

along with some some food for thought about Stewart's achievement in using his pan-to fame to engineer a genuine annual revival of variety theatre - and the variety audience - at the King's. Self-satirising magician Phil Butler added some traditional variety to the first act, the second half featured both Stewart and Stott's much-loved comedy folk duo The MacRoberts, and Fred Macaulay in the kind of brilliant form that makes you long for him to drop the stale and sexist wife jokes, and stick to the brilliantly surreal observational stuff. And with the Andy Pickering Orchestra offering fine support throughout, this latest Big, Big Variety Show emerged as one to remember - and not only because of the snow emergency that almost prevented it from happening it all.

**JOYCE MCMILLAN**

dotted throughout the Usher Hall's sizeable audience, clearly dragging family and friends with them, the average age for her Sunday afternoon concert must have been a couple of decades younger than for other similar events.

Lisitsa has achieved her enormous global popularity through YouTube, and has evidently translated her online stardom into a compelling, charismatic presence in more traditional concert settings. Her Rachmaninov Third Piano Concerto was - well, quite simply magnificent. She combined steely clarity and athletic articulation - seldom can Rachmaninov's flurries of tumbling notes have sounded so sharply etched - with a generous, easy-going sense of lyricism, holding the breathtaking power she's capable of firmly in check, only to release it in two stage-shuddering caden-

zas. If there was a touch of teeth-gritted determination about her outer movements, that only served to re-emphasise the Concerto's turbulent, restless emotions. It was far from easy listening, and it proved an ideal match for conductor Valery Polyansky's no-nonsense incisiveness with the orchestra.

Polyansky bookedend the concert with similarly penetrating accounts of Tchaikovsky - a taut, tempestuous Fourth Symphony, all the pent-up energy of its first movement expended in a vivid finale; and equally dramatic performances of movements from Sleeping Beauty, driven, biting and gutsy. But this was Lisitsa's concert: she's clearly a major talent, and one with plenty to say.

**DAVID KETTLE**

## **MUSIC**

### **Russian State Philharmonia/Valery Polyansky. Piano: Valentina Lisitsa**

Usher Hall, Edinburgh



Valentina Lisitsa might well be right. In her interview for The Scotsman before her Usher Hall performance with the Russian State Philharmonic Orchestra, the Ukrainian-born pianist argued that more young people than ever before are now connecting with classical music. And with enthusiastic kids and teenagers



← **Valentina Lisitsa has achieved her enormous global popularity through YouTube, but shines as brightly in a traditional concert setting**