

Reviews

OPERA

**SCOTTISH OPERA:
INTERMEZZO**
THEATRE ROYAL, GLASGOW
★★★★★

THE curtains part in Wolfgang Quetes's new production for Scottish Opera of Richard Strauss's *Intermezzo* and you know instantly it's going to be a breathless night, and a colourful one. For there's a real sense of connection between Strauss's whirlwind score – an absolute seething riot of notes – and the menagerie of colour that explodes from designer Manfred Kaderk's period set.

You sense immediately the delicious hypocrisy of early 20th-century Vienna, where Strauss's autobiographical tale of domestic turbulence is played out. The curtain opens to split a giant reproduction of Klimt's *The Kiss*, to be reunited only at the end when hero and heroine, Christine and Robert Storch, make their marital peace.

Bavarian soprano Anita Bader's performance as the ever-present Christine is astonishing for its stamina alone, with only marginal signs of fatigue. Roland Wood's unflappable Storch and Nicky Spence's slithery Baron Lummer, together with the nerve-edged assortment of domestic maids and other satellite figures, respond with equally feverish energy.

Musical director Francesco Corti matches that with an adrenalin-charged reading of Strauss's pulverising score. Scottish Opera's house band captures the super-charged neuroticism of the music, and handles its cinematic fluidity – and the emotional overload of the orchestral Interludes – with gripping fortitude.

And even if there are moments of textural and technical instability in the pit, and a rather four-square waltz from the dancers, there's no denying this rare outing for an eccentric opera is well justified.

KENNETH WALTON

