

Music review: RSNO, Glasgow  
Royal Concert Hall

April 2017      28<sup>th</sup>      Edinburgh  
                         29      Glasgow  
                         30      Aberdeen



Sergej Krylov

Music

RSNO

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall

Rosie Davies

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THE AUDITORIUM was packed for one of the RSNO's last concerts of its 16-17 season, a grand sweep of Russian works culminating in Tchaikovsky's final symphony. Its almost crushing emotional intensity is matched by the tantalising backstory - premiered just a week before the composer's mysterious death, it became enshrouded by all sorts of opportunistic hypotheses; was it a veiled suicide note? An intentional farewell symphony?

Whatever the truth, one of its biggest performance challenges is in not slipping from high Romance into cloying melodrama. The other, which applies to both the Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev's second violin concerto which preceded it this evening, is delivering something that glues together, both shifting as they do between moods and textures, and sometimes in disparate chunks.

It was done very well in the Prokofiev, with Moscow-born violinist **Sergej Krylov's** fiercely consistent solo line acting as a guiding thread between the three movements. Jumping straight in before the audience had even stopped clapping, Krylov set the pace for a performance which didn't stop for air, playing with a subtle, just-off-centre rubato which highlighted the work's frantic, unsettling undercurrent rather than its nods towards a Soviet-pleasing 'new simplicity'.

Tchaikovsky's symphony worked similarly well as a blasting and powerful whole, presented in broad brushstrokes, impressive for its hefty brass-sodden climaxes rather than its more delicate idiosyncrasies. There were moments where the approach felt a little too heavy, subtle nuances swallowed up by the overall feeling - but, with a work like this, you can't help be swept away by that power. As for melodrama - as a high-profile violinist himself, guest conductor Nikolaj Znaider knows how to work strings, using them in muscular fleets which blasted away any accusations of over-sugaring.