

MUSIC

Budapest Festival Orchestra/ Iván Fischer, Nicola Benedetti

Usher Hall



It takes a lot to upstage local lass Nicola Benedetti in front of a home crowd. But Iván Fischer and his Budapest band just about managed it.

Not that there was anything remotely bland or forgettable about Benedetti's Brahms Violin Concerto. On the contrary, she gave

a deeply considered, thoughtful account, each note weighed carefully for meaning, but never sounding forced or calculated. There was an etched clarity to her playing, and, while she may have taken her time in the first movement, she attacked the finale with ferocious intensity and appropriate gypsy abandon, bidding farewell with the briefest of encores, which she described as "just a little blues".

There was an almost palpable grit and texture to the Budapest players' sound in the Brahms Concerto, and that came firmly to the fore

after the interval in a fresh, vigorous Dvořák Eighth Symphony that showcased the musicians' gloriously soloistic playing.

But Fischer's masterstroke was in his two encores. Following a lesser-known sample from Brahms's Hungarian Dances, No. 15, the ladies of the Orchestra formed an impromptu chorus for one of Dvořák's touching Moravian Duets, accompanied by the remaining male string players. It was a wonderfully warm-hearted close to an unforgettable evening.

DAVID KETTLE