

# Reviews

www.thisislondon.co.uk/theatre  
www.thisislondon.co.uk/music



Tatiana Tchernobrovkina as "a delicately nuanced Odette" and Georgy Smilevski as a Wacko Jacko Siegfried

## Short shrift

**BRATKE AND ROGGERI ★**

Queen Elizabeth Hall

**Rick Jones**

ONCE, in the Brazilian city of Salvador, my bus got stuck behind a samba band practising its carnival routine and I was late for a date by nearly three hours. I know, therefore, that Brazilian drummers can play for far longer than they did in Saturday night's disappointingly short concert given by the above piano duo and the 11 drummers drumming of Meninos do Morumbi. The pianists alternated with the percussionists without pause for applause so that the 75-minute programme was heard as one item.

Bratke and Roggeri began with an extract from Bach's Goldberg Variations with 20th century twinges by Robin Holloway. This led to a lone drummer beating the simple rhythm of an ancient funeral march on drum and woodblock for a minute or so, which was hardly time to feel the tragedy. It seemed the intent was rather to demonstrate than entertain.

Later, in a piece by Brazilian composer Ernesto Nazareth, which Bratke and a shimmying tambourinist played together, the pianist tried too hard to give the impression of informality, forgot where he was in the bass and had to fumble for the right notes.

Still there was a genuine attempt to create something meaningful and worthwhile here: the Meninos are children rescued from drugs and prostitution.

The philanthropic duo played the original four-handed version of Mozart's Fugue in C minor with an addictive rhythm. Better a slave to music. Milhaud's Scaramouche — with illustrative percussion — swayed as gaily as a mardi gras procession. The drummers cruelly curtailed the pounding of the samba Olodum as if too much might harm us. In Brazil, they play until the crowd is wild with the beat.

My date forgave me. Anyone could be distracted by a samba procession, she said.

## Twirls of the unexpected

IN his 1953 version of Swan Lake for the Stanislavsky Ballet, the choreographer Vladimir Bourmeister reinstated a score which is claimed to be the original written by Tchaikovsky for the 1877 Moscow production. For the plot, he looked back to the 1895 St Petersburg production. The result is quirky and unexpected.

With Act 1, which follows a prologue illustrating (if not explaining) Odette's enchantment by Rothbart, we are transported to a castle terrace overlooking a Rhineland valley. Here courtiers, peasant girls, and a jester are attempting to amuse Prince Siegfried, who has been ordered by his mother to get married.

Georgy Smilevski, who danced Siegfried on last Friday's opening night, is an elegant and technically assured dancer, but his portrayal of the prince is — to say the least — somewhat mannered. With his late-period Michael Jackson make-up, and fingers which fly to a string of imaginary pearls at the

**SWAN LAKE/Stanslavsky Ballet ★**

Royal Festival Hall

**Luke Jennings**

slightest alarm or diversion, he presents an interesting challenge to any mother set on matchmaking.

Tatiana Tchernobrovkina received a warm round of applause on her entrance. London has taken this beautiful Stanislavsky ballerina to its heart, and in return she gave us a delicately nuanced Odette. As much fatalistic princess as swan, Tchernobrovkina dances the role as if unable to believe that happiness is to be her lot, and while she lacks the deep-frozen flawlessness of the Kirov's Uliana Lopatkina or the Bolshoi's Nadezhda Gracheva, she is far more human than either. We read Odette's tragic condition in her eyes as well as in her arabesque.

At the opening of Act 3, Siegfried is moodily viewing princesses and fingering his pearls when Rothbart bursts into the castle hall and magics up a whirlwind flurry of performers. The most brilliant of these is the Neapolitan dancer (Anastasia Pershenkova). Pershenkova has already danced a lyrical adagio in Act 1 and shown diamond-cut precision as a little swan in Act 2; now she is a whirling street-Arab, alternately flashing come-and-get-me looks at the throne and vicious, drop-dead glares at the stunned princesses.

Tchernobrovkina's Odile, meanwhile, is all glinting irony and self-adoration. Her fouettes are reckless to the point of folly, but she gets her man, forcing ghastly Miss World-finalist smiles from the other hopefuls. The story seems to demand a tragic ending, but Bourmeister's epilogue gives us Soviet optimism and a new dawn. A sold-out audience registered their loud approval.

● Until 12 January. Box office: 020 7960 4242.

## True Britt

**BRITT DANIELS ★★**

Borderline

**Max Bell**

SINGER/songwriters in January are generally about as rare and as welcome as unwanted Jamie Oliver product or film buffs desperately trying to convince us that Mulholland Drive isn't complete tosh. Like Tony Blair's passport, this breed is seen out far too often when it should be at home minding its p's and q's.

However, in the case of Britt Daniel, an exception can be made. Daniel, from Austin, Texas, is usually found ladling his wit and wisdom with a group called Spoon, hitherto most famous for sharing a producer with Lone Star loonies And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead. But don't let that connection put you off.

Looking about as un-American as it's possible to be in jumper and plimsols, Britt rattled through a fabulous selection of classy pop tunes from the excellent albums A Series Of Sneaks and Girls Can Tell. Although he's not a great guitarist, he's got a lot of charisma, moulding himself to his Guild with a whiff of the rhythmic panache and rough-around-the-edges glamour John Lennon used to give off.

Britt's songs are sophisticated, twisted even. Execution and Anything You Want aren't exactly power pop but they bounce off the edges of that genre without evoking too many obvious influences, although Harry Nilsson might be one. Neither talking a lot of nonsense, nor pushing himself into the tortured artist bracket, Daniel found the perfect middle ground between wayward and fascinating, didn't outstay his welcome and left the crowd curious for more.

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

## If only he'd gone down the river

THIS exhibition represents the worst excesses of conceptual art. In the three large and pleasant galleries that make up the Camden Arts Centre, Swiss artist Roman Signer has deposited a series of works that resemble the creations of a deranged DIY enthusiast with a penchant for Alpine imagery.

Which is, perhaps, what they are.

The first gallery is filled with a variety of pieces. One consists of an electric fan fanning a live Christmas tree. Another is a strip of sand, at the end of which stands a set of skis. Another is a wooden box into which you clamber and then stick your head into an attached fireproof helmet. In the adjoining gallery a video piece presents us with the view from a camera attached to a log floating down a river.

**ROMAN SIGNER X**

Camden Arts Centre, NW3

**Nick Hackworth**

The final gallery is filled with an array of large model helicopters. In the middle of the room sits a contraption for enveloping Christmas trees in white synthetic netting. Several of the helicopters sit, forlornly, wrapped in the netting.

If only Signer had enveloped himself in the netting and then thrown himself into the river that he has so pedantically recorded, he would have saved us the trouble of searching for value and meaning where there clearly is none.

His works make no pretence to be aesthetically pleasing. They do, however,

pompously present themselves as conceptually significant. But the concepts that Signer deals with are perversely insignificant or just dull, such as: alternative viewpoints (the floating camera piece); the relationship between the artificial and natural (the fan and the Christmas tree) and the importance of looking after your model helicopter collection.

All too often people viewing art will give it the benefit of the doubt. They assume that since someone has gone to the trouble of doing something, however idiotic it appears, that there must be a point to it. Well, they're wrong. Sometimes there is no point and less value. This is one of those times.

● Until 3 February. Tel: 020 7435 2643.



Insignificant: Signer's fan and Christmas tree