

Glasgow Cathedral Festival 'pulls out all the stops' with Metropolis

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★★★★★ 5 out of 5 stars



Katelyn Emerson (*Image: NQ*)

By Keith Bruce

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The dedicated team behind Glasgow Cathedral Festival pulled out all the stops, to use an appropriate metaphor, to mark the city’s 850th birthday as a Royal Burgh this year.

That was especially clear in the closing events, when the composers of two new works were present to hear them premiered.

Roxanna Panufnik’s Organ Mass Cum Jubilo (With

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Joy) was heard in its complete form for the first time on Sunday afternoon, in a recital by Katelyn Emerson that interspersed its movements with well-chosen complementary repertoire.

The most substantial of those was J S Bach’s Chaconne from his Second Violin Partita, in Emerson’s own adaptation of William Best’s transcription, and itself evidence of the power of the Cathedral’s Father Willis pipe organ.

Just as fascinating, though, were the mellow pastoral prelude by French composer Ermend Bonnal and the chorale by Georg Bohm, who was an important influence on Bach.

Rather than interrupt the flow of the Mass, they made it easier to appreciate Panufnik’s global range of influences in music that was as symphonic as hymnic. The new Sanctus began on an ethereal high figure before revealing a homespun plainsong melody with unusual harmonies which built to a terrific flourish at the end.

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The Agnus Dei revisited material from earlier in the piece, adding an elegiac tone to music that combines scales and phrases from Eastern music with contemporary Western modes.

Emerson’s addition of a “postlude” in Quebecois composer Rachel Laurin’s 2017 Finale brought her concert to a joyful upbeat conclusion.

The Festival itself ended with a screening of Fritz

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Lang’s 1927 masterpiece Metropolis in a recently restored fuller print, with a new score by Irene and Linda Buckley featuring live percussion by Patrick Lynch and Patrick Nolan.

The 21st century restoration of the film still has some grainy footage amongst the pristine images, and one notable gap in the narrative, but the storyline is much clearer and even more eerily prescient.

The Buckleys' soundtrack was receiving its UK premiere and it combined sequenced synthesiser and electronics – the film is, after all, the origin of Dusseldorf pattern-makers Kraftwerk’s “Man-Machine” – with acoustic recordings and the superbly-played tuned and untuned percussion, which was as remarkable for its subtle scrapes and scribbles as its bass drum, gong, and bells.

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