



Federico Colli at Nottingham Lakeside Arts - Review

There was plenty of high-voltage pianism

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I don't know about you, but most Italians make me feel a bit scruffy - and pianist Federico Colli is no exception.

Here is an artist who exudes charisma by the barrelful, his strong musical personality reaching out to the Lakeside audience from the moment he walked out to the piano.

If anyone had arrived at Thursday's concert wondering why this shiny-suited young man had won the Salzburg Mozart Competition and the Gold Medal at Leeds, their wondering would have turned to just plain wonder after only a few bars of hearing him play.

Not that everyone would have agreed with everything they heard.

His way with the opening set of six Scarlatti Sonatas was not so much a case of playing the composer's notes (originally for harpsichord) as recomposing them for piano. It was an almost orchestral approach with so much more colour, light-and-shade and distinctive phrasing than would ever have been possible on Scarlatti's harpsichord. In the F Minor Sonata which opened the programme the dynamic contrasts (especially the amazing pianissimos) caught the breath.

His playing of Schumann's Carnival Scenes was similarly vivid, capturing mood and atmosphere with plenty of high-voltage pianism as he built up a kaleidoscope of moods and characters: boisterous and bouncy at one moment, then intensely lyrical and heartbroken at another.

In Mussorgsky's Pictures from an Exhibition Colli straddled two art forms, using a wide palette of sound to suggest the ten pictures which inspired the work. The big-scale movements (like the Great Gate of Kiev) were full of Technicolor grandeur - but there was so much character elsewhere too: a grotesque gnome, newly hatched chicks, a bustling market place, the mystery of Roman tombs.

Sometimes the effect was a tad self-conscious - but there's no denying that this was an evening which offered ear-opening exhilaration.
