

MUSIC
TCHAIKOVSKY
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
OF MOSCOW RADIO
USHER HALL, EDINBURGH
★★★

MAKE no mistake: the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra makes a glorious sound – rich, sophisticated, with a burnished patina built up over decades playing together. Things might occasionally get slightly ragged but that only adds to the character of its playing. And even if its chief conductor Vladimir Fedoseyev's accounts aren't the most incisive, they more than make up for that with their power and grand, sweeping expansiveness.

The orchestra – now Moscow Radio's house band, but established back in 1930 as the official Soviet radio orchestra – kicked off the Usher Hall's International Classics series in style, with a commanding Tchaikovsky Fourth Symphony whose music seemed to be coursing through the players' veins. Fedoseyev was a mesmerising presence, sometimes abandoning traditional conducting entirely to stand immobile, arms aloft, imperiously summoning sounds. And it paid off – some details were swept aside in the process, but there was no denying the urgency of his account, nor his broad vision.

The sometimes percussive brilliance of Peter Donohoe's pianism was in contrast to the orchestra's cultivated tone, but he delivered a searing Rachmaninov *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini* nonetheless – his closing variations bristled with energy, but the slow episode sang with pure poetry.

Beethoven's Fourth Symphony struck a jarring note, though – untroubled by any acknowledgement of period performance, it felt old-fashioned, weighed down by its own richness. It was only here that a bit of bracing incisiveness wouldn't have gone amiss.

DAVID KETTLE