

ARTS



For the most part, Glasper was spinning contemporary pop, R&B and in-style originals into the intense and intensely personal piano-trio jazz of his current CD *Covered*. Simple themes came with dense, downscale harmonies, basic beats were pulled into evocative shapes and spindly quick-fire lines exploded out of clusters of harmony and rhythm.

Two numbers added pre-recorded spoken word – from Harry Belafonte on “Got Over”, and Omar on “So Beautiful”. His opening line “I don’t know why I’m singing” raised a smile, though I could have done without the choreographed clowning that introduced the finale “In Case You Forgot”. An edge-of-seat drum solo from Damion Reid restored focus.

Opening act Chihiro Yamanaka delivered a populist repertoire. The Japanese-born, New York-based pianist has an attention-grabbing classically trained technique and her set included Dave Brubeck’s “Take Five” and a multi-styled take on Beethoven’s “Für Elise”.

A burst of feedback wasn’t the ideal start for the tricky up-tempo original “Living Without Friday” but soon the long, superfast lines were flowing, two-handed chords thumped and tremolos

rolled in rhythm. Yamanaka finished her opener by running her thumb down the keyboard, rock-and-roll style, and the applause drowned out a good chunk of the drum solo that followed.

The rest of the set didn’t quite live up to this early promise. There were interesting conjunctions but the rhythm section was solid rather than matching Yamanaka’s bravura technique. The finale, though, whetted the appetite by squeezing a dozen musical snippets into a collage lasting, according to the title, “Two Minutes and Thirty Seconds”.

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CLASSICAL MUSIC

BBC Proms

Royal Albert Hall and Cadogan Hall, London

★★★★☆

Richard Fairman

The scope of the BBC Proms is so vast that it is possible to schedule cycles of works and have them almost disappear. Sibelius’s seven symphonies, packed like sticks of gelignite, fitted into three evening concerts over the weekend.

Each was assigned to different performers, this first entrusted to the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Thomas Dausgaard. If the aim was to create pyrotechnics to mark Sibelius’s 150th anniversary, their performances lived up to the occasion. The curtain-raiser, the patriotic *Finlandia*, was brooding, bordering on explosive.

The first two of Sibelius’s symphonies are often performed as if they are grand offspring of Tchaikovsky’s symphonies. Finnish conductors tend to prefer a style that is cool, taut and brisk, and Dausgaard, a Dane, offered his own take on that. These performances had more ebb and flow, but they came with a visceral power. Ferocious, dark, northern storms raged through the centre of the First Symphony’s opening movement, the scherzos of both, and much more besides. It was rendered by sometimes raw playing, with brass too prominent in the sound-picture, from the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. Whatever shortcomings there were, this Sibelius cycle started out like a force of nature that filled the Royal Albert Hall.

In the afternoon concert at Cadogan Hall, the Cleveland-based period instrument ensemble Apollo’s Fire gave a programme of mostly Baroque music that flickered and danced, with cultivated string tone and buoyancy of rhythm. The most appealing item was a selection from Telemann’s *Burlesque de Quixotte*, vivid, pictorial vignettes. Alina Ibragimova gave lithe performances of concertos by Vivaldi and Bach. The programme was designed to take the audience back to Zimmermann’s coffee house in 18th-century Leipzig where, unusually, women were allowed to attend concerts – just as well, since Apollo’s Fire is directed by the live-wire Jeannette Sorrell.

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