



Splendid, evocative work

AT its best, Vaughan Williams' music has all the freshness of a perfect English summer's day. This was well demonstrated in both *Fantasia On A Theme By Thomas Tallis* and the masterly *Symphony No.2 A London Symphony*.

Conductor, Paul Watkins, impressed with a precision and eye for detail, balancing the large sweeping themes with subtle nuances to bring out the multi-layered colours and textures of the orchestra, with excellent results.

The glorious *Fantasia*, scored for three separate string orchestras, was handled by Watkins placing the usual off-stage string quartet visibly in the organ loft, while controlling the single desk of the strings *in situ* within the orchestra.

It worked well. From the atmospheric hushed opening, through the beautiful melodies and har-

Symphony by a Londoner

Queensland Symphony Orchestra
Concert Hall QPAC
Reviewer: Suzannah Conway
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monic themes, the Maestro was in full control. There was some first-rate playing of the solo sections by the front desk, particularly from the first viola and Concertmaster.

Choosing to present *A London Symphony* in the original 1913 version, never before heard outside of England, added some 20 minutes to the work. Weighing up the loss of lyrical passages versus the tighter structure, one understands why the composer revised it. The repetitive solos finally became tedious. Nevertheless, this is a splendid, evocative work,



showcasing orchestral skills, including fine string and wind solos, French horn, trumpet and harp.

Chinese-born Australian cellist Li Wei Qin, playing a 1720 Guarneri instrument with its warm, mellow resonance, gave an impassioned rendition of Schumann's *Cello Concerto*.

Attacking the opening melody with gusto, he interacted superbly with the rising orchestral passages and the chromatic, rhythmic changes of the first movement.

The languorous second movement was beautiful, with well-judged interaction between soloist and first cello, leading to a dynamic climax.