

## The Arts

# Currents crackle to a formula

## POP

AC/DC

Hammersmith Apollo

John Aizlewood

ON October 16, 1982, when the most popular band the southern hemisphere has produced last played the theatre then known as Hammersmith Odeon, tickets were just £10. Last night, to celebrate the venue's rebranding and the removal of the stalls seats, AC/DC returned. Once again, tickets cost just £10, although the palaver to get them — involving websites, emails, credit cards, queuing for pre-gig collection, wrist bands, actual tickets, more queuing to actually gain entry — were ludicrously ill-thought out and resulted in pandemonium outside and a delayed start.

Inside, the chants of "Angus, Angus", directed at AC/DC's 44-year-old schoolboy-uniform-wearing guitarist, Angus Young were loud. AC/DC, needless to say, were louder ... much louder. At the close when four giant cannons repeatedly exploded during For Those About To Rock (We Salute You), they were painfully loud.

They were more force of nature than mere band. There is nobody quite like AC/DC, unique for artists of their stature in their

refusal to sanction a greatest-hits album and equally stubborn in their refusal to tinker with their sound. Instead, their seaside-postcard tales of manly tumescence, women of easy virtue and the subsequent visits to sexual-health clinics exist in a bawdy bubble.

Young still exudes energy, whether impersonating Chuck Berry's duckwalk or stripping to his Union Jack boxer shorts. Portly, flat-capped vocalist Brian Johnson, however, was a most peculiar frontman; more jolly, bewildered, bow-legged uncle than rock icon. "What have you lot been eating?" he wheezed at one pantomime point. "Raw meat?"

Bassist Cliff Williams and second guitarist Malcolm Young crowded around Phil Rudd's drums and kept a low profile.

They took distorted blues riffs, cranked up the volume, added robust choruses and turned up the volume. From Johnson's introductions (invariably "here's one for you") to a Young guitar solo, which dutifully closed each song, the formula remained cheerfully unrelenting. No matter: Their finest work — the almost funky Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap, the explosive T.N.T. and Highway To Hell — rocked harder and, of course, louder than any other band. My ears were exhausted.



Foot stomper: guitarist Angus Young duckwalks across the Apollo stage as singer Brian Johnson looks on

## The art of discovering our common ground

## EXHIBITION

Common Wealth

Tate Modern

Nick Hackworth

THE idea of commonwealth has roots stretching back to the old Germanic custom of communally owned land, ruled by common consent. Now it is a commodity like any other and that ancient idea is obsolete. One of the more interesting suggestions made by this exhibition is that culture has become our equivalent of communal land where minds, if not bodies, may freely roam.

Five highly fashionable artists from Europe and Latin America have been brought together — Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla, Thomas Hirschhorn, Carsten Höller and Gabriel Orozco — all of whom make objects or installations that you can interact with. The tone and intent of the work varies, as does its effect — from the pompous and ineffective to the amusing and appropriate.

Nestling at the wrong end of the quality spectrum are über-trendy Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn's installations, made from everyday

materials, that pretend to be populist and accessible but are utterly pretentious. Here U-Lounge, a hut made in DIY fashion with brown tape and cardboard, is meant to be a place for "poetry, philosophy and art", a place where "people can sit, read, talk and reflect". But, of course, people will just wander in and out bemused by the chaotic display, realising that such work is no more than an empty pose, uninterested in real communication.

Far better are the works by Carsten Höller and Gabriel Orozco, who, judging from the artwork, have a better measure of our times. In their work is partially realised the idea of culture as a communal space, and one in which play not politics is the order of the day. Höller presents an installation in which visitors can chuck foam frisbees into holes in the fabric of large white tent.

One of Orozco's works, meanwhile, is Oval with Pendulum, an oval billiard table with no pockets, two white balls and a red one, which is hung from the ceiling on a wire so that it swings like a pendulum if hit. It metaphorically and accurately casts those who use it as "homo ludens", man the player, for whom life is nothing more than a game without intrinsic meaning.

● Until 28 December. Information: 020 7887 8888.

## A classical rein on the greatest-ever love story

## OPERA

Paride ed Elena

Barbican

Barry Millington

GLUCK'S *Paride ed Elena* is a reworking of one of the most famous love stories ever told: that of Paris and Helen. You might think that the face that launched a thousand ships — those of Helen's compatriots, determined to get her back — would also have precipitated one of the composer's most popular operas.

But for some reason, *Paride ed Elena* has never found widespread favour.

In the 19th century it was completely forgotten and even in modern times it has rarely surfaced. All the more welcome, then, was this well-prepared, strongly cast concert performance with the Gabrieli Consort and Players under Paul McCreesh, who is also to record it for DG.

One possible reason for the work's neglect is that the role of Paris was written for a soprano castrato, obliging the part to be taken today

— since it is too high for most countertenors — by a soprano (or mezzo-soprano).

All four lead roles are thus sopranos (to avoid which Paris is sometimes taken by a tenor down an octave).

The mezzo Magdalena Kozena is the current darling of the glossy magazines, but she compromised her femininity here with a slightly camp portrayal of this trouser role, incorporating body language that didn't seem to come naturally.

Her lovesick sighing was delicately and touchingly done, and if one missed the fire and tonal colouring that, say, a Janet Baker would have brought to it, it was in its own terms an impressive performance.

Susan Gritton's Helen was faultless, tracing the character's conflicting passions and rising to a peak of incandescent anger at her apparent betrayal.

Carolyn Sampson was a sparkling, mischievous Cupid and Gillian Webster a fine Pallas Athene.

McCreesh's direction was impeccably paced, electing to emphasise classical restraint rather than the proto-Romantic histrionics that so inspired Berlioz.

## Dissonant interlude to a long Baroque sequence

## CLASSICAL

Australian Chamber Orchestra/Tognetti

Wigmore Hall

Stephen Pettitt

THE soloist at the Australian Chamber Orchestra's rambling concert last night was the French star flautist Emmanuel Pahud. He played, beautifully, the solos in two works, both badly positioned for different reasons. The French composer Jean-Marie Leclair's elegantly Italianate C major Flute Concerto was the climax of an over-long baroque sequence that included concerti grossi by Handel, Corelli and Vivaldi, all given with a stylish sense of theatre. And *Pipe Dreams*, by the contemporary Australian Carl Vine, opened the second half with music that sprang from a poetic vision of flute as personality with aspirations to things high. Vine fails to realise the possibilities of combining real technical adventure with a certain spirituality. Instead he charms us with straightforwardly illustrative music.

Fortunately, in place of the originally programmed *Fratres* by Arvo Part, the ACO offered a work by Georges Lentz, a Luxembourg-born Australian who plainly sees his first task as asking some of the questions that Vine's piece avoided. His *Te Deum Laudamus* is his own arrangement of the slow movement of the fourth part — originally for string quartet and four suspended cymbals — of his composing project *Caeli enarrant*.

It's an arch-shaped ritual of naked gesture, departing from a monotone, which sounds from first to last. Saccharine, pious chord progressions are contrasted with dissonant clusters. Every gesture happens on a constant, slow pulse, so that there's no sense of melody or rhythm. This brave art was given a performance of refinement and passion.

To end, there was an arrangement by the ACO's director, Richard Tognetti, of Szymanowski's beautiful Second String Quartet. Despite its opulent colours, this treatment suffered in the same ways as most such treatments, distancing the music, eliminating the sense of a four-way conversation, and diluting that all-important percussive sensation of bow-scraping string.