

MUSIC

LES MUSICIENS DU LOUVRE GRENOBLE 2

USHER HALL

★★★★★

WHEN conductor Mark Minkowski bowed to acknowledge the copious applause at the end of the second of his all-Schubert evenings, so did all the musicians in his crack period-instrument ensemble *Les Musiciens du Louvre Grenoble*. It's a small detail, and although it seemed strange at first – orchestral players invariably stand stock still while the conductor laps up the adulation – given the musicians' highly individual playing, and the gloriously characterful sound they produced in which every section came through loud and clear, in fact it was only right.

But the orchestra's gritty, detailed, radiantly complex sound was only one of the concert's glories. Players and conductor alike clearly loved the two Schubert symphonies they performed – the brief, youthful *no.3* and grand, expansive '*Great*' *C major* – and they attacked them with passion and vigour, never overplaying the former piece's naive lyricism, while negotiating the latter's sprawling paragraphs with a sure sense of direction and a noble clarity. Articulation was well-nigh impeccable, rhythms were beautifully crisp, and structures conveyed with piercing insight. On the several occasions that Minkowski threw open his arms as if to welcome the sound he drew from his band, it felt just what the audience wanted to do too.

DAVID KETTLE