

York Guildhall Orchestra  
York Barbican, 19th May 2018

HANG the expense. Bring in a top-class soloist and you win hands down. That maxim was proved right once again on Saturday. There was a healthy crowd, leavened by children from six York schools, to greet Jack Liebeck as soloist in Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto.

The orchestra was also inspired to new heights, opening with a cracking account of Shostakovich's Festive Overture, whose stirring fanfares carried more than a few echoes of events in Windsor earlier in the day.

Liebeck is one of the young lions on the circuit. But allied to his astonishing virtuosity is an unusual sensitivity. He took both the opening themes in the concerto with a deceptive nonchalance; the first was leisurely, the second soulful. But these were mere softeners for the fireworks to come. Leaping double-stops – two notes at once – were even exceeded in bravura by a breathtaking cadenza.

The slow Canzonetta was a total contrast, plumbing the depths of a gypsy-style melancholy. Liebeck's liquid tone was utterly seductive. Repartee between soloist and orchestra in the finale was excitingly taut. Liebeck was coaxed into a solo encore, a dazzling arrangement of Tarrega's *Memories of the Alhambra*.

Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, five narcotic visions from a lovesick romantic, got off to a diffident start, but there was an engaging lilt in the ballroom and eerily entrancing woodwinds in the *March To The Scaffold*. The expanded brass gleamed in the concluding *Witches' Sabbath*. A memorable evening that owed much to Simon Wright's intelligent baton.

Martin Dreyer  
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