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From The Times

March 5, 2007

David Daniels

Among the evening's works Daniels despatched an indecently gorgeous lullaby with breathtaking control

Neil Fisher at the Barbican



No Handelian heroes and no florid fireworks: David Daniels hadn't gone down the obvious route for this intimate recital, and very occasionally you wondered whether the gamble had paid off. The opening number, Ottone's declamatory opening scene from Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, showed scrupulous taste and trademark dramatic style: what it didn't have was either the volume or the pizzazz to wow us.

But Daniels simply turned up the focus (and the decibels). Few would argue that Girolamo Frescobaldi's aria *Così mi disprezzate* reaches the heights of musical invention, but the Daniels counter-tenor — a shade darker than it was, but still as smooth — gave us an artful portrayal of a spurned lover who tells his ex that he'll be laughing when she's lost her looks. You certainly wouldn't get that in stodgy Handel, and Daniels oozed wounded (and macho) pride.

Daniels's supporting cast, the French-named but mostly American ensemble Le Point du Jour, also took their time to get going. At first, in Dario Castello's Sonata No 15, their playing erred on the side of demure and respectful until, tightening their grip, they pulled together for a rich-toned passacaglio by Biagio Marini.

But it took the work of Alessandro Scarlatti to take things up a notch. The instrumentalists whizzed through the contrasting moods of his Concerto Grosso No 2 with obvious rapport. Daniels, meanwhile, having hit us for six with the soaringly sweet opening lines of Scarlatti's motet *Infirmata Vulnerata*, then traced a subtle line through this courtly love song.

And better yet was the final scheduled number, Scarlatti's delicate cantata *Perch'è tacete, regolati concertati*. Boasting an indecently gorgeous lullaby that Daniels despatched with breathtaking control, this miniature drama left just enough room for Daniels to sing three time-stopping encores by Caccini, Lotti and, finally, Handel — allowed back in courtesy of the suitably introspective and poetic knight, Orlando.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Interesting view. We were in back stalls and except for first number we heard perfectly - first one was a bit low but he and players seemed to realise and adjust. We must remember not to sit where you guys were next time he sings at Barbican. Great singing though and was our second Daniels live recital - and not our last I hope. I think it was on radio 3 last night at 7, so you could try the site on their listen again facility maybe to hear what you missed.

Pete, london,

What Neil Fisher says about the quality of his singing well be true, the problem was that neither my partner nor I were able to hear (and both of us are still young and have excellent hearing!). We sat at the very front of the dress circle in the middle of the hall and this

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position normally affords us the best sound in the house. The violins (both of them) drowned him. David simply did not project to the middle of the hall and I can't imagine what it was like towards the rear of the hall. I have never heard him singing live before although I have been 'wowed' by his recordings. The audience especially downstairs greeted his performance with enthusiasm although it seemed to us that it was a case of the emperor's new clothes. In our opinion this concert was more suited to the Purcell Room.

Mark, London, UK

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