

MARIO BRUNELLO

LIVERPOOL

LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC MICHAL NESTEROWICZ

3 & 4 OCTOBER 2012

Review **DVORAK DELIGHTS**
RLPO



by
Catherine
Jones

ORCHESTRAS perhaps inevitably take on a little of the persona of their conductor.

Since Vasily Petrenko arrived six years ago, a touch of Russian muscularity has been added to the RLPO's DNA.

It jostles there with an expressive Mittel-European streak, a remnant of the days of Libor Pešek.

And while Petrenko is on conducting duties in California, it's a return to the Czech Republic at Hope Street this week with an all-Dvorak programme, conducted by rising Polish maestro Michal Nesterowicz.

I suspect we're going to see an increasing number of ambitious young conductors at the Phil as 2015 and the end of Petrenko's (current) contract looms.

And initial impressions suggest the rangy, lupine Nesterowicz is worth closer scrutiny.

The 38-year-old's conducting style appears outwardly rather workmanlike, a straight up-down

beat punctuated with extravagant silent movie gesturing.

But despite last night's less than propitious surroundings – a half-full hall on a wet Wednesday – he delivered the goods with a flourish, starting with a bright and brisk Carnival Overture and concluding with a robust and vigorous (including an adagio verging on allegretto) Seventh Symphony.

The Phil embraced the radiance and passion of the structurally ambitious piece, generating a lovely contrast between the romance of the adagio and the raw power of the closing allegro.

There was good work, as there was all night in fact, from clarinetist Amanda Burvill and flautist Fiona Paterson in particular.

Sandwiched between glitzy overture and handsome symphony, Mario Brunello delivered a richly textured cello concerto.

The Italian plays a rare Maggini instrument – dating back to the 1600s – which has a distinctive contralto burr to it.

He made the technically challenging piece, bristling with octaves and double stops, appear effortless, and conjured a lovely plaintive yearning through a central movement somehow simultaneously delicate and robust.

It wasn't all perfect. There was a glitch in the accompaniment at the beginning of the final movement, which necessitated a swift re-start, and there were moments where the Phil threatened to overwhelm the soloist.

But it was good enough for Brunello to return for not one but two encores, including a haunting Armenian folk tune.

8/10 Czech it out