

# Trio lack romanticism

THE Bolshoi's second programme opens promisingly on Vadim Ryndin's wonderfully atmospheric set for Chopiniana. Its dewy greys and misty woodland greens suggest a dawn painting by Corot, and the motionless groupings of corps de ballet dancers complete the tableau.

All the more disappointing, then, when the night's three ballerinas failed to offer the requisite romanticism. Maria Alexandrova danced with a brio that would earn her cheers in *Le Corsaire* at the end of the evening but was quite out of place in this delicate period piece; Maria Allash delivered the steps with a vacancy that was less ethereal than anaesthetised, and while Inna Petrova did her best, she was quite unequal to the ballet's technical and dramatic challenges.

The corps de ballet were faultless, however — the company's new director, Boris Aki-

BOLSHOI BALLET ★

Theatre Royal Drury Lane

Luke Jennings

mov, has wrought wonders with them — and I passed the time recasting the piece from their ranks.

Petrova reappeared after the interval as Juliet to Sergei Filin's sinuously exotic *Romeo* in a pas de deux from Leonid Lavrovsky's 1946 production. This was not a successful pairing and reignited long-standing questions about the relationship between seniority and talent in the Moscow company.

Talent swiftly took the stage in the slender form of Anna Antonicheva, who, with Andrei Uvarov, delivered a radiant and supremely confident *Sleeping Beauty* pas de

deux. Antonicheva can appear hesitant at times, as if uncertain as how best to deploy her high, pure line, but tonight she gave herself unreservedly to the music and to Uvarov's elegant partnering. The result was thrilling, every risk paid off, and the seven or eight minutes the two of them spent on stage together entirely redeemed the evening.

They were followed by Svetlana Lunkina and Dmitry Gudanov in an excerpt from *La Sylphide*. Gudanov is a fine dancer with exceptional ballon but tonight — inhibited, perhaps, by a lightweight mini-kilt and a bonnet that would have given Julian Clary pause for thought — he appeared uneasy. Lunkina, meanwhile, was thistledown lightness, even if an unsylph-like smirk told us that she couldn't take the abbreviated proceedings entirely seriously.



Nigel Norrington

Svetlana Lunkina: thistledown lightness



Intensity: violinist Tasmin Little

## Frozen, but not a waste

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA★★

Royal Festival Hall

Rick Jones

SIR Peter Maxwell Davies's *Antarctic Symphony* (Symphony No 8) presented a still picture of the South Pole at its world premiere last night. There is no progress towards a point as there is in the heroic, doomed, Scott-of-the-Antarctic trudge of Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antarctica*, which Max's work was commissioned to follow after a 50-year gap.

It is a one-movement study in sound of the awesome static beauty of the desolate continent. Nature is not an enemy as it is in Vaughan Williams. Time is merely the canvas which the still-life fills. Irregular bar-lengths permit no rhythm to take hold.

Even the middle-section's romantic string melody with old-fashioned harp runs sounds like frozen homage to the earlier composer. The jagged opening is as vicious as ice. Aggressive trombones punch with a glacial glare. The clarinet speaks with chilly clarity — God this is an awful place. Banshee strings shiver. The percussionists have a busy night. The glockenspiel glistens, vibrating wine-glass rims sing like Vaughan Williams's wordless choir and the scraped gong hurts like fingernails on a blackboard.

Yet I could hear it all again and not regret it. What a pity it was not programmed with the Vaughan Williams. Apparently, the idea was discussed. Instead, Elgar's *Violin Concerto* with soloist Tasmin Little, who hushed the orchestra with the intensity of her first notes, and Walton's *Crown Imperial* were the match.

One sensed an ironic hand at work but the Elgar is too serious and passionate and Max's *Antarctic* too cold and cruel to be trifled with. That was where Scott went wrong.

## Bee-plus for originality

BILL WOODROW: THE BEEKEEPER ★

South London Gallery, SE5

Nick Hackworth

AS Tina Turner once sang, "Women of a certain age don't like taking chances — and play the waiting game", which, happily, also serves as a damning critique of most internationally renowned artists of a certain age, who generally hang around, playing it safe, sticking to well-trodden and assured paths.

Pleasingly, Bill Woodrow bucks this trend. The work on display in this exhibition, all of it made in the past five years, represents the highpoint of what one might call allegorical figurative style in Woodrow's work, which, given his origins in conceptual work, is the mark of a consistently inquisitive artist.

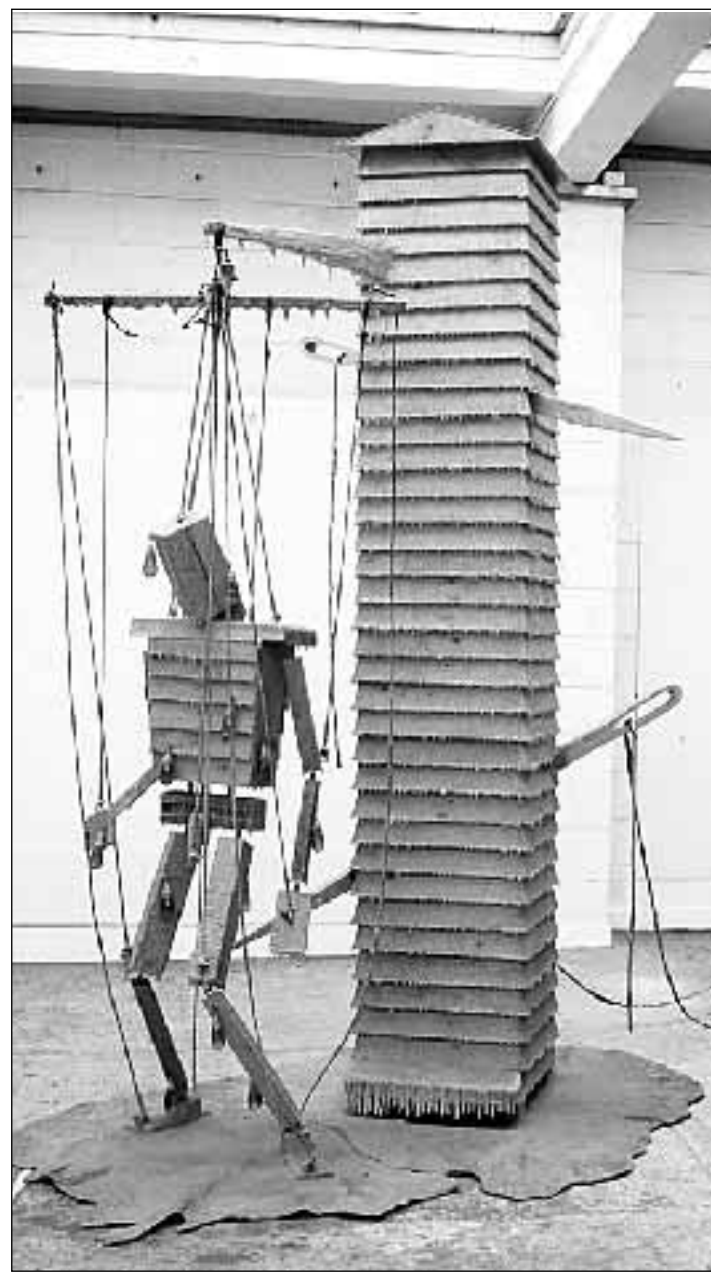
The first impression on walking into the exhibition is of having been transported to some scene from *Alice in Wonderland*. The gallery is full of sculptures that jostle for attention, losing out, momentarily, to the massive, seven-metre-long *Shadow of the Beekeeper*, which dominates the room. It depicts the main character of the show, the beekeeper, a giant wooden puppet made up of rough-hewn wooden blocks, morphing into the shadow of a huge bee.

Elsewhere we see the beekeeper engaged in various different stages of his art — harvesting honey and releasing swarms, objectified as bulbous glass forms resting in the cool of a lake. Throughout his labours, the puppet form of the beekeeper is wading through, or drenched in, beeswax and the golden glow of honey fills the room.

Despite the fact that the allegorical meanings of the different elements within the beekeeper's universe are never made explicit, the symbiotic relationship of the beekeeper with the bees seems to serve as some sort of model for the relationship between man and his environment.

Allegory, however, is a dangerous tool. The link between the physical object and the allegorical meaning it is meant to manufacture is a fragile one, dependent on a language of ideas that is shared by artist and audience. That language and link can only be stretched so far. Staring at the small series of sculptures entitled *Beekeeper*, *Rock* and *Chicken I, II, III*, it is hard to see anything other than the image of three roast chickens flying through the air, crapping beeswax on to the heads of three beekeepers sitting forlornly below.

● Until 13 May, 65 Peckham Road, SE5. Tel: 020 7703 6120.



Bill Woodrow's Beekeeper and four hives

## Surrender to that Caracas beat

URBAN BEATS/CARACAS ★★

Barbican

Max Bell

THE Urban Beats week may prove to be one of the best seasons you can enjoy without contracting foot-and-mouth since *Womad* moved into Shepton Mallet. Taking the idea that cities inspire great musicians to gravitate towards them may not be revolutionary but it gives the jaundiced World Music term a different thrust.

Last night's visit was from Caracas — the most dangerous area in the world after Algeria, Kabul, Cardiff and Clapton — and UB refused to be typecast. Whereas the admirable *Meltdown* was basking in glory south of the River, in Silk Street Guaco and the Los Amigos Invisibles were laying down a brand of fevered funk and traditional folk and couldn't give a monkey's about anything

but rhythm. They reminded everybody why music has nothing to do with esoteric tourism and is far more about having a good time.

Guaco majored in horny horns, sashaying, leather-clad brotherly vocals and an entourage larger than Ronnie Biggs's coat minders; Los Amigos struck out for their usual filthy, funky rock meets Santana with a side-order of slit-throat sleaze. Some people

preferred the former's more formal Latinat touch but I'm a sucker for the Invisibles' debauched disco dramas, many of them dealing with practices of a dubious nature.

Yet none of these observations should detract from one's admiration for the sheer charisma of the bands playing. Western music has plenty to recommend it but still lacks the cheek and glamour of these Caracas cats. Not so much a case of seeing was believing, more like hearing was surrender.

Ratings: ○ adequate, ★ good, ★★ very good, ★★★ outstanding, X poor