

Concert
LPO/Netopil
Festival Hall
★★★★☆


Damian Lewis
returns to the
West End in a
Mamet revival
First Night, main paper

The candles that burnt in Janáček's cathedral were, he declared, the stars above the tall pine trees. And, in a performance that blasted its way through the Festival Hall at the weekend, the composer's great *Glagolitic Mass* did indeed seem like a veritable rite of spring. With a Czech conductor in Tomáš Netopil, an impassioned Slovak soprano in Andrea Danková, and with the London Philharmonic Choir's consonants and vowels brightened by the presence of the Orfeó Català, and the Cor de Cambra del Palau de la Música Catalana, this was a performance that will reverberate long in the memory of its audience.

From the sun-filled opening bars Netopil drew from the orchestra pungent inflections and pacing that seemed to spring from the heart of the Czech language itself. And, as the old Slavonic text peeled out, Danková's soprano and the fine tenor of Ales Briscein were raw with just the primitive, high-fibre energy vital to this piece. In a work in which every Amen becomes a heady dance, the LPO high-stepped its way through the

Creed and the Sanctus, making way for the hurtle of hell within the organ solo, fearlessly played by Catherine Edwards.

The following evening, a Czech work from almost 40 years earlier. Dvorák's Eighth Symphony had Yuri Temirkanov conducting the Philharmonia in a performance that lacked the sheer impassioned joy of the Janáček, and just missed that sense of exuberant spontaneity that characterises the best performances. Little to fault, though, in the orchestral playing itself, both robustly obedient and rigorous — and on athletic form thanks to earlier accompanying Daniil Trifonov's Rachmaninov First Piano Concerto. To hear a 24-year-old pianist, with body and hands tingling as it were with static electricity, play the work of an 18-year-old composer was thrilling. Trifonov brought febrile energy and a sense of high fantasy to every exposed nerve-ending of the music. In his trance-like dream of a slow movement, Trifonov was closely attuned to each orchestral soloist, and to the emotional heart of Rachmaninov himself.

Hilary Finch