

Reviews

MUSIC

Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra/Yuri Simonov

Usher Hall, Edinburgh



What a way for the Usher Hall to kick off its new Sunday Classics season. The musicians of the Moscow Philharmonic must have played all three pieces in their all-Russian programme countless times, but under the rather imperious, aristocratic direction of Yuri Simonov, they tackled this music as if for the first time, in all its beauty, wonder and rawness too.

That rawness was most evident in their closing Shostakovich Symphony No.10, which – and this is a compliment – reminded you of just what a draining, difficult piece it really is. Simonov injected the whole thing with a relentless intensity, cranked up and down to striking effect in a steely opening movement, and exploding into grotesque life in its pounding scherzo, reputedly a musical portrait of Stalin, where Simonov's rather slow tempo only emphasised the music's immovable

weight. By the end, though, after Shostakovich's pleading horn calls to a pupil he loved, his desperate repetitions of his own initials transformed into music felt like an act of defiance delivered through gritted teeth. Quite simply, a remarkable vision of the piece.

Beforehand, too, Romanian-born pianist Alexandra Dariescu dug deep into Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto to remind you of just what an affecting, effective work it is, despite its over-exposure. It was quite a driven, hard-edged account, but she played as if every phrase held a huge personal meaning to her – technically immaculate, mesmerising, deeply moving. To open, Simonov wrung every drop of drama and sentiment from Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet, which is just as it should be.

DAVID KETTLE

MUSIC

Midge Ure

Barrowland, Glasgow



The year was 1980 – time to usher in a new music for a new decade, time to replace