

**Scottish Chamber Orchestra/Maxim Emelyanychev, Josef Špaček (violin)**

Usher Hall, Edinburgh

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"Is he any good?" my neighbour asked worriedly. "I really wanted to see Tetzlaff." He was referring to violinist Josef Špaček, standing in for an indisposed Christian Tetzlaff as just one of two replacement performers in the SCO's vivid, energetic concert. Špaček might be a less starry name than Tetzlaff, but he clearly has a musical personality every bit as strong and distinctive – and yes, in a beautifully lyrical, sharply defined Violin Concerto by his compatriot Dvořák, he was very good indeed.

Špaček took the outer movements at quite a lick, but he was almost nonchalant about the Concerto's showy pyrotechnics. He summoned a remarkable range of colours from his strongly projected Guarneri "del Gesù" instrument, and he delivered an account of the folksy finale so buoyant and translucent that it was hard not to be swept up in its enthusiasm. His encore – the finale from Ysaÿe's Second Sonata – only served to demonstrate further his astonishing articulation and athleticism.

The modestly enlarged SCO was on fiery form, too, under the evening's second replacement musician – young Rus-

the border town of El Paso in the late 1990s, bringing a riot of rage, taut energy and a succession of relentlessly gymnastic stage shows to what had become a fairly comfortable alternative rock scene. They made it as far as Later With Jools Holland, laying waste to the studio while Robbie Williams looked on like a man thoroughly upstaged, before splitting up just as their star was ascending.

Since then, no band has quite filled the void they left, so there was nothing for it but to reform, older but only marginally less athletic. Frontman Cedric Bixler may no longer leap from speaker stacks but mic leads were there to be whipped and bass drums to bounce off as his compadres

sian conductor Maxim Emelyanychev, standing in for an indisposed Robin Ticciati. Emelyanychev galvanised the musicians with his urgent, demanding gestures – things sometimes seemed a little micro-managed, but there was no shortage of meaningful detail. And as a result, the 'heavenly lengths' of Schubert's epic Great C major Symphony unfolded with smooth, elegant inevitability, Emelyanychev constantly balancing surface charm and vigour with a far darker, more manic undertow – not least in the towering cumulative energy of his propulsive finale. Two lesser-known artists, maybe, but they provided penetrating visions nonetheless.

**DAVID KETTLE**