

What is the question?

On my way to Covent Garden for a performance of *Faust I* spotted the private forecourt in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea on which nestled the two luxury cars. The registration on the DB7 was 2 BE and on the Bentley it was NOT 2B. A photo of the phenomenon was published in the London evening papers on 26 October. Is the Croesus who owns these baubles a thespian, a theatre impresario, or a psychiatrist – and can you imagine the conversation he has with himself as he reaches for the car keys on the hall table? And speaking of Hamlet this serendipitous discovery was followed by another – the TV series *Slings and Arrows*. I am now a firm fan of the New Burbage Festival of Shakespearean Theatre, the heart of this Canadian sitcom now in its third season. The first, which I have not seen (the DVD's on order) was based around its production of *Hamlet*, the second was *Macbeth* (aired in full one Saturday night in September), and we are now well into *King Lear*. Every theatre cliché is introduced and reworked, and each episode is a self-contained gem of intelligent observation and droll humour. Now and then during the course of a rehearsal or performance Shakespeare's poetry shines from the small screen in a quite unexpected and disarming fashion. It's magnificent and as it's shown on Artsworld there must be literally dozens of us watching it.

A curious thing happened at a recital by Natalie Clein (cello) and Charles Owen (piano) at the start of the Bournemouth Chamber Music Society season. The performance was in the hall of the school where Miss Clein spent her formative years and, now in her late 20s, she has matured into a formidable cellist, although her facial expressions while in the throes of musical passion have become somewhat idiosyncratic and disconcerting. Nevertheless, the performance of the Beethoven Sonata in G minor, Op.5/2 was so unblemished, so stirring, and so consummate that I left at the interval because I was unwilling to listen to anything else that day. I was sure that the Rachmaninov would be an anticlimax. It was an expensive afternoon.

Radu Lupu is a remarkable musician. He delivered the Schumann Piano Concerto sat on a plain chair with an insouciance bordering on indifference, and his style is so relaxed one is surprised he actually finds the keys. His chamber music background manifests itself continuously as he is permanently and intensely communing with the orchestra. The



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Charles Owen

www.charlesowen.net



Natalie Clein

www.salisbusholt.co.uk



Simon Chadwick and Robert Benfield in Corpse!

www.salisburyjournal.co.uk

Alan Frost enjoys culture from Canada to Covent Garden to the South Coast.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra seemed occasionally unsure who was conducting as Lupu occasionally lifted his left hand to assist Walter Weller with the task. A friend of mine happened to lead the second violins that evening and found himself constantly under the eagle eye of the great man as he confirmed that the orchestra was still there next to him. We certainly had our money's worth as I am sure the slow movement contained a few notes Schumann had not bothered to include.

Salisbury Playhouse is on a roll and the current season is a potential feast. I had seen *Corpse!* by Gerald Moon before but still enjoyed a bravura performance by Simon Chadwick as Evelyn/Rupert Farrant. The play, premiered in 1983, makes you wish you were the idle rich of the 1930s and the set at Salisbury contrasted excellently the decadent opulence of an expensive penthouse in Regent's Park with a manky basement flat in Soho. It's a clever drawing of social stereotypes and the convoluted plot concludes with a dénouement of Freudian splendour. I look forward to the rest of the season.

What is your idea of a perfect concert if there were to be no Mozart, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, or Mahler? That is the question. The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under Nicolae Moldoveanu played Dukas's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*; Saint-Saëns' Violin Concerto No. 3 (soloist Philip Quint); and in the second half *The Fountains of Rome* and *The Pines of Rome* by Respighi. For 'B team' composers this is as good as it gets. There were groups of schoolchildren in the audience and I hope they enjoyed the evening. The Dukas is famous because of Walt Disney and few people who have seen *Fantasia* can hear the music without imagining Mickey Mouse and an animated broom. The Saint-Saëns is tuneful and virtuosic and Quint delivered it with great aplomb. For an encore he played 'something by Paganini' which left our mouths agape as he simultaneously played pizzicato with his left hand and bowed with right. Respighi's colourful orchestrations demand a full and expensive orchestra including two harps, piano, organ, bass woodwind, massive percussion, etc. The final paean to Roman glories as an army marches along the Appian Way under the sunlit pines was dazzling and thrilling – as was the whole concert.