

**Venera Gimadieva  
& Pavel Nebolsin**

Queen's Hall



Fast-rising Russian soprano Venera Gimadieva has a voice you can wallow in – alive with silvery sparkle but strong on substance too, and with a remarkable way of conveying a song's storytelling that takes you straight to the opera house.

She seemed entirely at home in her all-Russian Queen's Hall recital, contrasting well-loved songs by Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov with more obscure items. She was immersed in her repertoire's rich Russian world of love and exoticism right from her opener, Vlasov's glittering *To the Fountain of Bakhshisarai Palace*; she brought a rapturous intensity to Vasilenko's sensual *Fly, My Dream*; and she transformed Glière's *Rusalka* into a miniature opera scena, with a lovely, veiled smoothness to her upper register.

There were times, however, when, despite her tonal control, her intense vibrato got in the way of pitch clarity, ironically in her closer, Rachmaninov's well-loved *Vocalise*. On piano, Pavel Nebolsin proved a partner in the truest sense, sensitive to his music's storytelling yet full of his own bristling power. It felt only right that he should get his own solo in the spotlight, in an athletic Tchaikovsky *Dumka*, and by the end of Gimadieva and Nebolsin's three encores, it had been a captivating, beguiling concert.

**DAVID KETTLE**