

shwin's Porgy and Bess, right from the opening Buzzard Song, then languidly drawing out the melody in Bess, You Is My Woman Now, orchestra gliding behind. The spiritual Prayer was spare but increasingly impassioned, while There's a Boat Leaving brought things to a powerful climax, trumpet shrilling against jubilant brass chorusing.

These were timeless jazz classics, here sounding utterly of the moment.

JIM GILCHRIST

MUSIC

Royal Scottish National Orchestra/Nikolaj Znaider, Sergej Krylov (violin)

Usher Hall, Edinburgh



It was quite a coup for the

RSNO to get starry international violin soloist Nikolaj Znaider to join them for a season concert – even if it was on the podium as conductor, rather than on his customary fiddle. In fairness, he's been developing that second strand to his performing career for about a decade now, and he seemed in his element – perhaps not surprisingly – directing the evening's centrepiece, Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto.

Znaider found just the right balance of sarcastic wit and grotesquerie for Prokofiev's rather arch score, his orchestral textures sharply delineated with impeccable craftsmanship. The star of the Concerto, however, was Moscow-born soloist Sergej Krylov, who delivered it with such a sense of gruff, fiery truculence



↑ Nikolaj Znaider performed at the Usher Hall in Edinburgh

that he simply swept aside any doubts. He projected his line forcefully, and enunciated his phrases with chiselled clarity, even if it felt a bit like he

was playing the whole thing through gritted teeth, even a rictus grin. Still, the breathtaking technique he showed in his encore of Paganini's

24th Caprice – what else? – brought the house down with its staggering pyrotechnics.

Znaider brought the same impeccable craftsmanship to his Tchaikovsky Pathétique Symphony after the interval, and it was nothing if not a thoughtful, elegant account – even if it often fell frustratingly short on the raw emotional turmoil that the Symphony surely needs. Where was the trauma, and the tragedy? Znaider's nonchalant reading at times sounded bizarrely like Haydn, and the RSNO players didn't seem all that convinced either. His brief Scriabin *Rêverie* made a captivating if strangely low-key opener.

DAVID KETTLE