

# Concert BSO/Alsop Festival Hall

★★★★☆

HILARY FINCH

There seemed to be a direct line of succession, from Gustav Mahler to Leonard Bernstein to Marin Alsop. As her Bernstein Project reaches its climax, Alsop brought the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra to London to play Mahler—the composer who meant so much to Bernstein, who in turn was Alsop's mentor. And this was the *Resurrection* Symphony, the one particularly close to Bernstein's heart. Alsop must have felt daunted as well as elated. But she had the support not only of her own alma mater orchestra and chorus, but of six other choirs.

By the time they all reached Mahler's great choral finale, sound seemed to come from everywhere: from off stage, from the wings and front stalls of the auditorium, and from behind the orchestra. No wonder that the magic,

whispered word "Aufersteh'n" (Rise up) susurrated in glorious multiphonics. This was not a moment of hushed, unanimous perfection: it belonged to a performance of raw, robust and rough-edged exuberance.

We certainly waited long for that final jubilant affirmation. Alsop's great skill here was to make us palpably aware of that wait from deep down inside. From her taut, weighty tempi in the first movement, with its sense of mighty forces held back, to her magnificently paced, long and powerful building of the finale, this was a performance of long-sighted vision. And Alsop's grand design overrode the moments of blurred entries, carrying all before it up to the entry of the soloists.

First, Karen Cargill, her deep, densely focused mezzo-soprano finding lament and primordial light in *Urlicht*. Then the soprano Katherine Broderick, almost imperceptibly gilding the hushed chorus in their anticipation of immortal life. Together, their vocal timbres pleaded strongly for belief—vindicated as the lights went up and the choirs all turned to face their audience in a moment of unification of which Bernstein, and Mahler himself, would have been proud.