

MUSIC**Seong-Jin Cho**

Queen's Hall

★★★★

There were always going to be high expectations for the EIF debut of South Korean Seong-Jin Cho, winner of Warsaw's Chopin Competition in 2015. It revealed a singular artist, sometimes contrary, seldom out simply to please, but possessed of a rare focus and intensity.

As if out to display his versatility, Cho opened with two sonatas from either ends of Beethoven's career. His *Pathétique* was so fast at times that decorations and details were lost, and he had a liking for rather hammered basslines, too, even if his chord balances and radiant way with inner lines were exquisite.

The more expansive landscapes of Beethoven's Op. 109 Sonata provided a broader canvas for his pianism – not least his astonishing technical command. He also had marvellous control of mood and texture, especially in vividly characterised variations in its visionary closing movement.

Seong-Jin Cho:
command of both
mood and texture



That vivid characterisation continued after the interval in resonant accounts of Chopin's four Ballades, although, as with the Beethoven, there was also the sense of occupying the moment rather than conveying its role in the music's overall architecture.

A fascinating debut from a thought-provoking young artist nonetheless, a figure with an unusually intelligent, individualistic pianistic vision.

DAVID KETTLE**MUSIC****Schubertiade**

St Cecilia's Hall

★★★

The silken voice of tenor Julian Prégardien plus an unusual line-up of early music instruments – guitar, flute and baryton – cast some of Schubert's best-loved songs in a new light. Prégardien interspersed the music with readings describing the Schubertiades, giving a good