

MUSIC

François Leleux & Eric Le Sage

Queen's Hall



Unbridled sensuousness; an uncanny clarity of line; and above all, a compelling urge to engage with his listeners. French oboist François Leleux has a remarkable collection of musical talents, but it was his overriding desire to communicate, to tell his music's stories, that marked out his Queen's Hall recital as something very special.

Not unexpectedly, perhaps, he particularly excelled in the French segments. An early Dutilleux Sonata was full of chiselled, icy beauty; a sensitive Saint-Saëns Sonata revealed a lower register as sweet and smooth as golden syrup; and above all, a tender,

heartfelt Poulenc Sonata balanced classical restraint with aching poignancy.

But his Hindemith Sonata was wonderfully clean and elegant, too, full of scamp-ering mischief and off-kilter interplay with pianist Eric Le Sage, and he delivered two Schumann works with a natural sense of long, arching melody and a velvety tone.

Compatriot Le Sage made an able partner, even if the pianist was sometimes a little too thunderous on his instrument's bass notes. But seven pieces by six contrasting composers felt like a lot to take in – an unavoidable situation, perhaps, given the oboe's limited solo repertoire. More shape to the overall programme might have made it seem less like a best-of round-up, however immaculately dispatched.

DAVID KETTLE