

## **MUSIC**

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### **Gewandhausorchester Leipzig 1**

Usher Hall, Edinburgh



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It almost felt a bit of a tease. One of the world's truly finest and most historic orchestras was in town for two concerts, and for the first half of the first of them, all we got were 13 string players and harpsichord.

It was a bold choice by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra to open with Bach's E minor Violin Concerto – the band's own history stretches right back to the great Baroque composer's time, but we're now more used to hearing period-instrument ensembles that have made that kind of repertoire their own. If this was a kind of reappropriation, or an assertion of today's more relaxed attitudes, it worked brilliantly: the players were fleet-

footed in Bach's tripping figurations, with a judicious bit of vibrato in the poignant slow movement, and a noble, burnished sophistication to their sound that would only go on to grow in the concert's second half. Soloist Julian Rachlin gave a determined, strongly defined performance that was a little on the deliberate side at times, with a raw edge to some of his more demonstrative passagework, but it was an account that matched period sympathies with an older tradition of Bach playing.

But it was after the interval that things really let rip, when 89-year-old Herbert Blomstedt conducted a monumental account of Bruckner's equally monumental Fifth Symphony. With their astonishingly golden, rounded, blended string sound, blazing brass and nimble, soloistic wind, the Leipzigers showed many other ensembles what an orchestra should really sound like.

**DAVID KETTLE**