

out, is absolutely irresistible, conjuring up that special zone of fun, play, and magic that children often enter with their grandparents.

And when, at the end, the show dissolves into a jolly participatory tea-party involving knitted cupcakes and silly hats, the joy of the toddlers in the audience is as unconfined as their dance moves, as Gowen Calder's affable granny invites them to join in a last celebratory tea-dance.

**JOYCE MCMILLAN**

Further performances today and 20-21 January

## **MUSIC**

### **Scottish Chamber Orchestra/Robin Ticciati**

Queen's Hall, Edinburgh

★★★★☆

"This concert ranges widely" went the SCO's own description of its concert. With music from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries taking in all the big musical styles, plus a couple of complementary Czech works thrown in, that felt like rather an understatement. There was a risk, in fact, that the evening might have ended up more like the first part of its "Chaos and Creation" title than the second.

It was indeed risky, unconventional programming, but it paid off magnificently, not only allowing the SCO players and conductor Robin Ticciati to show their exceptional mettle across a number of incarnations—from exuberant, full-blown period band, complete with a rippling continuo trio of harpsichord, theorbo and guitar, to rich, luscious, late-Romantic ensemble—but also setting themes and ideas skittering between the various contrasting pieces.

Ticciati ended up jiving arm-in-arm with his players in a wonderfully spirited account of Rebel's *Les élémens*, a flamboyant pictorial evocation of the creation from the high Baroque, complete with chaotic dissonances and chirruping birdsong. Its Biblical subtext was echoed in Dvořák's *Biblical Songs*, given a restrained but beautifully nuanced reading by Karen Cargill, captivating and full of simmering power.

Dvořák's Czech counterpart was Martinů, whose rarely heard *Rhapsody-Concerto* got a strongly defined, nimble account from SCO principal viola Jane Atkins, from bucolic idyll through to restless questing, and Ticciati closed with a punchy, sparkling Haydn "Miracle" Symphony. It was an evening of contrasts and connections, full of supple, thoughtful, invigorating music making.

**DAVID KETTLE**