

influenced moves and deliver The Hit, I Wanna Sex You Up.

The party threatened to start with Salt N Pepa and DJ Spinderella, celebrating 31 years as an outfit, but their longer set was a ragbag of muddy sound mix, rambling chat and antics with their dancers, with the much-loved Let's Talk About Sex, Whatta Man and Push It just about making it out alive.

"Good times," repeated headliner Vanilla Ice like a desperate mantra as he recounted random 90s trends, invited his tour mates back on stage to do much of the rapping work and generally played for time before delivering his hit, Ice Ice Baby.

FIONA SHEPHERD

MUSIC

Royal Scottish National Orchestra, China Story

Usher Hall

★★★★

Seldom can the Usher Hall stage have been so jam-packed with instruments – with myriad drums, gongs, bells and more teetering on the front, joined by an equally expansive

percussion battery at the back of an oversize Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Would that the audience seats had been so crammed. But anyone deterred by the thought of three unknown pieces by an equally unfamiliar Chinese contemporary composer – Xiaogang Ye – might have been surprised by how approachable, even tame, it all was. Ye's a big name in China, holder of numerous influential positions and accolades, and kudos to the Orchestra for the concert's bold, ambitious vision – even if its ultimate result was rather underwhelming.

All that percussion was there for the evening's opener, Mount E'mei, a double concerto for violin (a forthright Lu Wei) and percussion (an athletic Hu Shengnan, darting between instruments and conjuring a hall-shaking cadenza on her colossal set of drums). Although Ye's orchestral parts felt too often like sumptuous but static aural backdrops, the RSNO dispatched them with utter conviction – and they had more to get their teeth into in his heavily perfumed, playful piano concerto Scent of the

Green Mango, with Wan Jieni supplying a delicate solo part. Cardiff Singer of the World-winning bass-baritone Shenyang rather stole the evening, however, with his deep, rich, blissfully clear voice in a commanding performance of Ye's introspective Song of Sorrow and Gratification. Conductor Gilbert Varga was on fine, alert form throughout, even if his Britten Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes that closed the first half felt strangely subdued.

DAVID KETTLE

MUSIC

Cumnock Tryst

Various venues, Cumnock

★★★★

How many brass bands can say they've been conducted by the music director of English National Opera? Ayrshire's Dalmellington Band found itself in that position in a packed series of Saturday concerts at the Cumnock Tryst. Martyn Brabbins even entrusted the band with some of his own music, written in his 20s but never performed.

Brabbins, it transpires, is