

FIRST NIGHT

Concert review: LPO/ Petrenko at the Royal Festival Hall

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★★★★☆

Considering the temperature outside — it felt like minus 25C — this London Philharmonic Orchestra concert needed something other than Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* Suite to start us off and banish that icicle feeling. With Vasily Petrenko at the helm and some pungent phrasings from the brass, it certainly sounded bouncy enough; light as a feather too. Yet tidy instrumentation and the 18th-century poise lingering inside Stravinsky's reworkings of Pergolesi (or composers thereabouts) couldn't help but make for a rather cool experience.

Everything changed with the arrival of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto and its soloist, **Sergej Krylov**. From his first note he transfixed the house, fiddling with the kind of effortless lyricism, liquid flow and mercurial tones that distinguish the best violinists playing at their best. This concerto may be prolix and garrulous, but with Krylov burning through its themes and skittering at impossible speed through the finale's double-stopped parade, even this Tchaikovsky sceptic was won over.

I was most impressed by Krylov's multiple colours and dynamic shifts, which were all blended into long lines of singing rapture stretching into the horizon. Petrenko and the orchestra added wonders of their own with darkly glowing textures and exquisitely sonorous woodwind playing at the start of the second movement. Krylov's encore of Paganini's 24th Caprice was the cherry on the cake.

For all the sultry splendour of Ravel's ballet *Daphnis and Chloe* — presented here in its streamlined form as two concert suites — the second half couldn't help seem a slight disappointment after Tchaikovsky's furnace. Yet there was still much to enjoy, from Juliette Bausor's limpid flute and the pellucid beauty of two rippling harps to the beckoning heat of the morning sunrise and the final bacchanale. Outside the Festival Hall, unfortunately, the temperature hadn't changed.