

Let's talk about sex

ALL WORDS FOR SEX ★

Soho Theatre

Patrick Marmion

ALL words for sex in Shakespeare's day were words for talking — or so we learn in Jules Leyser's hearty one-woman show about psychoanalysis. It's a fact that gives credence to the sceptic's idea that therapy, "the talking cure", is just mental masturbation. Accordingly, there are aspects of Leyser's show that border on onanism, but by large, the labour she has put into writing and performing her four characters at a Harley Street clinic is not self-indulgent.

It's also easy to feel sympathy for her quartet, because anyone who's prepared to foot the bills of a Harley Street clinic really does need their head examining. The first case is Imogen. She doesn't seem in too much need of emotional rescue, being a self-confident dot-com executive who employs "her boys" on the basis of their bed-ability. But behind her bravado there lurks an anxious control freak with a policy of dump first and dump hardest.

She is followed by prim Marion, who seems in much greater need — being comically sexually repressed and over-attached to honeysuckle-scented wipes. Then there's Paula, a party-animal Scouser who's chalked up nine abortions and is almost cheerful about her father's sexual abuse. But any feeling that you're going to get away laughing is banished by the arrival of the last character — a publishing executive who is the victim of a drive-by rapist.

The four appointments with an imaginary shrink are linked by Tom Holland's slick video sequences showing the characters en route to their appointments. They enter John McHugh's cream and white set as though arriving at a TV chat show (or sex show to Shakespearean scholars). Leyser's writing then hums with choice phrases and anecdotes, the characters unwittingly revealing themselves by addressing the audience as the therapist.

Philip Goodhew's direction exploits the simple format cleverly and subtly, but Leyser herself must take most of the credit. Not only has she written a lively script, she performs it with gusto and sensitivity. As a result, this is a good showcase for her considerable talents — whether she be slouching, perching, bouncing or weeping on the couch.

● Until Saturday 3 March. Box office: 020 7478 0100.



Four into one: Jules Leyser's hearty one-woman show

Jamaican daddy so-so at love-in

ERNEST RANGLIN BAND ★

Queen Elizabeth Hall

Jack Massarik

POPULAR Ernest Ranglin is the father-figure of Jamaican jazz. He sets high standards as a guitarist and composer and, more relevantly, is known by everybody, having entertained at countless dances over the years. In the early Sixties he lived in London, dabbling with the sounds of ska and scoring Millie Small's Top-10 smash My Boy Lollipop. After hitting these dizzy heights he returned home and his visits became rarer.

The welcome that greeted him last night was a real St Valentine's night love-in, and it was a pity that an over-serious opening half-hour dissipated it. A capacity crowd was ready to whoop and cheer everything the slightly stooped, neatly-suited figure played

on his deep-bodied Gibson sunburst, but found it unexpectedly tough going. Some five lacklustre numbers passed before a reticent Ranglin made any announcement, and there was a turgid similarity about those pieces. All were drone-like minor-key originals of little melodic interest with no real chord progression to explore. Only Ranglin thrived on them. He has his own patented ways of going outside the tonic key, using clever modal extensions to the familiar Wes Montgomery chord shapes and busy single-string flurries.

He's also a busy accompanist, which didn't help the other soloists, especially tenorist Jean Toussaint and pianist Nikki Yeoh, two of the usual suspects rounded up at short notice to replace no-shows from the advertised line-up. Inflight, a brisk bossa-nova, was Toussaint's first chance to do any better than arpeggiate his solos. Yeoh, always a crowd-pleaser, won through by switching between synth and piano.

Sylvia Tella, featured on Ranglin's new Telarc CD, Modern Answers to Old Problems, finally bounded onstage to deliver some theatrical vocals and do her hippy-dippy dance. Only then was the personality vacuum filled. Tip-top album, so-so show.



Ernest Ranglin: reticent

Futurists almost picture perfect

INSPIRED by a manifesto of 1909 that, among other things, glorified war and insulted women, the Italian futurists have been in danger of seeming faintly ridiculous to modern sensibilities. To fall prey to this tendency, however, would be a mistake, for behind the unfortunate moustaches sported by the futurists lie lessons that might be learned by contemporary artists, were contemporary art practice not so paralysed by the constraints of postmodern irony.

The most important lesson, perhaps, lies in the relationship between art practice and wider concepts. Whereas most contemporary conceptual art involves the exploration of obscure and solipsistic concerns, the futurists explored an idea that was profound and relevant to their era — that technology was changing the experience of life. This concept was then explored and articulated through their visual artwork, creating a unity between theory and practice that gives the work a lasting relevance.

The second lesson is that such a unity between concept

FUTURISM AND PHOTOGRAPHY ★★

Estorick Collection

Nick Hackworth

and practice does not necessarily stifle creativity or innovation, as the 150 prints in this exhibition prove.

The relationship between futurists and photography was, at first, ambivalent. On the one hand, they hailed scientific photography as technologically advanced; on the other, they felt that the photograph captured time itself, stopping it dead, an anathema to those who aimed to capture the total sense experience of speed and movement.

The paradox was solved by the development of photodynamism by Anton Giulio Bragaglia. The technique used long exposures in combination with a repeating flash gun to capture ghostly images moving over a length of time.

Walking around the exhibition, one might agree with early critics of the futurists who saw a generous gap between the revolutionary words of the movement's followers and the more prosaic works they created. Some images are true classics, such as the image of the photodynamic typewriter by the Bragaglia brothers, in which hands dance over the keys, or



Tackling big ideas: Central weights and measures, 1932, by Tato

Wanda Wulz's sophisticated photomontage *Cat + I*, in which cat and human morph into one. But even the many less impressive images are testament to a desire to tackle big ideas. True conceptual art. ● Until 22 April. Estorick Collection, N1. Box office: 020 7704 9522.

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

Brief Encounter meets romance

LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA ★

Barbican

Rick Jones

CONCERT promoter Raymond Gubbay, whose application to run the Royal Opera House is still under consideration, formed the London Concert Orchestra 30 years ago to play in events such as last night's Valentine Concert, which attracted a three-tier crowd.

Some slightly unromantic tuning developed as the evening matured, but the mood was easy, every couple received a red rose and there was laughter when a trumpeter cried out "yes" at the end of Tchaikovsky's Neapolitan Dance from Swan Lake. Still, it obviously would not do for Covent Garden to become profitable, as opera houses, especially royal ones, are by their nature a frightful and costly extravagance, darling.

Murray McLachlan played Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No2 with some panache, although he suffered from an overpowering orchestra during the swollen Brief Encounter passages. He evoked the film pretty well, which was the intention. No one was after any new interpretation. Certain generations gave themselves away by humming the Onedin Line. Strauss's Blue Danube waltzed rather sedately and a heavy moon waxed cheesily in Debussy's Clair de Lune. No one had to plead for an encore. They played the theme from Love Story. Seen the film, heard the orchestra.

Raymond Gubbay presents Verdi's Aida from 23 February at the Royal Albert Hall. Box office: 020 7589 8212