



Keyboard conduct

The baton bug has bitten Stephen Kovacevich

Pianist Stephen Kovacevich has been at the top of his profession for four decades. But he occasionally takes a few significant steps from piano to podium. On 22 January he conducts the London Mozart Players in a programme of Mozart and Brahms, in which he will also play Mozart's Piano Concerto No.18 in B flat, K456, directing from the keyboard.

Kovacevich has definitely caught the conducting bug. 'When I've finished recording the complete Beethoven sonatas for EMI, I'm going to take some time off and look for a position,' he says. 'I've done quite a bit of conducting, but finishing the Beethoven takes such a lot of stamina, worry and slavery that I want to get them over with.' If Kovacevich carries out his plan, he will be among a number of superlative pianists who have migrated to conducting. Among them are Daniel Barenboim, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Christoph Eschenbach. As their careers have proved, the sky's the limit.

The concert, also including Mozart's Symphony No.25 and Brahms' Fourth, is in association with B'nai B'rith, the Jewish charity organisation that has been devoted to community aid since its foundation in New York in 1843. *Jessica Duchon*

MUSIC London Mozart Players/Stephen Kovacevich 22 Jan, Queen Elizabeth Hall



Russian swans on the Thames

The Moscow Stanislavsky Ballet continues its first-ever run at the Royal Festival Hall with a glorious production of the ballet world's all-time favourite, *Swan Lake*. Below, ballerina Tatiana Tchernobrovkina stars as Odette, the Swan Princess

DANCE Moscow Stanislavsky Ballet
4-12 Jan, Royal Festival Hall

Stars of the future

Once more the Park Lane Group Young Artists New Year series gives us reason to come out of post-Christmas hibernation. In this ten-concert series, two per night for five days, you can hear some of Britain's most talented young musicians perform adventurous programmes with the accent firmly on premieres. These soloists are among the 32 up-and-coming artists being showcased.



Richard Harwood
(cello)
Tue 8 Jan

Harwood is studying with Heinrich Schiff in Vienna, but presents an all-English programme for solo cello, including two new pieces – by Dominic Muldowney and Martin Butler – written for him. A favourite work is Judith Weir's *Unlocked*. It's unique and arises out of her interest in the collection of American folksongs in the Library of Congress which were collected in the 1930s. The last movement is an arrangement of a blues song sung by a man from Alabama: you can certainly hear a Southern style.'



Elizabeth Atherton
(soprano)
Mon 7 Jan

Iwant to show off my voice's lyrical qualities, so I've avoided any squeaky gate stuff! Atherton's recital includes songs by Judith Bingham, Thomas Adès and Martin Butler. *'The Shadow Side of Joy Finzi'* [by Bingham] is a through-composed scena about a woman who's very disturbed, whereas Adès's *Life Story* is dramatic in a different way. It's in the style of Billie Holiday and is about how a hotel fire starts after two people have just slept together and one falls asleep with a lit cigarette.'



Alison Balsom
(trumpet)
Mon 7 Jan

I've tried to include pieces I could get my teeth into and which would satisfy the audience.' With works by Takemitsu, Steve Martland, Cornelius Cardew and HK Gruber, Balsom's programme is certainly varied. 'I'm finishing with Gruber's *Exposed Throat* as I don't think I'll be able to play anything else after it. It's a *tour de force* and includes stamping, taking slides out of the trumpet and loads of other new effects.'

MUSIC Park Lane Group Young Artists
7-11 Jan, Purcell Room

Jillian Edelstein, EMI/Richard Haughton/Gary Holmes/Shelley Gazin, Corbis

I get around

**Justin Tunstall previews
former Beach Boy
Brian Wilson's January gigs**

Brian Wilson has to be one of pop music's most influential figures. His live appearances have so far been restricted to North America and Japan – but now he's coming to the Royal Festival Hall as a solo artist for the first time, accompanied by his choice band including members of LA's highly regarded Wondermints.

Wilson and his brothers, Carl and Dennis, plus cousin Mike Love and a friend called Al Jardine formed the Beach Boys, perhaps the USA's most enduring band. With the surfing and hot-rodding crazes of the early 1960s as their themes, the group's records might have been as disposable as Bob the Builder. But these were no mere novelty records, and showed early signs of Wilson's songwriting talent. In 1966 he unveiled *Pet Sounds*, a breathtaking masterpiece depicting the joy and anguish of youthful love. He has described these songs as 'Teenage symphonies to God'.

Wilson's definitive hits like 'Good Vibrations', 'I Get Around', 'Fun, Fun, Fun' and 'Surfer Girl' maintained his high standing through wilderness years of drugs, isolation and intensive therapy. Leonard Bernstein described 'Surf's Up' as 'one of the most significant pieces of music of the 20th century'.

In 1988 Wilson released his first solo album on Sire; then in the mid-1990s he returned, revitalised, to high profile with a TV documentary of his life and a pair of new albums: *Orange Crate Art*, a joint effort with Van Dyke Parks, and the rousing *Imagination*. He also returned to the live concert stage independently of the Beach Boys (which, despite the deaths of Carl and Dennis Wilson, still exists under the leadership of Mike Love).

Wilson and his current band perform his timeless songs in the way that he has always intended. 'God Only Knows' always causes neck hair to rise when played and sung by the man who wrote it – one of a handful of pop music writers who deserve the accolade of genius.

■ **MUSIC** Brian Wilson 28, 29 & 30 Jan,
Royal Festival Hall



Follow that flute: Martin Feinstein plays Bach

Royal flush



A right royal band: The King's Consort

Lovers of early music won't be disappointed with January's abundant offerings. For an evening of Brandenburg Concertos, head for the last concert in the Feinstein Ensemble's Baroque Concerto Festival: 'The Brandenburgs are wonderful and represent possibly the high point of the Baroque concerto literature,' says flautist and recorder player, Martin Feinstein. 'I think they work best as a group; we've certainly found performing all six together particularly rewarding.' The ensemble, essentially made up of soloists, performs on period instruments. For other Baroque favourites, Handel's *Zadok the Priest* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks* complement Bach's *Magnificat* and *Orchestral Suite No. 3* in an evening given by the Belmont Ensemble of London and the Tallis Chamber Choir.

Philip Pickett and the New London Consort recreate a celebratory concert of music that might have been heard at the Field of Cloth of Gold – the meeting between Henry VIII and Francis I in 1520. Among the fanfares, dances, songs and more are pieces by King Henry himself, Cornysh, Josquin and Gervaise.

If Vivaldi's your tippie but you're fed up with *The Four Seasons* or the *Gloria*, why not try the dramatic cantata *La Senna festeggiante* (The Seine rejoicing) performed by The King's Consort under the direction of Robert King. Vivaldi was commissioned to write this effervescent work by the French Ambassador in Venice in the mid-1720s. Players and soloists, including soprano Carolyn Sampson as The Age of Gold, alto Hilary Summers as Virtue and bass Andrew Foster-Williams as The Seine, should be in top form as all are heading for the studios the next day to record the work for Hyperion.

■ **MUSIC Feinstein Ensemble** 4 Jan; **New London Consort** 10 Jan; **Belmont Ensemble of London** 12 Jan; **The King's Consort** 31 Jan. All in Queen Elizabeth Hall

Taylor made

John Taylor, for decades one of Britain's finest jazz pianists, is celebrating his 60th birthday with a major Contemporary Music Network tour. He's joined by American musicians Marc Johnson on acoustic bass and Joey Baron on drums. The Creative Jazz Orchestra (CJO) appears with them in music including numbers from *Exits and Entrances*, the CJO's new recording with Taylor, and pieces from Taylor's new suite *The Green Man*.

'I'll be 60 in September,' reflects Taylor. 'To find something as rewarding and consuming as music-making certainly has made me want to encourage others to do the same more and more.' He's looking forward to working with Johnson and Baron, whom he met four years ago when he recorded with them and Dutch trumpeter Eric Vloeimans. 'Joey and Marc play so well together – they have an instinctive rapport.' As for the CJO: 'With such talented improvisers, anything can happen!'

■ **MUSIC John Taylor Trio & Creative Jazz Orchestra** 23 Jan, Queen Elizabeth Hall



W e had proper playgrounds when I were a lad. It didn't take much to make us happy: a couple of swings and a few old tyres and we were as pleased as Punch. Nowadays, though, anyone under 12 is too busy getting lardy in front of Playstation 2 or *Xena: Warrior Princess* to engage in actual physical activity. It takes more than old tyres to coax them into the great outdoors.

No wonder designers have to try a lot harder with playgrounds today. In Jubilee Gardens, a new play area, opened in the autumn after a joint initiative between its neighbours, the South Bank Centre and the British Airways London Eye, is full of jolly primary colours, seals and elephants on bouncy springs, and giant cat's cradle structures for whippersnappers to clamber over.

But even this is nothing compared to what's happening on the continent, where some playgrounds are *the* place to be (if you're

IN·SITE

Tom Dyckhoff on the South Bank's unique design – inside and out, past, present and future

JUBILEE GARDENS PLAYGROUND

MP Kate Hoey joins local residents in the playground



eight). Yes, you heard right. Playgrounds are getting funky, with some of the most cutting-edge and respected designers, such as Ron Arad and Ettore Sottsass, turning their mighty creative brains to building spaces that children will actually use without a parental press-gang.

In Britain we're just cottoning on to the idea. In King's Cross, for

instance, trendy textile designer Kate Blew, poet laureate Andrew Motion and landscape designer Johanna Gibbons have collaborated on a brightly coloured retreat from a tough neighbourhood. On the Limehouse Fields Estate in east London, the terrifically chic and terribly now architect David Adjaye, more at home designing smooth bars for the smart set, has designed the Sky Pavilion with artist Henna Nadeem, a beautiful, stylised metal tree under which the grateful children can hang out. Blimey, next thing you know, they'll be demanding a comfy sofa and a remote control. Kids these days, eh?

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