

Sunday Business Post

Buribayev revels in the mighty Leningrad

BY DICK O'RIORDAN ON NOVEMBER 15, 2015



Italian pianist Federico Colli gave a stylish performance of Beethoven's second piano concerto, accompanied by the RTÉ Symphony Orchestra

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RTE National Symphony Orchestra
Federico Colli, piano
National Concert Hall, November 6

This was an eventful night in more ways than one. First the young Italian pianist Federico Colli – who curiously resembled the Artist Formerly Known as Prince – engaged us with Beethoven's second piano concerto.

By no means an epic work, it is still a landmark; it was the first Beethoven ever wrote. (It is generally thought he relegated it to No 2 because he didn't think much of it himself).

Still, the dazzling 27-year-old took it in his stride, and it was not difficult to scent the styles of Mozart and Haydn here.

Judging by his 2012 Leeds International victory, Colli is a supremely talented technician and well capable of keyboard histrionics, but he impressed with maturity and common sense.

This concerto did not afford opportunity for firework displays, but rather resisted the temptation to push it along aggressively into the “real Beethoven” style of later years. Colli allowed it to flow naturally, with admirable elegance and lashings of panache.

Shostakovich’s Symphony No 7 was the mighty stuff on the evening’s agenda and it was only natural to expect a top performance from the RTE NSO – the mighty Leningrad is the sort of territory in which principal conductor Alan Buribayev revels.

It is, of course, also puzzling territory – the composer’s description of the epic work as “not about the Leningrad under siege... but about the Leningrad that Stalin destroyed and Hitler finished off” has always been enigmatic in terms of the music content and structure.

Buribayev built up the drama and grotesqueness with passion and energy. (He remained admirably calm when halting the orchestra during the climax to the “invasion march” when a young man who had fainted in the choir balcony was attended by doctors from the audience).

A thrilling night for the orchestra, and a memorable one for its conductor.
