

# The Telegraph

## Anne-Sophie Mutter raises the roof, plus all the best of the BBC 2017 Proms so far



Anne-Sophie Mutter performs Dvorak's violin concerto Credit: Chris Christodoulou/ Chris Christodoulou

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### Prom 69: Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra/Anne-Sophie Mutter ★★★★★

If you think orchestras have become blandly over-refined and anonymous, you clearly haven't heard the Pittsburgh Symphony, who wowed a packed house at the Albert Hall through sheer force of personality and sound. The brass section especially was a marvel. In the opening piece, John Adams's jazzily syncopated curtain-raiser Lollapalooza, they made a sound of terrific Broadway sassiness, exactly right for the piece. Later, when the seven horns stood up to let rip at the climax of Mahler's 1st Symphony, I was almost tempted to take cover.

But it wasn't all about sheer force. Oboist Cynthia Koledo DeAlmeida made a beautifully wistful sound in the funeral march, and later in the same movement, the co-leaders of the violins made a sound drenched in old-Vienna nostalgia.

What conductor could tame such an unruly beast? Only one with a very strong vision of the music, and the technique to make it crystal clear. The orchestra's Music Director Manfred Honeck is clearly the man for the job. In Mahler's symphony he seemed to have a vision for every bar, highlighting a detail here, pulling back a tempo there.

It has to be said not all these ideas came off. The strange dragging opening of the Scherzo, as if it were some grotesque lumbering machine that had to be 'revved up', felt odd, and the numerous little tempo changes in the trio drew attention to themselves, rather than the music they were supposed to serve.

Honeck told us in his programme note that he was keen to infuse this movement with the irregularity of Austrian peasant dances, which Mahler would have known from his youth. To my ear it had the opposite effect, making the piece seem nervily modern and self-conscious. But overall that was no bad thing. It meant the blazing D major triumph at the end of the piece was overwhelming, because the anxieties that led up to it were so vividly etched.

That would have been enough for one Prom, but there was more. Sandwiched between the Adams and the Mahler was Dvořák's charming and very Bohemian violin concerto. The soloist Anne-Sophie Mutter is one of the few violinists in the world who could take on the Pittsburgh Symphony and win. She summoned a huge variety of sound, from imperious declamation to tiny nostalgic inwardness, and the joyous way she flung off the final movement raised the roof.

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