

# The Age

4 August, 2008

## Audience revels in soloist's vigour

### MUSIC

#### MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Classical Connections No. 3, Hamer Hall,  
August 2

[mso.com.au](http://mso.com.au)

Clive O'Connell Reviewer

BACK for a brief visit, British conductor Christopher Seaman began Saturday night's *Passionate Panorama* with a work from his countryman Delius.

The *Brigg Fair* rhapsody gave the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra plenty of scope for bucolic meanderings, but its appeal is limited, simply through changes in popular taste.

Not so the Brahms Symphony No. 1, here rendered with controlled urgency, stentorian passages from the horn quartet complemented by surging string work.

While the C minor Symphony

generated spirited playing, with Seaman summoning up majestic gusts from the MSO in full flight, this night belonged to guest soloist James Ehnes. The Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto can be relied on to rouse plenty of enthusiasm, but performances with the integrity and intelligence of this one are all too rare. From the initial exposed solo notes, Ehnes had us engrossed in the vigour and emotional drive of his approach.

As in the previous weekend's reading of Bernstein's *Serenade*, you felt absolute confidence in his technical mastery, but what kept us all absolutely still in the first movement cadenza was a

shared concentration — one of those moments when the performer and audience fuse. No wonder the normally staid MSO patrons burst into solid applause at the movement's end in a combination of relief and delight.

More of the same high quality followed: the generous melodic arch in the central *Canzonetta*; a driving passion in the player's G-string work in the sharp-edged finale; the sheer carrying power of Ehnes' interpolations between orchestral outbursts. This generous-spirited young artist should be high on the list of the MSO's rebound invitees.