

Reviews

MUSIC

The SCO, with Clemens Schuldt & Maximiliano Martín

Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

★★★

It had all started so well. Brilliantly, in fact, as young German conductor Clemens Schuldt directed the SCO in a truly exceptional Stravinsky *Pulcinella* – crisp, driven, richly textured, and giving so many of the orchestra's musicians the chance to shine as soloists. And shine they did – notably leader Stephanie Gonley in some beautifully shaped solos, and principal bassist Nikita Naumov, out front in a concertante quintet of soloists, and gloriously flamboyant in a heavy-footed duet with trombonist Duncan Wilson. Schuldt had an astute command of texture and mood, too, gliding gracefully between Stravinsky's arch Classical pastiche and more piquant dissonances – it felt wonderfully cubist, like the first post-modern score, a playfully ironic recasting of the past, and working to a joyous, helter-skelter climax.

And then – well, things went in a different direction. Schuldt

seemed somewhat detached directing the world premiere of Lyell Cresswell's dark new clarinet concerto *Llanto*, unwilling to play up its bleakness and eruptions of rage. But it was SCO principal clarinetist Maximiliano Martín in the spotlight, and he gave an astonishingly nuanced, subtle account, finding remarkable tonal variety even in just a few subterranean notes in Cresswell's brooding opening, and dispatching the work's frenzied syncopated dances with spitting fury. But for such an uncompromising creation – a wail of distress at the death of a friend – it needed stronger advocacy than Schuldt's.

As did the concert's closer, Schubert's 'Tragic' Symphony. There were moments when it crackled with energy, but also stretches that felt rather flat. It was a strangely workaday ending to a concert that had begun so spectacularly.

DAVID KETTLE

COMEDY

Ricky Gervais: Humanity

Clyde Auditorium, Glasgow

★★★★

Ricky Gervais caused a minor media stir recently, when a