

Telegraph

Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Usher Hall, Edinburgh, review

Peter Oundjian faced quite a challenge as the new Royal Scottish National Orchestra's Musical Director at this concert in Usher Hall on Friday, writes Ivan Hewett.

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It's a splendid ringing moniker the Royal Scottish National Orchestra possesses, which suggests it has an automatic title to the top place in Scotland's orchestral rankings. Up here in Edinburgh it doesn't seem so obvious. The Scottish Chamber Orchestra is now resurgent under its brilliant young conductor Robin Ticciati. The BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra offers Wagner with top-drawer casts and a contemporary music programme that's as bold as any in the country.

Pinioned between these two, it's hard for the RSNO to carve out a role. French under its flamboyant and gifted Musical Director Stéphane Denève. He's challenge for new director Peter Oundjian, who made his debut on Friday.

Flamboyant Oundjian certainly isn't, but there's an er figure. Towards the orchestra he displayed a sr and a model of technical correctness. He c with the air of a superbly confident do one standing on his head.

As for the programmatic choices, it was the simple brio and joy of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto that was the evening's highlight for me. Soloist Vadim Gluzman's sensational performance galvanised everyone around him. His gypsy ease and louche way of pausing before each return of the theme in the Finale gave a delight, which for me went deeper than all Shostakovich's ponderous literalism.

It's a concentration of the players and Oundjian's shrewd pacing that the tension in this slow movement unfolded. And how well the woodwind soloists captured the music's air of dogged fatalism. It was a feeling I began to share, as the repetitions ground on, and the ending seemed no closer.

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