

Adrenaline on overdrive

Sinfonia of Birmingham

CBSO Centre



Michael Seal and Laurence Jackson had quite a day on Sunday. Not only did they rehearse and perform as orchestral members (Jackson in fact the leader) in Andris Nelsons' inaugural concert as music director-elect of the CBSO, they also had the little matter of this concert with the Sinfonia of Birmingham in the evening.

And the adrenaline was thumping on overdrive from both musicians, Seal conducting with his customary authority and clarity, Jackson delivering an enthralling account of the Beethoven Violin Concerto.

His tone sweet and silvery, his phrasing beautifully turned with an easy fluency of bowing, Jackson interpreted this greatest of all violin concerti not as an epic Everest to be scaled "because it's there", but rather as an intimate communing between soloist and orchestra, sharing the riches of the composer's material.

There was a heartening trust and empathy between Jackson and Seal (who as a violinist himself obviously understands the work from the inside), and this account was perfectly scaled to the intimacy of this welcoming venue.

Mozart framed the evening, beginning with a rich, full-blooded *Don Giovanni* Overture, string response zippy, winds cuttingly balanced within the textures.

His *Haffner* Symphony concluded proceedings, again clearly-textured and shapely, its feline charm blended with extrovert operatic gestures, and a fine example of Seal's capacity to make these capable players perform above their individual abilities in a band of much distinction.

Seal, violinist and conductor, revealed another string to his bow with his own deft arrangements for wind band and a handful of lower strings of movements from Janacek's piano suite *On an Overgrown Path*.

So successful were these that they sounded like interludes from Janacek's inimitable operas, and the players responded with relish.

Christopher Morley