

Creation unfolds before us

THEATRE

BOURNEMOUTH SO

LIGHTHOUSE, POOLE

CONDUCTORS are usually pictured with silvery locks and the *gravitas* that often goes with being weighty. But these days the trend seems to be for slender, elfin creatures – Ilan Volkov, Daniel Harding and Simon Rattle (in his young days) come to mind.

Kirill Karabits, newly arrived principal conductor of the Bournemouth, belongs to this new type. Last Wednesday, when he came on stage to take a bow before conducting Haydn's *Creation*, it was actually hard to spot him behind the three tall soloists.

But once on the podium, he seizes the eye. There's a charm about the man, a tender persuasiveness of gesture which on this occasion certainly brought wonderful results. The only disappointment came right

at the beginning, with the famous *Representation of Chaos*. The terrible grandeur and desolation of the music – chaos waiting and waiting for the Almighty's creative touch – didn't really register.

Thereafter, as the universe became orderly, the performance was a delight. The Bournemouth Symphony Chorus's great affirmation "and there was *light*" blazed out in a tone that was vibrant and clear as well as big, and throughout they were on terrific form.

On the whole, Karabits's tempi were spacious, but when he took the choral fugue *Stimmt an die Saiten* ("Awake the harp") at a startling quick pace, the chorus were ready for him.

As for the three soloists, they projected the essential feeling of naïve wonder at the sight of the unfolding universe, without sounding forced or faux-naïf. When Lisa Milne sang the line *und es war so* – "and it was so" – she sounded genuinely delighted and surprised, as if she was

witnessing the event there and then. Baritone Roderick Williams was especially good in the aria where the "creatures numberless" are enumerated down to the lowly worm, "which creeps with sinuous trace". He enjoyed the pictorial quality in the music, but kept an essential dignity. This is God's creation, not Disney's.

The most telling moments came, as they should do, from the orchestra. The kettledrums really thundered in "outrageous storms now arose" and later the flutes and oboes gave a lovely liquid warble to the lines about the "limpid brook". All very conventional, of course, but the wonderful thing about this piece is that these conventional musical signs – oboes for woods, flutes for birds – seem to be born with the things themselves. It's not just the universe that's created in this piece, it's music too.

CRATING ★★★★★

Ivan Hewett