Appian Way – was expertly done.

Despite his tight control, however, Wilson could let rip to thrillingly raw, rowdy effect – in Respighi's depiction of the Roman circus, for instance, or the unbridled, cacophonous joy of Epiphany celebrations. By way of contrast, his Foun-

tains of Rome stood out for its focus and its touching delicacy, with a beautifully judged slow fade in its elegiac close.

The BBC SSO players were on magnificent form, too – raucous and restrained by turns, alive to Wilson's demands, and just as adept and nimble in the miniatures by Donizetti and Puccini that formed the concert's brief first half. But all that sonic excess made you long for some mind-cleansing Bach.

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