

MUSIC

Sound Festival

Various venues, Aberdeen

A lunchtime recital, two evening concerts and no less than seven operas (okay, some of them just a few minutes long): Aberdeen's sound festival of contemporary music packed plenty into its final day – and also neatly brought together two of its big 2017 themes.

The first was the 'endangered' bassoon, perhaps overlooked as a solo instrument, but in no danger of slipping into the background in the breathtaking solo recital from Pascal Gallois (☆☆☆☆☆). His traversal of Berio's *Sequenza XII*, written in 1995 for him, was a masterclass in control and fantasy, his bassoon wailing gently as it slid between notes, interrupted by sudden snatches of volatile embellishment.

Opera was the second festival theme, and among pop-up operas in unusual locations was Lewis Murphy's *First Date* (☆☆☆☆), barely five minutes long, but startling lunchtime drinkers in Aberdeen's *Illicit Still* and capturing the hesitancy and poignancy of a first encounter, sung with sensitivity and restraint by Kenneth Reid and Ross Cumming.

At the other end of the spectrum was the anarchic, raucous, patience-testing *Mozart vs Machine* (☆☆☆) by Dominic Robertson. Nominally about electronic music pioneer Raymond Scott having some of his music stolen by a time-travelling Mozart, it brought in video, ping-pong balls, space hoppers, cut-up Mozart arias and even a fake, auditorium-clearing fire alarm to occasionally entertaining but mostly bewildering effect. It was a slick, confident production from Mahogany Opera, nonetheless, with brilliant performances – best of all, soprano Rebecca Bottone as a garish Mozart.

Bringing the festival to an altogether calmer, more reflective conclusion, festival chair (and Aberdeen University professor) Pete Stollery had turned instrument maker to construct a set of fragile glass tubes, drips of water falling on them from water-drenched dishcloths, all manipulated by percussionist Maxime Erchardeur. The result – for Austrian composer Peter Ablinger's *Weiss/Weisslich 3le* (☆☆☆☆☆) – was a gently glistening, ever-

changing soundscape, and an exquisitely meditative ending to the festival's eclectic final offerings.

DAVID KETTLE

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RSNO/Shostakovich 12

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall

☆☆☆

For a variety of reasons, Saturday's RSNO Remembrance programme looked very different from the original published plans.

Out went Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 1, to be replaced by the more popular No 3, played by the young South Korean winner of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, Yekwon Sunwoo; and in came Venezuelan-born conductor José Luis Gomez last minute to save the day when the previously listed podium incumbent had to call off. What didn't change was Shostakovich's Symphony No 12 "The Year 1917", the composer's trenchant, if quizzical, tribute to Lenin's 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

I'm guessing it was already in Gomez's repertoire, as it produced the climactic high point of an evening whose first half never quite hit the button.

In the Shostakovich, the tension was electric, pulverising