

**RSNO: Elfman Gala**

Usher Hall, Edinburgh



The problem with devoting an entire concert to the music of a composer as distinctive as Danny Elfman is that it can all end up sounding a bit – well, sam-e-y. Elfman has an almost miraculous way of conjuring up the grotesque and the poignant, encapsulated most brilliantly in music from his score to Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands*, which the RSNO dispatched with just the icy gracefulness it calls for in its all-Elfman concert under conductor John Mauceri.

His long choral piece intended to cover the end credits of Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*, however, probably outstayed its welcome, despite strong contributions from the RSNO Chorus, who also added a strength and richness to the suite from his *Batman*

score, which showed a rougher side to Elfman's music, despite a brass- and percussion-heavy balance from the RSNO that left the strings virtually submerged in the composer's dense textures.

But the concert's most unusual element proved its most disappointing. There were amplification problems in the opening movement of Elfman's new violin concerto *Eleven Eleven*, receiving its European premiere, which clearly unsettled elfin soloist Sandy Cameron and required the first movement to be restarted from several minutes into it. But those aside, it was a strangely amorphous work, full of incident and brilliant, Adams-meets-Prokofiev effects, but somewhat lacking in memorable content or meaningful development. Cameron, however, was a remarkable advocate, playing with utter conviction, as well as stunning technique and clarity, and prancing nimbly around the stage as she did so. A curiously unfulfilling evening nonetheless.

**DAVID KETTLE**