

## February 2013 – York Barbican Concert Review

Sometimes it takes a visitor to remind us of the treasures we fortunate York-dwellers may take for granted. An overseas guest remarked after Saturday's concert that she had difficulty believing that York Guildhall Orchestra was not a permanent professional ensemble.

She was right. A generous evening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Elgar's Cello Concerto and two overtures found the orchestra under Simon Wright close to the top of its form.

Tchaikovsky's Romeo & Juliet fantasy overture enjoyed a bumpy start. But with the exciting string unison we knew something special was in the offing; the woodwind choir was equally comfortable later.

Jamie Walton was the scrupulous soloist in the Elgar. Not for him the flashy bow and swaying torso of some virtuosos: much to his credit, this was about the music. He kept his early powder dry, preserving a sense of the elegiac even through the second movement's edgy agitation. His lack of sentimentality made the Adagio all the more touching. Even the finale's fireworks were restrained, with melancholy undercurrents. It was an intelligent, intriguing account, delicately supported by Wright.

Wagner's overture to Rienzi gave the splendid lower brass a chance to shine, with contrabassoon and tuba standing in for serpent and ophicleide. Beethoven's Fifth began in a rush, verging on the ragged.

But cool returned in the nicely balanced Andante. A blend of the jocular and the mysterious in the scherzo segued neatly into a stirring finish, rhythmically supercharged.

York Guildhall Orchestra is a treasure indeed.

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