

# The Dallas Morning News

## Classical music review: DSO doesn't always succeed with excess



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Classical Music Critic

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The best thing in the Dallas Symphony Orchestra's Thursday night concert, at the Meyerson Symphony Center, was the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto. Playing with a huge, lustrous sound — but also exquisite pianissimos where called for — soloist Nicola Benedetti brought dazzling technique and a big personality to the piece.

Born in Scotland to Italian parents, Benedetti supplied both passion and poetry. Paradoxically, the finale would have been more exciting at a marginally less frantic pace, but the roaring ovation was well deserved. Even the first movement got a lot of applause.

With alert, responsive collaboration from Spanish conductor Pablo González, in his U.S. debut, the orchestra played splendidly.

No composer is more misunderstood, and misrepresented, today than Brahms. Precisely because so densely textured and richly harmonized, his music is ill-suited to today's loud, pressurized playing styles. Brahms went to his grave never having heard strings played with modern constant vibrato.

González' account of the First Symphony was self-indulgent — overstuffed and overheated. Apart from the third movement and parts of the finale, tempos plodded.

More and more conductors now take the first-movement introduction — properly, I'm convinced — at the same speed as the main Allegro, or just a *little* slower. But González interpreted the “somewhat sustained” marking in a thudding plod, with crudely over-loud timpani poundings.

Long after other composers were writing quadruple fortes, Brahms wrote nothing beyond a basic fortissimo. And everything we know about performances in his day implies a far more reserved fortissimo than the apocalyptic apotheoses whipped up by González.

His great flailings on the podium all but said, “Look how much sound I can make!” Lovingly formed solos by oboist Erin Hannigan, clarinetist Gregory Raden and co-concertmaster Nathan Olson were too-rare oases of eloquence.

The DSO needs to learn a new overture. Thursday night's performance of Dvorák's *Carnival* was the fifth I've heard from the orchestra since September — three at the Meyerson, two in run-out concerts. Enough already! With flailings worthy of *The Rite of Spring*, González whipped it into near-hysteria, but Olson and English horn soloist David Matthews supplied gentle touches in the dreamy middle section.