

## **MUSIC**

### **Mariinsky Orchestra & Royal Scottish National Orchestra/Valery Gergiev**

Usher Hall



For one night only the Mariinsky Orchestra and Royal Scottish National Orchestra came together to share the Usher Hall stage, all under the galvanising baton of conductor Valery Gergiev. It's the kind of extravagant, slightly madcap event that could only happen at the International Festival, but the unanswered question behind it all was: why? Perhaps simply to provide the requisite gargantuan band needed for Shostakovich's equally gargantuan Fourth Symphony, which received a hall-trembling account from a hundreds-strong orchestra made up of both ensembles combined crammed on to the Usher Hall stage, Scots and Russians sharing desks.

When Gergiev let rip in the outer movements with the massive brass and woodwind sections, complete with ferociously scrubbing strings, it was an appropriately overwhelming, stupefying experience, but there was plenty of subtlety and even tenderness, too, in the first movement's more desolate passages. There were a few inconsistencies across the two bands – disagreement over string sound, for example – but this was a performance about spectacle and power.

Before the interval, the two orchestras played separately. Gergiev was a little brisk and driven in Britten's Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge with the RSNO strings, but beautifully clipped and sarcastic with the Mariinsky in Prokofiev's "Classical" Symphony. An unforgettable evening.

**DAVID KETTLE**