

**MUSIC**  
**RSNO: BENEDETTI**  
**AND ELSCHENBROICH**  
**PLAY BRAHMS**

USHER HALL, EDINBURGH

★★★★

BRAHMS'S *Double Concerto* must be one of the most collaborative, co-operative pieces in the repertoire, with its violin and cello soloists constantly intertwining their melodies and completing each other's phrases. So it was a bit of a mystery why violinist Nicola Benedetti and cellist Leonard Elschenbroich – a couple in real life, didn't seem more together.

There was no doubting the passion or the technical command of their darkly glowing performance with the RSNO – on superbly energetic form under conductor Yan Pascal Tortelier. But they barely acknowledged each other's presence, and where she was bright and confident, he too often seemed reticent

and happy to slip into the background.

Thankfully, though, the rest of the programme was exceptionally fine. Tortelier probably pulled the tempo around a bit too much in the opener, Ravel's exquisite *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, but with the air of nonchalant sophistication that he conjured, that hardly mattered. Flautist Katherine Bryan was particularly sultry in the second waltz, and the penultimate dance approached the gleefully menacing air of imminent cataclysm in *La valse*.

It was a brave choice to close the concert with Lutoslawski's big, brash and demanding *Concerto for Orchestra*, but it paid off magnificently in Tortelier's scorching account. And the RSNO players clearly relished the chance to show what they're made of – especially the brass. An unforgettable performance.

**DAVID KETTLE**