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# Nicole Cabell / Matthias Goerne

**Hilary Finch** 

Published at 12:00AM, February 23 2007

Nicole Cabell

St John's Smith Square

**Matthias Goerne** 

Wigmore Hall

It's a voice that wraps itself around you. That is how Marilyn Horne described the lyric soprano of the Californian Nicole Cabell, who took first prize at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the Year in 2005 and who presented her solo calling card to London on Wednesday in her Rosenblatt Recital.

The voice does, indeed, have something of the pashmina about it: long, sinuous phrasing, warm tone and a sophistication that touches everything she sings. Cabell does no more and no less at present than simply sing the music that fits her voice best: Puccini, French opera and American song.

Every register of her voice is illuminated through her generous smile; there's a sudden sense of lift-off into coloratura and an irresistible glide through every second of schmaltz. Whether experience or a new singing teacher will give her a wider palette of vocal colour, a sharper focus, a punchier edge to phrasing and inflection remains to be seen. But this audience was enthralled by her Musetta Quand m'en vo' soletta per la via, by her Rondine Che il bel sogno di Doretta and by her Gounod Juliette Je veux vivre . She also brought close focus to three songs by Liszt, consummately accompanied by Simon Lepper.

And it was good to hear Ben Moore's responses to Keats's nightingale in his setting *Darkling I listen*, followed by a tricksy, witty performance of *Amor*, one of William Bolcom's superb Cabaret Songs .

Bernstein's arch I Hate Music spoke of "a lot of folks in a big dark hall where they really don't want to be at all". Hardly the Wigmore experience. The hall was packed twice in the week to hear Matthias Goerne, and to witness the German baritone receive the first Wigmore Medal. He chose a challenging programme of rarely performed long and serious Schubert settings of Schiller, Mayrhofer and the like. Alas, he seemed scarcely more familiar with them than the audience, and despite much subtle beauty of expression and trademark quiet, inward singing, his profile was on show for too much of the evening, as his eyes were glued to the score concealed on the piano lid.



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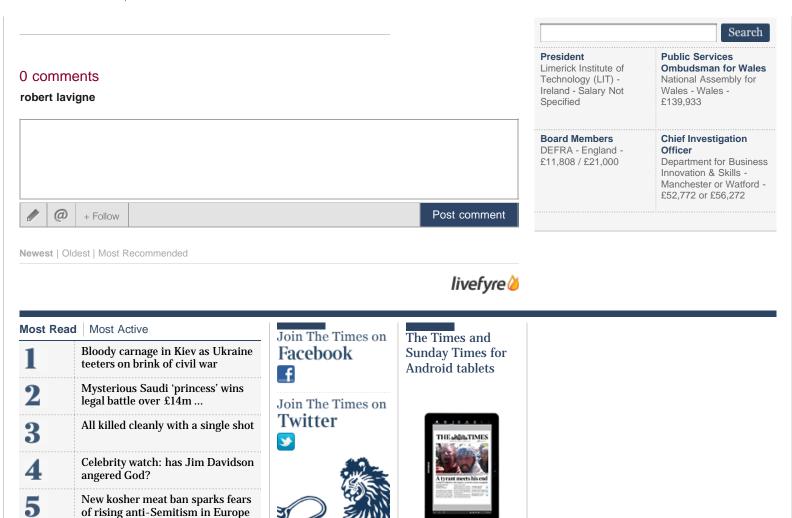
The five piece played with nimble excellence but finally seemed like a remote adjunct to a stylishly bombastic lightshow

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