

## Going Out Reviews

# Lethal talent

MIXED BILL/Houston  
Ballet ★★  
Sadler's Wells  
Anne Sacks

HOUSTON Ballet's mixed programme vividly exposes the company's depth of talent with dances that reinvigorate the art form. Excellent training at the company's school, from which most of the dancers are drawn, and the blazing of a fluent classical style have produced dancers of character who are lively, versatile, polished, and vigorously accomplished.

Apart from Diana and Actaeon, a dazzling gala piece with explosive performances by Lauren Anderson and Carlos Acosta, the programme comprises new pieces created on this set of lethal dancers. Company choreographer Trey McIntyre's *Second Before the Ground* is a vibrant work that cheekily sets the formalism of ballet to African rhythms, and it works surprisingly well as a joyous homage to dancing.

Musicians on stage play a Schubert concerto for Natalie Weir's *In A Whisper*, a knotty piece about the death of a relationship. A sash frame is a window on a couple's emotional carnage and also represents a means of escape for the skittish man (a feverish Dominic Walsh). Stanton Welch's big Bruiser, danced in Lycra shorts and crop tops, is inspired by the cut and thrust of boxing and uses high kicks, hip thrusts and spot turns in a skilfully inventive piece. Anybody interested in the progress of contemporary classical ballet daren't miss this.

● *Tonight only. Cleopatra to Saturday. Box office: 020 7863 8000.*



Capturing the heart and soul of a passionate work: Joseph Millson and Caroline Faber

# Minding the mill

TO fit George Eliot's rich, sprawling and emotionally gripping novel onto a stage in one evening seems tantamount to the impossible task of fitting a ship into a bottle. But just as those with the right skills could trap a vessel that evokes a more wide-ranging journey in a flattering showcase, so too, the Shared Experience Theatre Company captures the heart and soul of this passionate work, so that it displays Eliot's talents in all their glory.

Shared Experience's intelligent combination of text and physical theatre has attracted accolades over the years for productions that include *Jane Eyre* and *War and Peace*. Nancy Meckler and Polly Teale's version of *The Mill On The Floss* has been part of the company's repertoire since 1994, and it rises to the challenge by making the stage as much a depiction of Maggie Tulliver's psychological landscape as a recreation of the Wordsworth-inspired coun-

MILL ON THE FLOSS  
★★★

New Ambassadors

Rachel Halliburton

try scenes to be found in the novel.

The play therefore opens inside Maggie's imagination. On stage, a girl with a bird's nest of hair that seems to shoot straight from her wild impatient mind, reads from a book about the trial-by-drowning of a witch. Behind her a crowd reenacts the scene playing itself out in her head, and the lighting flashes to a livid, underwatery green as the "witch" is plunged below the bridge. It is a brilliant prefiguration of her own eventual destiny, as an intelligent woman pushed to the edges of society by prejudice and incomprehension.

Three girls play Maggie Tulliver at different stages in her life, and Helen Edmundson's adaptation

makes full use of this trio of actresses to evoke Maggie's complex psychological layers. So, for instance, as the prissily pious Maggie (Jessica Lloyd) deliberates on her feelings for Philip Wakem, the wild impetuous child (Pauline Turner) tugs at her and urges her to kiss him. The constant wrestling match between impetuous intelligence and the iron corset of rigid religious belief is an obvious echo of Eliot's own early adulthood. Unlike Eliot, however, who eventually got her man, Maggie is doomed to denial.

Against Bunny Christie's wonderful set, a strong cast recreates the closely observed comedy and the heartfelt tragedy of the novel. There is not one weak link — but Pauline Turner especially ensures that Eliot's untameable spirit continues to burn.

● *Until 5 May. Box office: 020 7639 1761.*

# Sultry heat and castanets

LSO/CECILIA BARTOLI ★★

Barbican

Rick Jones

IMPATIENT with the schools, all orchestras now have their own education projects. As befits the world's finest, the LSO's scheme is the most grandiose. It involves the purchase of the redundant church of St Luke, Old Street, EC1 and the transformation thereof into a music-education centre, mini concert hall and recording studio. It was in aid of this noble ambition last

night that the fabulous Italian mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli sang Berlioz's *Les Nuits d'Été* with conductor Pierre Boulez, who had to beat half the National Anthem when the Duke of York came in. Bartoli sang with tantalising restraint. Her pianissimo in *Le Spectre* reduced the strings to a delicate shimmer. All coughing ceased in wonder. She conjured a bright sultry heat in *Sur les Lagunes* and summoned a cooling, billowy breeze in *Absence*. She did not let rip until her encore, Berlioz's *Zaide bolero*, when she shortened her neck and shook out her famous dazzling runs while reminding us that she had started life as a flamenco dancer by simultaneously playing the castanets. Boulez conducted unflappably, controlling the exuberant triplets in Berlioz's *Beatrice et Benedict* overture and freeing the dances in Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloë* ballet. The concert is repeated tonight.



Wondrous: Cecilia Bartoli

● *Cecilia Bartoli sings Berlioz with the London Symphony Orchestra under Pierre Boulez tonight at the Barbican. Box office: 020 7638 8891.*

Ratings: ○ adequate, ★ good,

★★ very good, ★★★ outstanding, X poor

# Bring back the birch

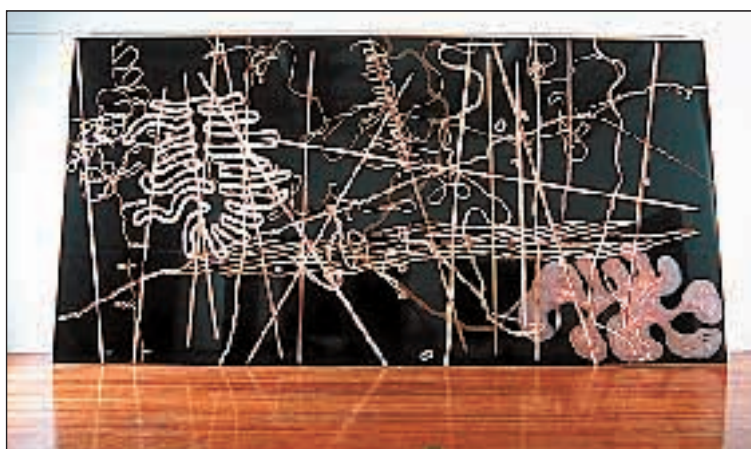
BECK'S FUTURES 2 ○

ICA Galleries

Nick Hackworth

I'VE SEEN the future, and it sucks. Beck's Futures is now the biggest British art prize going in terms of prize money, with a total of £60,000 being doled out: £4,000 to each of the 10 short-listed artists and a further £20,000 going to the winner. Inevitably, big does not mean good. The short list, apparently representing the best of young talent, consists of five painters (well four and DJ Simpson, who "paints" by savaging bits of MDF and plywood with an electric router), three photographers and two artists who produce sculptures/installations.

On balance, the photographers edge it, though this is hardly an accolade. Gemma Iles, at 25 the youngest artist on show, produces clean, striking portraits in which quite human dramas unfold against anonymous backgrounds. Dan Holdsworth, too, makes a virtue of anonymity, depicting strange scenes of floodlit and desolate out-of-town shopping malls with clinical, colour-saturated



No way to treat a tree: DJ Simpson's Secondary Modern

precision. The sculptors are a mixed bag. Brian Griffiths has created an enormous, amusing Blue Peter-style sculpture of a horse and his rider using all manner of household detritus. Shahin Afrassiabi, however, has conjured one of those installations that firmly focuses your attention on the room's decorative plaster mouldings in the hope of receiving some intellectual and aesthetic relief.

The painters, sadly, are no better. Simon Bill, whose inclusion in an exhibition subtitled *Tomorrow's Talent Today* seems to be stretching things a little, given that he was born in 1958, presents five oval paintings, none of them interesting. Clare Woods splatters enamel paint inconsequentially around in what looks like a Frankenstein coupling of the styles of Gary Hume and Jackson Pollock, while retaining the

virtues of neither. DJ Simpson, who apparently is a strong contender for the overall prize, however, deserves special mention. In creating *Secondary Modern*, a huge 7m x 3m monster that leans against the wall of the lower gallery, he has needlessly ruined a perfectly good piece of high-pressure laminated birch. He has drawn squiggles, carved lines, gouged pits and denuded areas of the black laminate that covers the surface of the wood — basically doodling on paper writ large (and more destructively) with an electric router. Our poor birch tree, when first sprouting from some fecund forest floor, did not foresee for itself a fate as foul as this.

● *The winner will be announced at a gala awards evening at the ICA next Tuesday. Continues until 20 May (020 7930 3647).*

## 1,000 Free tickets to The Ideal Home Show

Thursday is late night at the Daily Mail Ideal Home Show when it is open until 10pm. And we're giving you the chance to claim an exclusive free evening ticket worth £5.

We have 1,000 tickets waiting to be claimed to this week's show. Simply cut out this advertisement and take it to Earl's Court after 5pm on Thursday and you will be admitted **FREE OF CHARGE**.

If you are one of the first 1,000 visitors you will also receive a **free glass of wine from madaboutwine** and get vouchers for a 2 for 1 meal and drink deal.

If you are not one of the first 1,000 you can still get in for **£5**.

The Daily Mail Ideal Home Show is at Earl's Court, London until 8 April. For further details go to [www.idealhomeshow.co.uk](http://www.idealhomeshow.co.uk)

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