

ennial flaw in Proms thinking. Time and again they blow large amounts of money on new orchestral works which sink without trace; far better, surely, to divide the available subsidy into smaller parts. One orchestral work could thus equal five or six works for small chamber ensemble, each of which would be infinitely cheaper to repeat.

Ironically the next work in the programme was another tone-poem, Janacek's *The Fiddler's Child* composed a century ago. This was everything which Catlin's work was not. Packed with drama, Janacek's work, with its characteristic effects, came over brilliantly, as did Tchaikovsky's *Little Russian* symphony. But the high point of the evening was soprano Georgia Jarman's performance in Szymanowski's *Love Songs of Hafiz*, a gorgeous work sung ravishly.

**MICHAEL CHURCH**

## **MUSIC**

### **Scottish Ensemble**

Marryat Hall, Dundee

★★★★

THE Scottish Ensemble—or at least a crack eight-strong cadre of core players—stopped off

at Dundee's Marryat Hall for the final concert in a whistle-stop, six-day tour that had taken in Argyll, Mull and Inverness. They'd clearly enjoyed their brief jaunt across the Highlands and Islands, and their performances showed it: it's hard to imagine a warmer, more generous approach to music making than what the players delivered, each of them emerging to demonstrate their talents while sparking off one another brilliantly. The result was chamber music of the highest order: intimate, considered, gloriously stimulating.

Guest leader Marianne Thorsen set the tone with her lithe, strongly defined playing that encouraged but never dictated. It proved the ideal combination for their opener, Mendelssohn's feelgood *Octet*, written—miraculously—when the composer was just 16, and culminating in a finale of unrestrained joy. Beforehand, though, came some beautifully balanced orchestral richness in its opening movement, and some deliciously nervy mischievousness in its fairy-music scherzo.

The concert's real revelation, however, came after the interval, with the otherworldly,

slightly deranged sensuality of Enescu's *Octet*. It is almost never performed, but the Scottish Ensemble players made a strong case for its weirdly twisting melodies and gorgeously decadent harmonies, even if it felt at times rather over-stuffed with invention. Violist Jane Atkins delivered a few particularly memorable, oily solos, but all eight players performed with dazzling conviction and searing intensity, pushing ever onwards towards the work's breathless, ecstatic conclusion. Truly a performance to savour and to cherish.

**DAVID KETTLE**



↑ **Scottish Ensemble: chamber music of the highest order**

## **THEATRE**

### **From Paisley to Paolo**

Oran Mor, Glasgow

★★★

GLOBAL pop star Paolo Nutini is a lad fae Paisley; and so are the three characters in Martin McCaig's 2011 play, now