

CLASSICAL

LONDON THEATRE

- Harold Pinter**
Tel: 0844 871 7622
SUNNY AFTERNOON
The Kinks Musical
Mon-Sat 19:30, Wed & Sat 14:30
www.sunnyafternoontheatrical.com A/C
 - Lyric**
Tel: 0844 412 4661 www.thrillerlive.com
Now booking until September 2015
THRILLER LIVE
Tue-Fri 19:30, Sat 16:00 & 20:00,
Sun 15:30 & 19:30 A/C
 - Sam Wanamaker Playhouse - Shakespeare's Globe**
Tel: 020 7401 9919
'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE
Tue-Sun 19:30, Thu & Sun 14:30
www.shakespearesglobe.com
 - Apollo**
Tel: 0844 482 9671
URINETOWN THE MUSICAL
Mon-Sat 19:45, Thu & Sat 15:00
www.urinetown.co.uk A/C
 - New London**
Tel: 0844 412 4654
WAR HORSE
Visit website for performance times
warhorseonstage.com A/C
 - Dominion**
Tel: 0845 200 7982
WHITE CHRISTMAS
Tue-Sat 19:30, Wed, Thu & Sat 14:30
www.whitechristmasmusical.co.uk A/C
 - Apollo Victoria**
Tel: 0844 871 3001
WICKED
The Untold Story of the Witches of Oz
Mon-Sat 19:30, Wed & Sat 14:30
www.WickedTheMusical.co.uk A/C
 - Vaudeville**
Tel: 0844 482 9675 www.nimaxtheatres.com
Now previewing; Opens 4 Dec
THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS
Tue-Fri 19:00, Sat 14:30 & 19:00, Sun 13:30 & 17:00
Please check the website for full schedule A/C
 - Fortune**
Tel: 0844 871 7626
Now celebrating 25 terrifying years! Susan Hill's
THE WOMAN IN BLACK
Tue-Sat 20:00, Tue & Thu 15:00, Sat 16:00
www.thewomaninblack.com A/C
 - Shows by venue**
 - London Coliseum**
Tel: 020 7845 9300 www.eno.org
 - English National Opera**
LA BOHÈME
Today, 6 Dec 15:00, 2, 4 Dec 19:30
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE OTHER MARY
3, 5 Dec 19:30
 - National Theatre**
Tel: 020 7452 3000 www.nationaltheatre.org.uk
 - Dorfmans**
HERE LIES LOVE
By David Byrne and Fatboy Slim
Tomorrow 20:00
 - Lyttelton**
3 WINTERS
A new play by Tena Stivicic
Tomorrow 19:30
 - Royal Opera House**
Tel: 020 7304 4000 www.roh.org.uk
 - Royal Ballet**
ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND
6 Dec 19:00
 - Royal Opera**
L'ELISIR D'AMORE
4 Dec 19:30
TRISTAN UND ISOLDE
5 Dec 17:00
- KEY A/C = Air conditioned/Air cooled theatre.
Book at www.officallondontheatre.co.uk

A gesticulating Gospel has the power at ENO, and Huddersfield experiments with flair, says Paul Driver

At the Coliseum, English National Opera gave the world stage premiere of a "Passion oratorio" by the American composer John Adams. **The Gospel According to the Other Mary** (2012), to a two-act libretto compiled by the director, Peter Sellars, had its European premiere in an ambitious concert staging at the Barbican last year by the LA Philharmonic.

As a hybrid form, it was by no means unamenable to the concert hall; and, in truth, there is little action in it for the theatre to feed on – less, even, than in Bach's St Matthew Passion, which Sellars recently staged for the Berlin Philharmonic. Bach, however contemplatively, is telling a good story, where Sellars's eclectic and explicitly feminist version of Gospel events – an amalgam of biblical episodes and multicultural texts from Hildegard of Bingen to the 20th-century Catholic activist Dorothy Day – is more like a musicalised essay on faith.

His dramatic solution, here as in the Bach (and pretty well all his work), is to resort to mime. One often feels that Sellars is only just an opera director – that he'd perhaps prefer to be a choreographer. Certainly, there isn't a thought, impulse or emotion not instantly signalled by hand or body gestures. There is, indeed, a big part for four (black-vested) dancers, but everyone fundamentally dances in a Sellars production.

However static his subject matter, it can be jittered into something like a stage occurrence; and this facility can mean that the designer need do little. George Tsypin's



All-singing, all-dancing

simple single set is a billow sand-coloured tent, pitched not so much in the biblical desert as in a concentration camp with barbed wire and searchlights, and strewn with packing cases. Good use of these containers (one becoming a tomb) is made in the enactment of the Lazarus story, the chief business of Act I. But you can't but feel an



exiguity to the *mise en scène*. The bathing of Christ's feet in oil, the carrying of the Cross, the crucifixion and the resurrection are all dealt with in Act II, alongside text-based invocations of our troubled contemporary world. The six solo singers, like the chorus, are in modern dress, and much given to hugging and consoling each other. The evening is a veritable apotheosis of touchy-feeliness, and it can seem as if it is happening between the real-life performers, because they operate at a Brechtian distance to the stories being reviewed. For me, the result is, in the main, a sanctimony and humourlessness (not that this material was ever going to be comic) and "attitude" consciousness that are decidedly

off-putting. But I found the odd brilliant moment: notably when a dancer crawls insidiously beneath the translucent floorcloth to depict Lazarus rising from the dead. Musically, the piece is powerful. Adams's freshening up – almost reinventing – of tonality is startlingly impressive. Far from the maverick minimalist here, he puts mainstream influences, Stravinsky's in particular, to inspired purposes. It is a big and driven orchestral statement, packed with fascinating new sounds. The singers have correspondingly big voices and use them assertively. As Mary Magdalene, the mezzo-soprano Patricia Bardon struts about, sumptuously distraught. Meredith Arwady, as the solemn, social worker-like Martha, has a contralto that easily crosses the vast spaces of the auditorium; as has Russell Thomas (a stolidly impassioned Lazarus) a tenor.

The charming trio of countertenors (Daniel Bubeck, Brian Cummings, Nathan Medley), representing seraphim, is a novelty; as is the presence of a female conductor, the Portuguese Joana Carneiro, who did a terrific job. Of the remaining performances, the first will be signed. Gesticulation is expecting a field day. The 37th **Huddersfield Contemporary Music**

An apotheosis of touchy-feeliness
The Gospel According to the Other Mary
at the Coliseum

Festival – ending this afternoon with a concert in which the Arditti Quartet (celebrating its 40th anniversary) is, remarkably, offering all seven of the featured composer James Dillon's string quartets – began with an 80th birthday tribute to the American Christian Wolff. His sort of post-Cagean experimentalism, leaving much of the detail of a piece for the performers themselves to determine, has found a sympathetic home in Huddersfield for some time.

The first of the Sunday afternoons was devoted to the aleatory and improvisational. In a rare out-of-town sortie, the festival decamped to Hepworth Wakefield, that startling, sculptural art gallery on the weir-flushed banks of the Calder, and its adjoining performance space named after that river, for a survey of Early English Experimentalism given by the Edges Ensemble, then, in the atmospheric erstwhile mill, the premiere of the saxophonist Evan Parker's Twelve for Twelve Musicians. Occupying by turns the 10 rooms, the foyer, the top of a staircase and an outer entrance of the Hepworth, members of Edges realised evanescent, conceptual inventions from the 1970s by figures such as Christopher Hobbs (his One Note 1966 requires a pair of players to

It's a big and driven statement

repeat a single pitch for "a long time"), Michael Parsons, Hugh Shrapnel and Gavin Bryars.

After such pleasant cavortings, the greater earnestness of disciplined free improvisation was soon under way in the Calder. To mark his 70th birthday, Parker had been invited to gather a group of veterans in the field. There were electronics men and four percussionists – one clacking stones and waving a leafy branch – four wind players and a pianist, and their collective spontaneities unrolled for nearly an hour and a half as the sun was setting, and the colour of the interior brickwork deepened.

It was perhaps excessive, but embraced many felicitous moments as it ran its course from predictably disjunct intimations to outright jazz and back again. It needn't

ever have ended – the men seemed happy to keep going – but somehow (even mystically) Parker steered what was in the end his personal opus to a conclusion.

More conventional modern fare was offered, though still with an experimental spin, by the Catalan ensemble CrossingLines in the little Phipps Hall. Alistair Zaldua's

Contrejours (2012) seemed squarely Cagean, with three players poking into the strings of a piano to trigger electronic transformations of the sound; and it was interesting to note a kind of fightback of the predigital in the UK premiere of Manuel Rodriguez Valenzuela's crisply entitled T(t)-Blocks A+B+C+D, with its role for three electric typewriters.

The Norwegian Cikada Ensemble's Sunday lunchtime recital under Christian Eggen at St Paul's Hall displayed contemporary music in what seemed to me its most hopeful aspect: two superbly imagined works by the British-based Australian Liza Lim (b 1966), in which old usages of tonality and a wealth of new approaches are fused without self-conscious intent into a captivatingly "followable" discourse, almost tactile in its aural satisfactions.

The Heart's Ear (1997), for mixed sextet, is a haunting (nonvocal) meditation on the poetry of Rumi, growing out of an initial fragment of Sufi melody; while Winding Bodies: 3 Knots, receiving its British premiere, not only plays on the rather rich symbolism of "knots", but introduces actual pieces of string, variously drawn through a grand piano, a Hardanger (Norwegian-style) fiddle, a double bass and a Brazilian cuica, or friction drum, which makes a sound like a small-scale lion's roar, if such were possible. **E**

AT SOMERSET HOUSE

GUY BOURDIN IMAGE MAKER

27 NOVEMBER 2014 – 15 MARCH 2015

"ONE OF THE GREATEST FASHION PHOTOGRAPHERS OF ALL-TIME"
MARIE CLAIRE

BOOK NOW FOR THIS MAJOR EXHIBITION
SOMERSETHOUSE.ORG.UK
#GUYBOURDIN

OPEN DAILY 10.00 – 18.00
THURSDAYS 10.00 – 21.00
£9.00/£7.00 (CONCESSIONS)

SUPPORTED BY NARS

EMBANKMENT GALLERIES
SOMERSET HOUSE
LONDON WC2R 1LA

© THE GUY BOURDIN ESTATE, 2014

RICHARD HUBERT SMITH