

MUSIC

Mark Padmore & Kristian Bezuidenhout

Queen's Hall



London-born tenor Mark Padmore's superb technical accomplishment almost goes without saying, and it was well in evidence in his characteristically intelligent Edinburgh International Festival recital, which kicked off with Beethoven establishing the song cycle as a genre in *An Die Ferne Geliebte*, and ended with Schubert's final example of the form – *Schwanengesang*, which isn't even a real song cycle at all.

But what made the recital so special was Padmore's remarkable emotional subtlety and his revelatory sense of storytelling – time and again he'd sing as if he were discovering a song's meaning, along with his listeners, as he sang through it.

He kept a lid on the intensity for the most part, even occasionally exchanging the odd smile with the audience,



↑ Tenor Mark Padmore, whose subtle performance was enhanced by the sensitive accompaniment of pianist Kristian Bezuidenhout

but power and turmoil were always simmering under the surface, exploding through in a gripping *Der Atlas* and *Aufenthalt* in *Schwanengesang*.

And he dared to be simple in that cycle's two most famous songs, with an elegant, mellifluous *Ständchen* and a wonderfully direct *Der Doppelgänger* that grew and grew until its full existential

horror was finally revealed. Playing a beautifully sonorous US fortepiano modelled after Conrad Graf, South African keyboard player Kristian Bezuidenhout was surprisingly unobtrusive, but always highly sensitive and powerful when he needed to be – alongside Padmore's subtle artistry, a model combination.

DAVID KETTLE