

MUSIC

Filarmonica della Scala/ Riccardo Chailly

Usher Hall



While Gianandrea Nosedà and his Teatro Regio Turin forces were concluding their International Festival residency with *La Bohème* in the Festival Theatre, the orchestra of another great Italian opera house – Milan's La Scala – was just starting its own two-concert residency across town at the Usher Hall.

And under the galvanising, exacting direction of La Scala music director Riccardo Chailly, the concert felt like a theatre of sound, an evening of drama in music. The climax, Shostakovich's Twelfth Symphony, had a double significance: it formed part of the International Festi-

val's 70th birthday celebrations (it received its Western premiere at the EIF in 1962); and it also marked the centenary of the Russian Revolution (which it celebrates). It's a troublesome work, possibly the closest the composer came to toeing the Communist party line without any of his trademark bitter irony, but Chailly carried it off magnificently in an astonishingly sincere, driven account that dared to play Shostakovich's cinemascope excesses straight – and was electrifying and persuasive as a result.

Julian Rachlin swapped his usual violin for its deeper sibling for a fiercely committed, deeply lyrical Bartók Viola Concerto – and Chailly's vivid encore, Verdi's *I vespri siciliani* Overture, looked ahead to the orchestra's all-Italian follow-up concert.

DAVID KETTLE