

## **MUSIC**

### **La Scala Philharmonic/ Riccardo Chailly 2**

Usher Hall, Edinburgh



Desolate darkness and dazzling light; pious restraint and joyful flamboyance. There was a touch of genius to the programming in the International Festival's final conventional Usher Hall concert. Not only because the La Scala Philharmonic and conductor Riccardo Chailly were on home ground with its two Italian composers – Verdi and Respighi – but also because of the glorious, defining contrasts between them.

The Edinburgh Festival Chorus was on remarkably vivid form in Verdi's *Stabat Mater* and *Te Deum*. But it

was Chailly's monumental readings of these two choral monoliths, as if he were filled with God-fearing awe, that made them so unforgettable.

After the interval, however, the Milan band broke out into unashamed colour and spectacle in glittering accounts of Respighi's *Fountains of Rome* and *Pines of Rome*, with Chailly ensuring sharp definition even in the work's dreamy textures, and an edge of hard brilliance to much of the playing. His majestic closing evocation of Roman soldiers on the Appian Way was lovingly sculpted, even at its roof-raising, ear-shattering volume. A stormy, surging *Force of Destiny Overture* made a suitably theatrical encore to a concert of blazing magnificence.

**DAVID KETTLE**