

On Tuesday 19th September, the Thames Youth Orchestra made its central London debut at the Cadogan Hall. Formerly a church, the hall was used by the BBC for weekly recitals as part of this year's Proms. The hall's warm acoustic complemented the orchestra's nineteenth-century programme, with the shattering C minor chords of Beethoven's *Coriolan* overture nonetheless well-blended and focused, and woodwind solos in particular in Mendelssohn's *Reformation* symphony coming over with great clarity and beauty. The slow movement of the Mendelssohn brought some elegantly sinuous string playing, while the TYO demonstrated its expressive range in its exuberant commitment to the *allegro vivace* finale.

The second half of the programme moved from Germany to Finland and Russia, with Sibelius's *Karelia Suite* followed by Borodin's second symphony. Here the strength of orchestra's brass shone through, the execution of Sibelius's tricky horn echo effects in the suite's first movement being particularly noteworthy. The exhilarating third movement *alla marcia* was driven to its climax by brash articulation from the trumpets which was again evident in the *scherzo* of the Borodin. By contrast, the slow middle movement of the Sibelius introduced some richer string playing and further evidence of the hall's happy relationship with woodwind sounds in the haunting cor anglais solo.

The orchestra's strong ensemble playing engendered by Simon Ferris's clear and communicative conducting was a feature of the entire evening, but was especially evident in the Borodin, with its frequent changes of metre and tempo and dialogues between strings, wind and brass. Here, the quality of the ensemble belied the complexity of the score, and carried the audience along with some sparkling playing, especially in the finale. The finale was not the end, however, as enthusiastic applause brought Dvorak's *Slavonic Dance no. 4* as a deserved encore.

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