

Reviews

MUSIC

Scottish Chamber Orchestra/Nicolas Altstaedt

Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

★★★★

FROM the opening notes of Beethoven's Coriolan Overture – which conductor Nicolas Altstaedt ripped out of the SCO musicians, feet slamming on the stage and fists furiously snatching at the air in front of him – it was clear this was going to be a concert of blistering intensity, and so it proved. And while at times Altstaedt's direction felt a little over-emphatic, it was hard not to be swept up in his unshakeable conviction and his raw sense of purpose.

Indeed, rawness (rather than refinement) was what characterised his Coriolan Overture overall. The SCO might have sounded more pristine on other occasions, but seldom can they have been more attention-grabbing, from the Overture's restless, churning figurations to the resignation of its bleak conclusion. Altstaedt returned in his better-known role as cello soloist in Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto – not the

most straightforward work to lead from the soloist's seat, it has to be said, though Altstaedt pulled it off with aplomb, leaping to his feet on occasions to cue and encourage. He gave a brisk, nervy account, one that stressed the Concerto's conflicts and grotesqueries over its dark wit, but it was all the more provocative for that, and his playing – especially in the movement-long solo cadenza – was muscular yet nimble, and expertly judged in its shaping and flow. The microtonal meanderings of Ligeti's Rami-fications provided an intensely focused but unexpectedly cool interlude, before the heat returned in a volatile Schubert Tragic Symphony, always on the verge of bursting into flames. Hot-headed playing, certainly, but all the more compelling for that.

DAVID KETTLE

COMEDY

Adam Kay – This is Going to Hurt (Secret Diaries of A Junior Doctor)

King's Theatre, Glasgow

★★★★

MORE theatrical and compelling than the vast majority