

## **CLASSICAL**

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### **RSNO/Roger Norrington**

Usher Hall, Edinburgh



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Boundaries are blurring, distinctions crumbling. The SCO and Robin Ticciati have long brought a chamber sensibility to bigger orchestral repertoire – Brahms, Dvořák, even Mahler. Pioneer in historical performance Roger Norrington has worked with the RSNO before, and here pared the Orchestra back to a chamber-sized period band for music by Schumann and Mendelssohn. It's all to the good, of course – not only providing new musical perspectives, but also showing the breadth and versatility of two of the national orchestras.

This was a brisk, bright, captivating evening of music, with the conductor perched on a swivel chair, glancing at times over his shoulder at the audience,

and deeply engaged with the RSN0 players – who were arranged in an unconventional period formation, basses high at the back, woodwind standing.

His Schumann Overture, Scherzo and Finale was just as eager and bouncing with energy as it should be, and also displayed the sense of focus and balance that characterised the whole concert: Norrington's slimmed-down strings made a lot of sense against his prominent woodwind and horns. His Schumann Spring Symphony was richer and broader, but maintained his bristling clarity of lines.

The concert's highlight, however, was Mendelssohn's rarely heard First Piano Concerto, in quite a brittle, percussive account from soloist Roman Rabinovich. There was a sense of restlessness to his playing, even in the lyrical slow movement, but it was spectacularly articulated, fiery in its explosions of energy, and with Norrington's nimble orchestral backdrop produced a true journey of emotion.

**DAVID KETTLE**