

NZSO sparkles under Pietari Inkinen's direction

REVIEW

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, with cello soloist Natalie Clein, conducted by Pietari Inkinen. The Town Hall auditorium, Thursday night, April 10. Reviewed by David Sell.

The NZSO has picked a winner with Pietari Inkinen as the new music director.

His control of the orchestra and sense of shaping was clear right from the start. He was not short in excitement, either.

Lilburn's Aotearoa Overture is almost a classic in the New Zealand repertoire, but it took a Finnish conductor to bring to it a sense and strength that I have never heard to such effect before. Inkinen could take a slow tempo, sustain and enfold within it an unusual feeling of power and growth. Add to this the grace and intensity of Natalie Clein, and the result was an account of the Elgar Cello Concerto that was not only different from mainstream performances, but also unusually controlled.

It would have to be to sustain the magic of the opening at such a slow tempo.

Natalie Clein wrung every bit of poignancy from the first movement while keeping the focus of interest on the music rather than on herself.

Only rarely did she display the extrovert brilliance of which she was obviously capable. Then after this wonderful performance she added a most delicate account of a Sarabande from one of the cello suites of Bach.

The major work, Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, was as interesting as it is familiar.

Pietari Inkinen started as he continued, with utter concentration on every detail. He gave life to Tchaikovsky's transparent scoring, and even created interest in the composer's predictable repetitions.

His amazing expansiveness was no better heard than in the opening and ending of the second movement. With its huge built-in momentum the Finale of the Tchaikovsky Fifth can seldom fail. Inkinen, however, took it well beyond an exciting roar.

He gave refinement to the most rumbustious sections, adding intensity to the excitement that brought the large audience to its feet.



English cellist Natalie Clein



NZSO's musical director,
Pietari Inkinen