

The Arts

Music

RSAMD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, CITY HALL, GLASGOW

MICHAEL TUMELTY

★★★★

I EMERGED from the City Hall on Friday night speechless, moist-eyed and in a state of wonder over all that I had heard. What follows is a snapshot. Deeper consideration of some of the issues that arose in the course of the RSAMD Symphony Orchestra's long concert will wait until another time and context.

Every composer, since time just-about-immemorial, has grappled with the possibility of creating the illusion in music of a sense of stasis, of time having stopped. It's a contradiction in terms of course: music moves through time, which cannot be stopped.

Well let me tell you this: through his orchestral piece *Kidge A*, an evocation of the coldest place on earth, Richard Greer, a gifted young Glaswegian and a student in the composition department at the RSAMD, has come close to approximating that condition.

He established a vast landscape of stillness, so pervasive and dominating that, even when orchestral eruptions occurred, they constituted no more than local events within a universe of stillness.

What a piece: masterfully written, perceptively conducted by Christian Kluxen, and outstandingly delivered by the student orchestra.

And that was just one highlight in a great night for the academy in which Jessica Cottis conducted a tangy account of Kodaly's *Dances of Galanta*, prize-winning pianist Nafis Umerkulova, with Kluxen conducting, gave a performance of Prokofiev's *First Piano Concerto* that was as lucid as it was barnstorming, and the colossal full orchestra, with staggering quality from its principals, devastatingly beautiful playing from leader Rachel Spencer, and Kluxen in overdrive, blew the whole place away with a monumental, glorious performance of Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*. Another one for the record books.