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London Schools SO/Edwards, classical review: Teenagers triumph with collective strength, skill and energy

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This was much more than "not bad for a bunch of teenagers", writes Nick Kimberley



NICK KIMBERLEY | Friday 6 January 2017 12:33 GMT |  0 comments





Collective energy: The London Schools Symphony Orchestra put on quite a show

You have to feel sorry for the London Schools Symphony Orchestra. While most of us were indulging ourselves, these young players devoted their Christmas holiday to preparing for the LSSO's annual January concert. Not that there was any sign of resentment. Why would there be when the hall was filled with enthusiastic parents, friends and well-wishers?

The programme followed the traditional overture-concerto-symphony format, but the choice of repertoire - all from Soviet Russia - was bold enough.

Every LSSO **concert** features established professionals; last night, the conductor was Sian Edwards, something of a Russian specialist. She opened with the overture from Dmitri Kabalevsky's opera *Colas Breugnon* (1938), a Rossini-a-la-Russe showpiece that the musicians attacked with gusto.

Alfred Schnittke's *Viola Concerto* (1985) was altogether tougher, for orchestra and audience alike. It begins in a mood of tortured intensity, then, with the madcap logic of a screwball cartoon, veers

between baroque and ballroom, the salon and the army parade ground, before sinking into a deep and sinister silence. Soloist Lawrence Power was superb throughout, and the players clearly fed off his focussed intensity.



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The LSSO runs to about 100 musicians; they needed every ounce of their collective strength in Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony (1937). There were moments of raw intonation or reduced voltage, but a few rough edges don't go amiss in Shostakovich.

he winds were as shrill as they needed to be, the percussion as raucous, while the string pianissimos were breathtaking. This was much more than "Not bad for a bunch of teenagers"; it was a triumph of skill, energy and collaborative commitment.

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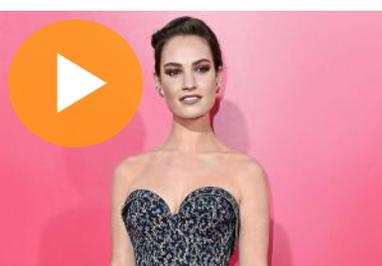
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