

Natalie Clein (cello) Xuefei Yang (guitar)

WIGMORE HALL, LONDON 3 FEBRUARY 2010

Performing before a capacity audience, Natalie Clein and Xuefei Yang gave an accessible programme that included their own arrangements, as well as a new commission from Stephen Goss. Based on Chinese poems, *The Autumn Song* is a beautifully evocative composition and was eloquently performed by both artists, with Clein's winning lyrical style proving ideally suited to it. Inevitably, given the presence of a guitar, Latin music was prominent, not least the delightful and varied Falla *Suite populaire*, which boasted a real flamboyance and sensitivity. Equally,



Natalie Clein: a persuasive performance of Bach

Piazzolla's music lends itself to this duo combination particularly well, and both artists revelled in the intoxicating Latin American tango rhythms of their four chosen pieces, while the first movement of Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas brasileiras* no.5 was captivatingly played.

Balancing these elements were two Bach solo works. His Cello Suite no.1 was given a persuasive performance by Clein, with intelligent voicing and much accent on the element of dance – only her distracting head movements marred the performance. But the highlight of the

programme was undoubtedly a stunningly virtuosic arrangement for solo guitar of the G minor Violin Sonata BWV1001, where Xuefei Yang proved to be a most impressive advocate for her instrument.

JOANNE TALBOT

Viktoria Mullova (violin) Philharmonia Orchestra/Esa-Pekka Salonen

ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, LONDON 4 FEBRUARY 2010

I was literally dazzled by this concert, as a number of the Philharmonia's new desk lamps shone straight into my eyes. But Viktoria Mullova was dazzling, too. Chances to hear Stravinsky's Violin Concerto are few and far between, but even if they were

weekly events, I doubt if I would hear a better account than the one she delivered.

We are inclined to take her sovereign command of the violin for granted but she can surely only keep up her peerless standards by the most minute preparation. All four movements were not just clean and precise (the intervals pitched perfectly) but beautifully and seemingly effortlessly shaped, with the assistance of Salonen and the orchestra.

She held the ideal balance between the lyrical and the dramatic. The technical difficulties, up-bow staccato and so on, were neatly dismissed. She played from the music and seemed to be breaking in a new string, but still performed flawlessly, the tone always even and well modulated. The Arias were well distinguished from each other, the finale genuinely exciting. The work came across, unusually in my experience, as a masterpiece that should be heard more. But how often can you find a Mullova to play it?

TULLY POTTER