

## Vengerov/Golan at Wigmore Hall

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The queue for returns snaked up Wigmore Street: this was the return of the violinist Maxim Vengerov to Wigmore Hall after injury had necessitated a switch from bow to baton.

The air was electric. And so was the opening of Bach's solo Partita No 2 in D minor. Vengerov stood alone, soberly clad. His body seemed more ballasted, his presence more authoritative than ever. The *Allemanda* was commanding, its broad outlines and full-bodied tone enlivened by tiny nuances of chiaroscuro. And in the *Corrente*, dotted rhythms leapt high, flinty with double-stopping. Each sustained note of the *Sarabande* had a wonderful dying fall, and a single line of melody appeared like a gleam of supple, golden thread from the rich double-stopping. Multiple stopping gave gravitas to a *Ciaccona* in which Vengerov's variations were robust intellectual arguments on a theme, lit by flights of virtuoso figuration.

His outstanding pianist, Itamar Golan, joined him for Handel's Violin Sonata in D, Op 1, No 13. And what a delectable pastoral vision was created by Golan's gently purling spread chords, turns and trills, and by the quick decay of each variegated tone in his deft pianism. A robust and rhythmically rigorous *Allegro*, then on to the platinum-bowed elegy of Vengerov's *Larghetto*, meticulously phrased by both players.

Finally, Beethoven's *Kreutzer* Sonata. This was a performance of great stature, with a strong freedom born of deep and long assimilation. Bold, confident and extrovert gesture met sudden withdrawal and inwardness: the redoubling of energy and sudden shrinking back of the opening was wonderfully affirmed at the very end.

In between, a white fire of intensity, with thudding bass notes and physical pizzicato, led to a development full of mischief and discovery. Each player seemed absorbed by the evolutionary potential of every moment, with a remarkable freedom of reaction and response in the central variations. The encores could have gone on all night, but Vengerov and Golan stopped after a fiery Brahms *Hungarian Dance* and Wieniawski's *Scherzo tarantella*.

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