

MUSIC

RSNO/James Feddeck, Alice Sara Ott (piano)

Usher Hall, Edinburgh



It was a thoroughly entertaining evening – and not just for the high quality of the performances. Young US conductor James Feddeck has directed the RSNO before, and he delivered the same richly detailed, sweeping music making as previously, propelled along vigorously but with thick textures – not least those of Brahms's warmly nostalgic Third Symphony, which closed the programme – teased apart with loving care.

There was more Brahms to start – his glowing funeral ode *Nänie*, for which the RSNO Chorus was in extremely fine form, enunciating with ringing clarity, and with real depth and richness to their sumptuous harmonies. German pianist Alice Sara Ott proved a highly indi-

vidual soloist in Beethoven's serious-minded Third Piano Concerto. It can seldom have been played with quite so much brittle clarity – it felt at times as if she was attempting to emulate the sound of a fortepiano on a heavier modern instrument, but it worked a treat in the Concerto's filigree passagework.

It was her brief look of head-scratching bewilderment on choosing an encore that provided the first bit of non-musical entertainment – immediately followed by a Für Elise so disarmingly fresh that it sounded as though she was making it up on the spot. And the second came from the evening's premiere, Irish composer Gerald Barry's *Humiliated and Insulted*, for which the RSNO Chorus chanted relentlessly through those same three words to an equally incessant backdrop of angry dissonance from the orchestra. It was perplexing, but also rather tongue-in-cheek: if we took it too seriously, Barry seemed to be saying, the joke was on us.

DAVID KETTLE