

Prom 32: EUYO/Bamert

Royal Albert Hall, London



Martin Kettle

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The [Proms](#) are rich in young orchestras this year and the European Union Youth Orchestra, conducted here by Matthias Bamert in the absence of the indisposed Colin Davis, proved themselves the equal of any. From the doom-laden exchanges between woodwind and strings that mark the opening of Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* to the frenzy of the brigands' orgy that ends Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*, these players generated not just youthful commitment, but a maturity of expression.

Bamert has a clear and unfussy manner on the podium, which helped bring out the details of a programme that was particularly strong in orchestral colour. The EU orchestra's exciting string section caught

the ear immediately. The cellos and double-basses were incisive at the start of Tchaikovsky's fantasy overture, and the violins achieved gossamer delicacy as the love theme surged and flowed. The brilliantly original closing bars of the Pilgrims' March in Berlioz's Byron-inspired symphony-cum-concerto was especially fine, from the horns starkly alternating with a duetting oboe and flute, to the viola soloist's final spectral arpeggios. There may be no getting away from Berlioz's self-imposed problematic sound balance in Harold in Italy, but it is one of the great imaginative pieces of any era, and Maxim Rysanov's playing of the solo viola part perfectly captured its poetic melancholy.

In a concert where there was much to admire, it was nevertheless Janáček's Taras Bulba where the ensemble playing caught fire. The composer's orchestral rhapsody can sometimes seem a shapeless piece: not here. Bamert kept such a firm grip on the structure that the final blazing affirmation of Slavic feeling was overwhelming.