



THE TIMES

Concert
Tasmin Little/
RLPO
Philharmonic
Hall, Liverpool
★★★★☆

“I have been glued to my violin since I was seven years old,” Tasmin Little told *The Times* last month. Now she is unsticking herself, retiring from performance and selling her fiddle. Yet if her farewell tour has been thrown into disarray, you could say that her timing was impeccable for her last concert with a British orchestra.

This date with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic had a live audience and began only a few moments after the prime minister had plunged the performing arts world into a fresh crisis with the announcement of a fresh lockdown. It also marked Little’s 55th appearance with the RLPO.

No other soloist in its history has clocked up so many concerts. Little, above, has always been a champion of

British music, and if she has ventured much further than Vaughan Williams’s *The Lark Ascending*, this is a piece that she sets in flight with silvery assurance, as well as a seamless legato that seemed to tie the entire rhapsody almost into one song-like phrase.

Perhaps inevitably it felt particularly elegiac here, but you don’t need to search far to find deep melancholy in the *Lark*. Its composer said that he was inspired to write it on the day that the First World War broke out; its reverie is, in fact, a glimpse of something about to be

lost. Little was beautifully accompanied by the (reduced) RLPO players, conducted by Joshua Weilerstein.

The rest of the programme had another showpiece for Little — something to let her hair down — and

a cannily chosen symphony, no less impactful for its compact dimensions. *Tzigane* is another one of those pieces where Ravel is both sending up the format — gypsy hoedown — and surrendering to it. Little was fully in control of the tricky flourishes, but this performance needed an extra sizzle. Perhaps the originally announced maestro, the orchestra’s Venezuelan chief conductor designate Domingo Hindoyan, would have given it more pep and pizzazz.

Weilerstein did, however, come into his own in Mozart’s *Symphony No 40*, which crackled from the get-go, the upbeat sending us into G-minor anxiety as if we were midway through a drama rather than just beginning one. There was little respite, but plenty of imaginative touches along the way: a nervy, angular slow movement and a minuet bristling with drama. The climax had more than a whiff of Don Giovanni’s infernal damnation.

Neil Fisher
Stream from Nov 18; liverpoolphil.com

