

evocation of hard-won maturity, ringing with a sense of internal and external battles fought and won; more Woody Guthrie than Bob Dylan. His songs are steeped in classic and contemporary Americana, from *The Running Shoes* of New York to the a cappella *Moonshiner*, which was somewhat annoyingly accompanied by just one noisy audience member.

His voice soared into falsetto amid *Like the Wheel*, was accompanied by his own rudimentary piano – he's still learning, apparently – on *Little Nowhere Towns*, and bore revelatory power on *Waiting for My Ghost*. Over two hours it was a somewhat one-note show, but that note was beautifully struck.

DAVID POLLOCK

MUSIC

Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Pekka Kuusisto

Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

★★★★

That this was the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's first season concert featuring Lon-



↑ Violinist Pekka Kuusisto has a huge musical personality

don-born, Edinburgh-educated, New York-based Anna Clyne as associate composer almost overshadowed the fact that it was the remarkable Finnish violinist/conductor Pekka Kuusisto's second as featured artist. No concert featuring Kuusisto can fail to convey his huge musical personality, though, and with the SCO it was there in abundance. His opening Beethoven *Creatures of Prometheus Overture* was rugged and gutsy, directed with vigour from the vio-

lin, and he injected a similar vigour and vim into Mozart's lightweight but charming *K136 Divertimento*. To close, his Haydn "Il distratto" Symphony was simply superb – brisk, biting, boldly characterised, and with its copious musical jokes (a sudden spate of tuning up, or violins seeming to forget why they were there) played deliciously straight, and as a result genuinely funny.

"Il distratto" provided the inspiration for Clyne's new work, *Sound and Fury*, along with Shakespeare's *Macbeth* – an odd juxtaposition of sources, perhaps, and one reflected in a strangely mixed piece, even if it was faultlessly fluent and elegantly crafted. Clyne knows how to spin a musical argument, and how to lead the listening through her restlessly changing textures, though including a recording of Ian McKellen reading *Macbeth's* famous "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow" soliloquy was less convincing: Clyne's music seemed simply too lively and jolly for the emptiness and desolation of the words. Her two-violin concerto *Prince of Clouds* made a big impact, however, with Kuusisto and SCO leader Benjamin Marquise Gilmore superbly matched in its austere, Pärt-like ruminations.

DAVID KETTLE

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