

MUSIC

Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia

Usher Hall



Antonio Pappano is every inch a man of the theatre – and will admit as much. Most obviously in his role as

music director at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, but also in his second job, heading Rome's Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, as their dramatic second concert at the International Festival demonstrated so brilliantly. Bookending the concert – entirely appropriately – were

two passionate love stories.

Pappano showed off the orchestra's rich, caressing sound in a superbly balanced Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, microscopically detailed in its textures but never less than tasteful. His closer, Schoenberg's dense *Pelleas and Melisande*, was so vivid it felt like the sound-

track to an imaginary film, with Pappano throwing himself bodily into the score.

But there was a different kind of theatre in the Rachmaninov Paganini Rhapsody that came between them, with Boris Berezovsky a powerful soloist – disarmingly matter-of-fact one moment, searingly intense

the next. It's rare to see a true impromptu encore, but Berezovsky seemed to catch Pappano off-guard as he strode back on and launched into a repeat of the work's slow variation – leaving the conductor to shrug and jump back on the podium. It was a moment of true, honest musical joy.

DAVID KETTLE