



# Octogenarian

Willkommen, willkommen, willkommen!

**Willkommen** to the 2nd issue of *Octogenarian* – your friendly reviewer and lobbyist for Bristol’s music scene. We’ve put together a (relatively) bumper edition for your perusal, spanning a whole three pages going over highlights of the Easter period as well as up-to-date reviews. Please see Pg. 3 for a list of what we think will be the highlights of the upcoming performances to be found in Bristol.

This issue sees our reviewers sampling eclectic delights from large scale symphony – where in that far-off time of political certainty and hedonistic living – March – our lieutenant in the field Joshua Claymuncher saw John *No-less* Adams visit our parochial little metropolis with the LSO – to a concert of contemporary chamber works (by Karumpti Patel), *Tosca* taken on by WNO (from our old favourite Flavio) & jazz/funk/mouse-click fusion (our newest space cadet H. Ipe). We also feature a new feature *The Bi-weekly RANT* based on BBC Radio’s *Thought for the Day* we invite retired/dead dictatorial leaders to employ some rhetoric for our cause, this issue we are delighted that Tikon Khrenikov has stepped forward. Thanks Khrenikov... thankikov.

**Thank you.**

NB/ Editor reserves the right to misrepresent genre and as such we will disregard all complaints that broach the subject. Please send complaints to [ak6750@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:ak6750@bristol.ac.uk) the funniest will be included in every single future edition and will be forwarded to the New York Times and Vogue magazine.

## London Symphony Orchestra/John Adams

**Friday 12 March, Colston Hall**



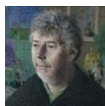
Cosmologically speaking, a unique phenomenon occurred on 7.30pm, Friday 12 March at Colston Hall. The appearance of a star in a concert hall of the South West caused astronomers and music-lovers alike to flock to experience some of its brilliance. Even a faction of the somewhat concert-shy music students of Bristol University were reported to have been spotted in the nearly full (nearly being the key word) auditorium, doubtless enticed by the prospect of something as sublime as the raging sea (Britten), a vast snow-scape (Sibelius) or the first atomic bomb mushrooming in the distance across a hot, arid Nevada desert (Adams). They were not to be disappointed. The first half was what you might call impressionistic. I was certainly impressed. The orchestra left the multi-facaded image of the ocean in all its serenity and bloodlust impressed upon both eyes and ears, as Britten’s *Four Sea Interludes* lapped and crashed over the stargazers. An exquisite performance was perhaps only disappointing on one count: the somewhat held back dynamics of the Storm. If, like me, you’ve ever experienced being on a pirate-style ship in the middle of a storm at sea, or at least imagining it, you’ll know what I mean. Maybe. Anyway, after the storming applause had abated, we were whisked off to Finland for a perfect representation of the huge white expanses of Sibelius’s *6<sup>th</sup> Symphony*, where a little elf or dwarf or faun or something dainty like that frisked about (3<sup>rd</sup> Movement) and was pounced

upon and devoured by a polar bear or something bad-ass like that. Again, perfect painting from the stunning LSO. After the interval, Mr. Adams returned to the podium to offer us some softly-spoken friendly guidance to his explosive (sorry!) symphony, *Dr. Atomic*. He captured the hearts of all: such a clever man, and so nice! And funny! Impressionable audience members soon were rescued from hollow admiration when the symphony filled their ears and they had something more than just kind words to admire: moments of lyricism emerged from massive cross-orchestra minimalist cross-rhythms (Adams at his true best), huge orchestral textures thinning out to the sound of a solo trumpet, or trombone, or tuba (all stunningly played) over maintained high string lines. A truly celestial performance, duly appreciated by a star struck audience.

Joshua Claymuncher.

Editor’s Note: whilst there might not have been any real life astronomers in the public, we hope you will allow this humble reviewer this little indulgence. He took enough liberties with that ‘star’ theme, we know. Man, that really star-ted to wear thin. Oh God, it’s contagious.

We had some room so I included a tiny picture of Harrison Birtwistle, our brave and noble leader (and onetime guest editor). Hopefully its size will inspire you to go and see the real thing held at the excellent National Portrait Gallery after which you could pop over the road for evensong at St. Martin In The Fields followed by a pasty and a cigarette... the train costs £6.60 each way, admission is free, pasties are normally between £1 and £3, and cigarettes can be as cheap as 0.5 ppp (pence per puff – assuming 24 ppc) (puffs per cigarette)). ENJOY MUSIC RESPONSIBLY



We welcome submissions of reviews from all; to submit a review, to write regularly or to receive this publication by e-mail please contact: [ak6750@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:ak6750@bristol.ac.uk)

John Law's Art of Sound Trio  
 John Law (piano), Sam Burgess (bass), Asaf Sirkis (drums)  
 22 April 2010, St. George's.



It seemed on this fine April evening that, having decided against halving the average age of the Colston Hall (or Hippodrome; such choice!) audience, I in fact ended up doubling the number of people sat in the smaller venue up the hill. St. George's is regularly home to some top quality jazz artists, and the trio on show tonight were truly world class; it is a shame that Law doesn't have the 'name' to draw in a larger audience. He is a musician of incredible versatility, having studied piano and composition of the classical variety at the Royal Academy, and going on to find success as far away as the genre of free jazz. For tonight's concert he was in something of a middle ground, performing two hours of original material (save for an utterly filthy

take on 'I Got Rhythm'): jazz, yes, but of a rather more composed variety, and truly eclectic in its influences and execution. Pop and rock, gospel, minimalism, Bach; one piece simple, lyrical, and achingly beautiful, the next rhythmic, driving, and littered with metric modulations. Law describes this music as 'intricate yet accessible', and though it is often easy on the ear it stays the right side of smooth, and is certainly up to repeated listening. The musicianship was of the highest order throughout, all three players clearly enjoying themselves and having ample opportunity to demonstrate virtuosic technique and skilful improvisation.

H. Ipe

### **The Bi-Weekly RANT:**

*Silly sentiment from T. Khrenikov:*

Okay. Have you been to ANY of the Elektrostatic series this year?... No?... Not even one?... Why not?

After all it's bloody well advertised through multiple e-mail channels within the department (leading to the annoying pre-emptive caveat to most of the e-mails that I receive "sorry for cross-posting") including our very own David Fay's weekly concert listings, all of Colston Hall's literature, by enthusiastic word-of-mouth and now by this publication. Is it because of the price?... NO. at £7 concession it is perhaps a little more expensive than some evening concerts that have a more favourable student rate, but the simple fact is that YOU are not going to those concerts, the only concert YOU have been to see was conducted by over-rated import has-beens playing Finish(ed) tone poems, Brito(e)ns whining about the sea and operas re-strung into a concert format for no reason other than to produce a more lucrative show... and that cost £8!

**GO TO ELEKTROSTATIC.**

Welsh National Opera

Friday 23 April, Bristol Hippodrome



On what was a balmy spring evening, the pretty dresses were out, jackets hung off finger-hooks over shoulders, and an excited crowd bustled outside the Bristol Hippodrome, waiting for the curtain to rise on the Welsh National Opera's performance of one of Giacomo Puccini's best-loved operas, *Tosca*. A tale of treachery, betrayal and distrust; love, hate and lust; murder, suicide, more murder and more suicide, set to some of the composer's most intimate, heart-wrenching music; it was exactly what opera enthusiasts would call a good night out. In fact, it was a great night out. Not only were the singers superb, the orchestra 'on it' and the stage designs staggering, but the audience was inaudible: well done Bristol for not destroying the mood/opera by clapping after arias, something that the New York Met audience were heinously guilty of on last

Saturday's broadcast of the same opera on BBC Radio 3. A high-point in the WNO's production was the third act, set atop Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome, complete with a stunning huge bronze replica of the statue of St. Michael, and in particular the desperately tragic aria, *E lucevan le stelle*, with its haunting clarinet line, sob-inducing string playing and desolately passionate tenor part, to which Geraint Dodd did complete justice. Teary-eyed but fulfilled, after a highly vocal and prolonged applause, Bristol's opera buffs have begun another long wait before the next troupe troops across the Severn Bridge to indulge their West-country audience's operatic cravings.

Flavio in Musica

## Elektrostatic 5: 'Modern Britain'

Wednesday 14 April, Colston Hall (Hall 2)



In this the penultimate concert of this season's Elektrostatic series the ever-enthusiastic audience were treated to larger scale chamber works than had previously been programmed. The sheer number of musicians was beneficial to the atmosphere, which has only slightly been eroded since increasing audience numbers have meant that the café-style seating has become a gesture at the front, rather than a statement of intent regarding the ethos of the series. (Other policies include compulsory beards, jaunty hats and round spectacles). The audience were indulged with the very first performance of no less than three works, but before 'premièring' could commence we began with James MacMillan's delightful set of caricatures As Others See Us. The playing here was outstanding, the Bristol Ensemble proving that they have a really deft touch. Control of minute sounds and stylised playing that turned the ensemble sound from an early courtly ensemble using instruments made mostly from tripe straight into a faux 20's swingin' jazz band evoking massive apples.

Barnard's 'moment alone' (5 of 6 or, sorry, V of VI) employed Roger Huckle in a more theatrical role than in previous instalments and proved divisive with those that made it to the pub after the show. I found the music enjoyable for its delicacy and its treatment of the (irritatingly over-explained) subject matter was succinct and had clarity. There will be a chance

for re-appraisal and the treat of hearing what I think was a very fine piece again at the final Elektrostatic as all five of the previously separated 'moments' are put together with another hot-off-the-press movement for the complete performance of Six Moments Alone.

The first part of Neal Farwell's piece Bloodlines was the last to be played before the break. This produced an astonishing ensemble sound giving an over-whelming impression of the numerous players all contributing to an U.U.I. (unidentified über instrument).

The premiere of Laycock's piano concertante (all were at pains to make sure we knew it wasn't a concerto) Among Severn Hills left me and the blonde a little under-whelmed; it was excellently performed and had moments of beauty, but the relentless barrage of thick (and then thicker) textures made for a trickier and 'treacleier' listening experience than I had expected.

This was a great concert, signalling the beginning of the end for this years Elektrostatic series, at five concerts down, one to go I can honestly say this series is as exciting as it gets in Bristol, long may Elektrostatic continue.

Karumpti Patel

When?	Where?	Who?	What?	Pennies?
1pm Thursday 29 April	St. George's	Schubert Ensemble	Exploring Schumann's Piano Quintet (with performed analyses and full performance)	<b>FREE for students</b>
1pm Thursday 6 May	St. George's	Jane Ng – violin Fei Ren - piano	Mozart/Brahms/Ng	<b>FREE for students</b>
7pm Saturday 8 May	St. George's	Exultate Singers Chamber Orchestra David Ogden	Mozart/Lauridson/Corigliano	<b>£8 under-26</b>
7.30pm Tuesday 11 May	Colston Hall	Moscow State Symphony Orchestra (Pavel Kogan)	Borodin/Rachmaninov/Shostakovich	<b>£6 student</b>
<b>Pick of the nose:</b>				
7pm Sunday 2 May	St. George's	Orchestra/Choir of the Age of Enlightenment	Monteverdi <i>1610 Vespers</i>	<b>£11 students / £5 BUMS</b>

# ctogenarian

*Where style outweighs substance*

Disclaimer: Whilst style in fact does outweigh substance, management note that there is very little in the way of style, and cannot be held responsible for disappointment.