

## May 2010 – Concert Review

We've already had Atmosphere and Landscape this season. On Saturday, it was the turn of Passion.

These were the banner headlines on York Guildhall Orchestra's publicity; ours not to reason why.

The purveyors of Passion on this occasion were an Elgar concert overture, a Richard Strauss horn concerto and Tchaikovsky's Sixth. Passion did not immediately come to mind in Elgar's In The South, a concert overture subtitled Alassio, where it was sketched on holiday. In fact, Simon Wright's orchestra initially seemed a little uncertain how to string it together persuasively.

There were certainly splashes of Mediterranean sun, but the most engaging moments came with the gentle chiming of the clock and the tender viola song (a mellow Maggie Lamb). By his own extremely high standards, Michael Thompson's horn in Strauss's First Concerto was less than exact; it was recalcitrant, especially in the first two movements. Hardly surprising, perhaps: despite its engaging surface jollity – all of which bubbled through here – this is one of the most taxing concertos in the repertory.

But he stuck to his guns and the final rondo was exhilarating.

Tchaikovsky's Pathétique symphony – so-called from its opening allusion to Beethoven's piano sonata – was certainly atmospheric, but after a sedate first half, it took until the largely staccato third movement for the orchestra to blaze in its true colours.

Here Wright's control was excitingly taut. And the strings dug in, yes passionately, in the finale. The publicity was right after all.

*Martin Dreyer*  
*The Press, 11 May 2010*