

MUSIC

Royal Scottish National Orchestra/Lahav Shani, Adrian Wilson (oboe)

Usher Hall, Edinburgh



The RSNO is fast becoming an orchestra of soloists. Following principal flautist Katherine Bryan's two-concerto concert a month back, as well as a clutch of orchestral principals stepping out front as concerto soloists last season, it was the turn of principal oboist Adrian Wilson to take the spotlight, in Vaughan Williams's seldom heard but touchingly poignant Oboe Concerto.

Wilson gave rather a reserved, decidedly unshowy account, focusing attention squarely on the telling subtleties of his playing – his beautifully rounded sound, tonal flexibility, unforced phrase shaping. But maybe with a little more fantasy and flamboyance, he could have delved even more deeply into the music's transcendental visions.

His orchestral colleagues

gave sharply defined support under young Israeli visiting conductor Lahav Shani, who had summoned a determined, demonstrative Dvořák Carnival Overture with his sometimes brusque gestures – rousing, if also a little raucous. It's tempting for any conductor to want to stamp their mark on Beethoven's epoch-defining Eroica Symphony, but for Shani, that seemed to involve ponderous tempos, a frustrating smoothing over of Beethoven's dramatic contrasts, and an almost complete absence of wit, grit or swagger. It was a pleasant, well-meaning account, unencumbered by period considerations, but where was the energy, the revolutionary zeal? Instead, Shani made parts of the first movement sound like note-spinning, and took the second movement's funeral march so glacially slowly that it became a hesitant lament – with sometimes ragged entries from apparently confused orchestral players. With so much thought and energy devoted

to the Symphony over the centuries, Shani's reading just wasn't convincing.

DAVID KETTLE

MUSIC

Scottish Chamber Orchestra

City Halls, Glasgow



One true test of a living composer is how much he can avoid living on past glories. In his late 50s, James MacMillan's productivity has increased to the point of near mass production. There's evidence all around us this month, where assorted concerts by the SCO, BBCSSO and RCS students include World and Scottish Premieres of his latest music.

Friday's SCO programme, under Andrew Manze, opened this coincidental Mac-Fest with a powerfully moving re-composition of his 2007 Horn Quintet, entitled Concertino for Horn and Strings. The original music remains core, but with the horn soloist (the brilliantly