

dominated by resonant harmonics. While in Kurtág's *Rappel des oiseaux* from *quartet 6 Moments Musicaux* the strings uncannily imitated piccolos and flutes as they fluttered and tweeted.

After two Mozart divertimenti, a quintet and sextet, the Scottish Ensemble upped their numbers to 16, including a pair of horns and oboes, for Mozart's *Symphony No 20 in A major*. This punchy, turbo-charged delivery was full of bite, and playful humour with the musicians clearly having fun.

Although the modern music was fascinating in its reflection of the fragmented and often chaotic world we live in, it was Mozart's tunes we were humming all the way home.

SUSAN NICKALLS

MUSIC

RSNO/Peter Oundjian

Usher Hall, Edinburgh



As farewell concerts go, Peter Oundjian's bowing-out as the RSNO's Music Director was hardly an exuberant, extravagant spectacle marking his six seasons in the role. What it

was, however, was something far simpler, more authentic and almost certainly more heartfelt: just orchestra and conductor, closing their relationship with one of the most unflinchingly raw, honest works in the repertoire: Mahler's *Ninth Symphony*.



↑ Peter Oundjian threw himself into his farewell concert

You can't get away from the fact that Mahler's *Ninth* was an unusual choice for the occasion – a work often seen as Mahler's sign-off to a life of bitterness and regret, although in Oundjian's view a vision of eternity, of endless possibility. And appropriately, he focused on the expansive consolation of the *Symphony's* outer move-

ments, while his inner movements stepped back from the fury, sarcasm and vitriol they often express – they could probably have been rawer, but this was a time for reflection and contemplation rather than angst.

The orchestra – enlarged for the occasion – played magnificently, particularly the voluptuous but strongly defined strings, and Oundjian paid due respect to the *Symphony's* countless soloists: flautist Katherine Bryan, clarinetist Josef Pacewicz, horn player Christopher Gough, trumpeter Christopher Hart, violist Tom Dunn, cellist Aleksei Kiseliyov, and many more besides.

But it was Oundjian himself who was inevitably the evening's focus, and he threw himself into the *Symphony* with purposeful determination, teasing apart its dense, complex textures, and finding an organic sense of development across its contrasting sections. By the end, Oundjian's Mahler was an experience of immense tenderness, honesty and vulnerability.

DAVID KETTLE

THEATRE