

Russell Watson, Albert Hall, review

Watson reckons his post-treatment voice is richer and fuller, though he was treading warily around the high notes during this gig. Rating: * * *



Resoundingly unsubtle: Russell Watson Performs At The Royal Albert Hall In London Photo: C Brandon/Redferns

By Adam Sweeting 5:13PM BST 04 May 2011

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If brain tumours couldn't beat Russell Watson, the critics don't stand a chance, and this Albert Hall date demonstrated that he evokes the classical-crossover version of Beatlemania in his adoring supporters. It wasn't so much a concert, more a kind of indoor street party festooned with Union Flags and blasts of tickertape shooting across the stage.

Resoundingly unsubtle and bursting with pride about it, Watson wrapped himself in the flag (literally) and climaxed the show with gigantic singalongs of Jerusalem and Land of Hope and Glory, as if it was the Last Night of the Proms.

Earlier, the "classical" part of the equation hadn't got much of a look in as Watson trampled enthusiastically through popular standards, Neapolitan songs and a few highlights from the West End stage. Leonard Bernstein's Somewhere and the Mario Lanza chestnut Be My Love set the scene, Watson riding the grand orchestral surge from the massed musicians filling the stage behind him (a surprising number of them just happening to be young, attractive and female). Volare and Strangers In The Night allowed Watson to indulge his glittery Rat Pack fantasies