

## **MUSIC**

### **Llŷr Williams**

The Queen's Hall

★★★★

It was a programme of high fantasy and vivid storytelling which incisive Welsh pianist Llŷr Williams offered for his International Festival recital. He's a technical wonder, with thrilling pianistic abilities and an impeccable, high-definition clarity to all he

plays. But this repertoire was crying out for a little more unbuttoned fantasy.

Williams had put together a convincing and adventurous selection from Grieg's Lyric Pieces, from a surprisingly muscular Bell-Ringing with its impressionistic chains of chords, to a sublime Evening in the Mountains with a beautifully sculpted unadorned melody. But likewise, his March of the Trolls seemed rather too

jolly to exude much menace, and was there really enough unbridled joy in his tightly controlled Homeward?

In the second half came Liszt's showy transcriptions of Wagner opera excerpts, and Williams revelled in their finger-twisting fireworks. Wagner's Sonata for the Album of Frau MW – an original piano rarity from the great composer – was a restrained affair, though Williams made the most of

its slow-moving harmonies and unmistakably noble melodies.

It fell to Williams's encore – Ravel's La Vallée des Cloches – to showcase his spectacular talents to best effect. He teased apart Ravel's layers of chiming bells expertly and balanced the piece's rich harmonies exquisitely. It was a magnificent conclusion to a vibrant if not always entirely convincing concert.

**DAVID KETTLE**