

Concert Reviews

Talent, like spring is flowering across our concert halls...

The London Festival Orchestra and Emmanuel Despax

The London Festival Orchestra's fascinating Virtuoso Piano Series, where a pianist is invited not only to perform a concerto in the first half but also open the second with a major solo item, is a unique venture for a classical platform. Conductor Ross Pople's idea is a good one, bringing greater insight to the chosen soloist's musicianship.

On 9 November at Cadogan Hall the young Frenchman, Emmanuel Despax gave a discerning and stylish account of Chopin's First Piano Concerto. Controlled throughout, Despax shaped the work into a distinct early Romantic model, his *rubato* adding its own character, driving a display of passion. In the delicate passages Ross Pople had the orchestra at a whisper and while Despax continued his heart-wrenching exploration in the central *Romance* Pople was finely balancing the two protagonists.

In Liszt's Second *Ballade* Despax produced passages of intense beauty, helping transcend the work before menace and tempestuous howling devour the plaintive opening. Here was an outstanding performance by a young musician of great potential. **DAVID ALKER**

