Reviews

Wrong buzz

MUSIC PROJECTS O

Tate Modern

Rick Jones

LOFTY Turbine Hall became a concert venue last night. Two groups performed. The first, Music Projects London, played two works by Stravinsky. Fanfare for a New Theatre was obviously appropriate and the bright, but unseen, brasses jarred regally in

the three-second echo. However, the building can never be any good as a serious auditorium as its industrial-sized power generator emits a constant, low, steady hum. This was quite disconcerting in the ruminative slow movement of Stravinsky's Concerto for Piano and Wind of 1924, where it imposed itself as an off-key drone. Still, in the headquarters of artistic pretentiousness, at least it served as a kind of musical

conceptualism. Soloist Nicolas Hodges spanned out the affected largo with determined independence while charging through the brisk outer movements with thrilling, machine-age exuberance. Artists in the Twenties were aware of both excitement and danger in untethered technological advances. They feared a descent into mechanical zombie-dom.

The second group was the Stan Tracey Jazz Orchestra. Their music is living evidence of the descent. The pity is that they believe it to be original when it is nowadays just a repetitive, head-nodding cliché. They should listen for the drone.

ullet Soprano Sarah Leonard sings Luigi Nono's La fabrica illuminata on 5 July at 2pm, 3.15pm and 4.30pm at Tate Modern (020 7401 5120).



Quaint fun: Richard Brightiff, Issy Van Randwyck and James Lailey

Evoking innocence

THEY'VE tarted up the reopened May Fair Theatre to look like a Singapore brothel for this Off-Broadway musical hit first seen over here with Issy Van Randwyck at Chichester's Festival Theatre in 1998. The innocent charm of the spectacle is more suited to children than a syphilitic fleet, but good, clean fun as it is, the show could have benefited from being performed in a speakeasy. That way, tipsiness might have helped smooth the passage of extremely cheesy puns.

A zany plot finds a singer in a 1941 dive-bar jazz band (Van Randwyck) suffering from amnesia. Meanwhile, the corrupt chief of police is trying to smuggle a set of magical jewels out of the country before the Japanese arrive, in what amounts to a panto spoof of Casablanca set in

SONG OF SINGAPORE ★ May Fair Theatre, W1

Patrick Marmion

the Far East. Beside this, it's punctuated with a lot of Forties' Louis Jordan-style jazz songs — plus lots more groan-worthy puns as Van Randwyck seeks to recover her memory and save the day.

The jaunty music could even have you doing a jig in the aisles if safety regulations didn't oblige you to stick to your seat. Numbers like You Gotta Do What You Gotta Do are pure Jungle Book, sing-along foot-stompers, while songs such as Never Pay Musicians What They're Worth have a rockabilly skiffle flavour set to washboard and bicycle bells. Fascinating

Aida star, a Van Randwyck, plays the amnesiac singer as a Marilyn Monroe airhead and makes a sweetly enthusiastic bimbo. Musically, she's hardly stretched by the material and she pulls her weight as a team player anyway. Only one song, I Can't Remember, really tests her with tricky syncopations and changes of key, but this is a largely academic exercise which she walks through easily.
Roger Redfarn's jaunty Chichester

production is packed with musical pros in a band that sets a rollicking rhythm — especially Elio Pace as the blind pianist. Meanwhile, Neil Gore plays a variety of music-hall caricatures that most of us thought they'd seen the last of in It Ain't Half Hot Mum. As the whole musical showboat steams into the sunset, the evening proves a whole lot of fun but terribly quaint too.

• Until 9 September. Box office: 020 7413 1415.

Ratings: \bigcirc adequate, \star good, $\star\star$ very good, $\star\star\star$ outstanding,

Sigh of a subtle swoon

FORTUNIO ★

Grange Park, Hampshire

Tom Sutcliffe

GRANGE Park Opera, where Wasfi Kani will soon be building her new opera house (and where the preperformance warm-up includes rounds of applause for donors of steel and concrete), has spotted a gap in the market ignored by Glyndebourne. A short step beyond The Mikado, already programmed, there exists an enchanting popular French romantic tradition (Auber, Boieldieu). Messager's Fortunio, recorded by John Eliot Gardiner, is a subtle delight from 1897, peopled with characters at least as believable as in Ravel and Poulenc's brilliant operatic squibs. The country house opera audience is suggestible where repertoire is concerned. This should be an encouraging development.

Fortunio is a sweet, young, provincial lad working for a Paris law firm, whose boss's wife uses him as a decoy to deflect attention from her affair with a smart captain. Except the decoy soon steps into the breach. The boss, Maitre Andre, is a pathetically jealous figure prone to inappropriate fits of generosity and forgiveness but the French have no time for absurd husbands of this type (nicely performed by Glenville Hargreaves). What makes the piece work so persuasively is the complex attitude of the wife Jacqueline (performed by the ravishing Natasha Marsh, the outstanding Grange Park star this year). Her lover Clavaroche (Quentin Hayes in gallantly vain mode) is quite tiresome enough for her to become bored. But the change of atmosphere as Lorenzo Carola's Fortunio gets in deep is totally engaging. If only Carola had the lyrical glow the part needs. Casting here is generally overoptimistic.

Daniel Slater's straightforward staging is nicely imagined, exploiting leisurely Edwardian or belle époque nostalgia. The scenes alternate between Jacqueline's bedroom and café tables in a park with *boules*, wine, and military uniforms. Harry Christophers conducts with poise and skilful sense of style. The orchestral playing is warm and enthusiastic.

● *Until 12 July. Box office: 01420 561090.*

Trees and burnt offerings

DAVID NASH ★

Annely Juda

Nick Hackworth

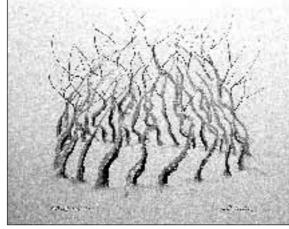
FAR from Greenwich, in the valley of Blaenau Ffestiniog, in the heart of North Wales, there lies a dome. PY Gerbeau, has, as far as we can tell, been nowhere near it. Nor did its construction cost the taxpayer a billion pounds.

Planted in 1977 by the environmental sculptor David Nash. Ash Dome consists of ing in a quiet circle. Under his guiding hand, the trees' growth has been shaped. A little way up each trunk is a 45-degree bend, as if the trees were bending at the knee. Leaning clockwise in concert, they resemble a circle of dominoes frozen in the act of

falling.
In a slightly belated celebration of this millennium circle, Nash has decided to exhibit drawings and photographs that record the dome's journey from inception to birth to maturity.

A mass of unframed drawings crowds one wall of the sunlit main gallery. Most of them, executed swiftly in pencil, charcoal or pastel, do no more than convey an impression of the dome's form or trace the branches of the trees in thin lines of lead, and they are but fragments of the artist's experience. They are enough, however, to make you want to rest beneath that placid canopy on a sun-flooded summer's day.

Also in the main gallery stand three sculptures hewn from tall blocks of pale ash whose cuts of differing depth and frequency impose an alien, man-made regularity upon the wood. The next room, smaller



Fragments of experience: Ash Dome 2001

and bereft of sunlight, is occupied by pieces made of charred wood. Village Husk, the most imposing, is made of 46 interlocking hollowed blocks of charred maple, vaguely resembling the post-apocalyptic remains of an ancient city. In both groups of work, Nash focuses attention on the surface qualities of the wood, the simple beauty of the charring with brightness of the denuded ash.

Inevitably, work that is so grounded in the natural will act as a mirror, reflecting the viewer's love of the natural back at them, but in the middle of the big, bad city, perhaps that is enough.

• Until 21 July (020 7629 7578).

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