



● Dimitri Hvorostovsky

## 'Singer of the world' arrives from Russia with love

**D**IMITRI Hvorostovsky has been the name on everyone's lips over the last week, that is, if you can manage to pronounce it. The 27-year-old Russian baritone arrived with an extravagant media hype as "Singer of the World", which must have put the collective noses of Pavarotti and others out of joint.

However, he did win the mis-named Cardiff competition of that title last year, which if it were modified to "one of the great young singers of the world" might be more accurate.

He is the possessor of a gloriously rich voice with endless breath control, which has led the great English baritone John Shirley-Quirk to acclaim

**Ian Fox is impressed by the Soviet Union's rising young baritone 'who looks like Nureyev and who sings like a god' and laments the lack of support for contemporary Irish music**

that he "looks like Nureyev and sings like a god".

At this early stage in his career, however, his exceptional talent still requires some rounding, only in Macbeth's Act IV soliloquy: "Pieta, rispetta amore", did his singing really catch fire and his exciting dramatic potential shine through; otherwise his delivery was carefully paced and somewhat straight-laced — solid rather than sensitive.

His choice of material was all on the slow side, too, and the fast cabaletta of his *La Favorita* encore was a little heavy-handed.

He was joined by two other outstanding singers in the concert. Virginia Kerr's artistry impresses more on each occasion and she has developed her tone quite splendidly in recent years.

She has been chosen to star in the latest Judith Weir opera *The Vanishing Bridegroom* which will be premiered in Glasgow in October as part of the city's "Cultural Capital" celebrations and will later travel to Covent Garden.

The trio was completed by Welsh tenor Arthur Davies who is a fine singer with a splendidly secure technique

and excellent musicianship. The three singers were well-partnered by pianist, Ingrid Surgenor.

Tomorrow night Philip Martin will reach Portlaoise on his Music Network tour, with further recitals at Tralee (Tuesday) and Cork (Wednesday). He is playing most of the material he performed so splendidly at the RDS two weeks ago.

His major offering was the Liszt B minor Sonata, one of the great works for the piano and a daunting task for any performer, with its huge sprawling single-movement

format requiring an innate feeling for shape and structure.

He includes his own latest composition as well, *Masquerade II*, another in his series of studies of the characters from the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, comprising five brief pictures in varying moods.

Contemporary Irish music is not served well here at present, the loss of the Dublin 20th Century Festival (there's a thought for our own "Cultural Capital" next year) and the poor, almost non-existent funding of the Association of

Irish Composers are two huge blots on our cultural escutcheon.

It is encouraging, therefore, to see the Goethe Institut and Sounds Modern, composer John Buckley's brainchild, get together to promote four concerts by young Dublin pianist Anthony Byrne. At 12 noon today in the Hugh Lane Gallery you can hear the second in the series with two more recitals to go — 1.15 pm tomorrow in St Patrick's Drumcondra and 1.10 pm on Wednesday in TCD.

The programmes are a mix of Irish and German contemporary piano music and should stimulate much more activity in, and support for, our present-day composers.