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# Critics' choice

Life&Arts

## Visual Arts Jackie Wullschlager

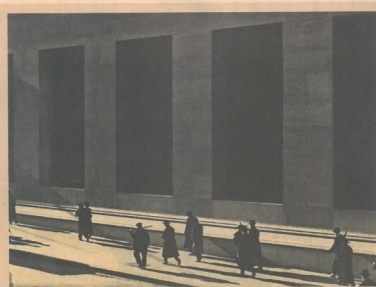
**In the Age of Giorgione**  
Royal Academy, London  
Giorgione's oeuvre is vanishingly small – with each generation the number of attributions diminishes – yet his poetic, elusive manner and softly blended colour had a defining influence on Venetian painting after his premature death in 1510. Built around a few key works – the National Gallery's "The Sunset", expressive portraits of young men, Venice's depiction of an old woman "La Vecchia" – this show suggests how this enigmatic artist urged the solid naturalism of his teacher Bellini towards a rich, sensuous style fully developed by Titian.  
royalacademy.org.uk 020 7300 8000, to June 5

**Scottish Artists 1750-1900: from Caledonia to the Continent**  
The Queen's Gallery, London  
Allan Ramsay's portraits of George III and his family, David Wilkie's romanticised accounts of everyday life at home and wartime scenes abroad, such as Spain's

struggle against Napoleon, David Roberts's orientalist pictures: an exploration of work shaped by the Scottish Enlightenment and collected with enthusiasm by the Hanoverian monarchs.  
royalcollection.org.uk 020 7766 7300, to October 9

**Alexander Calder: Performing Sculpture**  
Tate Modern, London  
The happiest show in town: soaring and swooping, Calder's evocative twisted wire and cut metal mobiles leaves looping from branches in "Vertical Pollock" – are hanging, hypnotic compressed and marvels of compressed colour, balancing abstraction and references to nature. Final fortnight.  
tate.org.uk 020 7887 8888, to April 5

**Omer Fas: Present Continuous**  
Private Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead  
Documentary, thriller, comedy, collage? Omer Fas,



**Paul Strand: Photography and Film for the 20th Century**  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London  
Paul Strand's "Wall Street, New York" (1915), which depicts workers on a sunlit pavement passing the massive shadowy rectangles of the Morgan Trust Company building, marked the arrival of fully fledged Modernism

in American photography. Formally perfect, the picture's high contrast, clean lines and strong angles announced photography's alignment with abstraction, but also its unique sharp-focus realism. In 1916 Strand went on to experiment with both aspects. Still-lives – "Jug and Fruit", "Bottle, Book and Orange" – play with

structure and composition in ways reminiscent of Cézanne, and his "Abstraction, Porch Shadows, Twin Lakes, Connecticut" recalls the verticals and horizontals of Mondrian. The same year, Strand embraced portraiture in close-ups of marginalised Manhattan types, emphasising gesture and expression: the bloated "Man in

a Derby", "The Italian", leaning against a wall in a grimy jacket, and "Yawning Woman", centred on an immense open mouth. Printed at monumental size, their frankness and intimacy at such scale shocked Strand's audiences. The V&A's retrospective, visiting from Philadelphia, unfolds the experiments with ways of picturing the world that occupied Strand from the moment he visited Alfred Stieglitz's gallery as a teenager in 1907 until the 1930s, when he became committed to an art recording social change with thoughtful compassion. That sympathy for the individual – reduced in "Wall Street" to faceless silhouettes overwhelmed by the edifices of capitalism – is there from the start. But it came to the fore in many series portraying embattled communities around the world: "Man with Tin Plates" in the harsh noon sun in Mexico, 1933; staid father and son in South Utah, Hebrides, 1954; the interaction of travellers' gazes at Ghana's Accra Bus Terminal, 1963. Slow, precise and deliberate, these images remain strikingly but humanism dominates: a stunning evolution.  
vam.ac.uk, 020 7942 2000, to July 3

Jerusalem-born, living in Berlin, makes disruptive videos – "5000 Feet is the Best" overlays a drone-operator's account with crime scenes in Las Vegas; "CNN Concatenated" reconstructs footage from thousands of news clips into a disconcerting poetic narrative – that question political structures, history, identity. His first UK show.  
balticmill.com, 0191 478 1810, to June 26

**Reza Derakhshani: The Breeze at Dawn**  
Sophia Contemporary, London  
The inaugural exhibition of this gallery of Middle Eastern art is devoted to a painter who seamlessly fuses Iranian traditions of miniatures and calligraphy with the dynamic strokes and textured surfaces of western abstraction. The highlight is Derakhshani's new "Hunting" series, with the motif of the liver layered into landscapes in brilliant pinks, misty greys, nocturnal deep blue, reflecting on nostalgia, migration, displacement.  
sophiacontemporary.com 020 7495 7907, to April 23

## Theatre Sarah Hemming

**PREVIEW All That Fall**  
Whitby Music Hall, London  
Max Stafford-Clark directs a rare revival for Out of Joint theatre company of Samuel Beckett's radio play. The audience will be blindfolded throughout, plunging it into darkness, and the production features a 360 degree sound design. Brid Brennan is Maddy Rooney.  
witsonyork.org.uk 020 7702 2789, March 22-April 9

**Hamlet**  
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon  
Paapa Essiedu takes the lead in Simon Godwin's new production of Shakespeare's great tragedy about a son confronted with a terrible dilemma.  
rsc.org.uk, 01789 403 495, to August 13

**Les Blancs**  
National Theatre, London  
Danny Sapani stars in Yael Farber's new staging of an

epic play by Lorraine Hansberry (best known for her 1959 work *A Raisin in the Sun*). Hansberry focuses on an unnamed African country where the people are struggling to throw off colonial rule and analyses the causes of these seismic events and the impact they have on individual lives.  
nationaltheatre.org.uk, 020 7452 3000, March 22-June 2

**Reasons to be Happy**  
Hamstead Theatre, London  
Neil LaBute ventures into Private Lives territory with a comedy about a separated couple who wonder whether they could resume their relationship – despite the fact that they both have new partners. Michael Attwell directs.  
hamsteadtheatre.com 020 7722 9301, to April 16

**How the Other Half Lives**  
Haymarket Theatre, London  
More matrimonial mishaps in this 1969 Alan Ayckbourn

comedy, revived here by Alan Strachan. Matters come to a head at two disastrous dinner parties, shown simultaneously on stage. Nicholas Le Prevost stars opposite Jenny Seagrove.  
trh.co.uk, 020 7930 8800, March 23-June 25

**RECOMMENDED Don Quixote**  
Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon  
A joyous new stage adaptation of Cervantes' much loved novel about would-be chivalric knight Don Quixote and his sidekick Sancho Panza. David Threlfall and Rufus Hound excel in Angus Jackson's delightful celebration of the love of storytelling.  
rsc.org.uk, 01789 403 495, to May 21

**German Skerries**  
Royal Court Theatre, London  
Lovely revival of Robert Holman's delicate little 1977 play about a handful of Teesside birdwatchers.

Although low on incident, it packs in a wealth of insight on the way global political developments impact on individual people and is beautifully acted in Alice Hamilton's production.  
orangebreaththeatre.co.uk, 020 8940 3633, to April 2, then tours (details: splituprsc.org.uk)

**I See You**  
Royal Court Theatre, London  
Noma Dumeznil directs a taut, disturbing new thriller by Mongkhekhaya about the painful realities of life and identity in post-apartheid South Africa. The staging will transfer to the Market Theatre, Johannesburg.  
royalcourttheatre.com 020 7565 5000, to March 26

**Peoples, Places Things**  
Wyndham's, London  
Deserved transfer from the National Theatre for Duncan Macmillan's bold and timely play about addiction, directed by Jeremy Herrin and featuring a tremendous, stellar performance from Denise Gough as a female addict in rehab.  
nationaltheatre.org.uk 020 7452 3000, to June 18

**Don Quixote**  
The Bolshoi Ballet has a new version of its splendidous Don Quixote made by the admirable Alexei Fadeychev. Your chance to see it, before it arrives in London during this summer's visit by the troupe, comes on April 10 when it will be shown in cinemas nationwide.  
cineworld.co.uk picturehouse.co.uk



Lesley Manville and Jeremy Irons in rehearsal

**Long Day's Journey into Night**  
Bristol Old Vic  
Richard Eyre directs Eugene O'Neill's harrowing masterpiece about a family struggling to face the secrets, blame, regret and addiction that has ripped them apart. Jeremy Irons (who began his career at this theatre) and Lesley Manville star as James and Mary Tyrone and, given the brilliant work that Manville and Eyre did together on Ibsen's similarly tragic *Ghost*, expectations are high for this production. The show is part of this year's 250th anniversary celebrations at the Bristol Old Vic, the oldest working theatre in the country.  
bristololdvic.org.uk, 0117 9871 7877, March 23-April 25

## Dance Clement Crisp

**Giselle**  
Royal Opera House, London  
Just three performances this week, with Iana Selenko and Steven McNeal as a matinee today. Mariachi Nizkor and Vadim Muntagirov on Tuesday and Lauren Cuthbertson and Federico Bonelli on Wednesday.  
roh.org.uk, 020 7240 1200

**Richard Alton Dance Company**  
Sadler's Wells, London  
Two performances on March 29 and 30 will include a new

work, *An Italian in Madrid*, set to Domenico Scarlatti's sonatas, together with Alston's superb *Mane* (a duet to Chopin for two male dancers) and his jubilant *British Singing*. Martin Lawrence's new work *Stronghold* completes the program. Come on April 10 when it will be shown in cinemas nationwide.  
richardaltondance.com 020 7863 8000

## Pop Ludovic Hunter-Tilney



Gwen Stefani returns to form on her first solo album in 10 years

**Gwen Stefani**  
This Is What the Truth Feels Like  
★★★★★  
Gwen Stefani's first solo album since 2006 opens with "Misery", which teases at being a "break-up song" ("Where did you go?") before performing a neat bait-and-switch into a catchy anthem about infatuation ("Hurry up, come see me") set to a beat pounding like a racing heart. Anyone with an unfortunate interest in celebrity gossip will know the back story: Stefani has

divorced Bush singer Gavin Rossdale and started a new relationship with her fellow judge on the US version of *The Voice*, country singer Blake Shelton. Such unpromising title-tattle has proved the basis for a surprisingly good album. Apart from "Where Would I Be?", which sounds like a Lily Allen cut-off, the songs strike the right balance between maturity and the Day-Glo pop with which Stefani found solo success in the 2000s. At one extreme is "Naughty", a zany burlesque about an errant man, while at the other is the kiss-off number "Used to Love You", in which the singer's processed nasal tones take on a genuinely emotional quality.



**Primal Scream**  
Chaosmosis  
★★★★★  
The problem with altering direction on each album, is that after a while it ceases to seem adventurous and instead comes across as irrevocable or opportunistic. The Scottish indie stalwarts' latest foray is a case in point, opening with the hokey *Screamadelica* throwback "Trippin'" on Your Love" before heading, without much conviction, to ho-hum electropop. Politicised lyrics and the odd hint of dissonance suggest the band might have preferred to remain in the noisier mode of previous album, *More Light*, but if they plod regardless, "I can change", Bobby Gillespie choruses in his washed-out way. He sounds enraptured by the prospect.



**Iggy Pop**  
Post-Pop Depression  
★★★★★  
Preceded by the hint it might be Iggy Pop's last album, *Post-Pop Depression* teams the great garage-rock reprobate, 68, with an imposing collaborator, Queens of the Stone Age leader Josh Homme. The songs don't attempt to resurrect The Stooges' spall of noise but instead set Pop's cracked crowd to the kind of serpentine guitar groove that Homme freessed on QOTSA's *Live Through This*. The results are gritty and mending, a hard-boiled setting for Pop's mesmerizing voice, although the songs really lift off when the tempo lifts a notch. "I won't stop to say goodbye." Pop grows over a patchwork of barbed riffs on "Paraguay", raising a gnarled middle finger to the modern world.



**Damien Jurado**  
Visions of Us on the Land  
★★★★★  
For the last album in a trilogy inspired by classic psychedelic pop and rock, Seattle singer-songwriter Damien Jurado really takes the plunge. *Visions of Us on the Land*, produced by fellow singer-songwriter Richard Swift, spins a yarn of a couple on some sort of metaphysical journey across the US into 17 tracks, a sprawl of lazy guitar fuzz, gentle acoustic chords, driving percussion and vocals that hover like heat haze. The conceptual side of the album is too wispy to command attention and there is the odd detour into a 1960s folk-pop museum ("Queen Anne") but elsewhere the music has a hypnotic pull. There are echoes of Nick Drake, Neil Young and Phil Spector, but the album is unmistakably a diverting road trip.

## Classical Richard Fairman



**Handel/Mendelssohn: Israel in Egypt**  
The King's Consort  
★★★★★  
The premiere of Handel's *Israel in Egypt* at Easter 1739 was no less than a triumph. After that, the oratorio's fortunes quickly waned until Mendelssohn rediscovered

Handel's music, giving the first German performance in 1833, using his own, recomposed edition, and with no less than 400 in the choir and orchestra. Robert King and his King's Consort field more modest forces, but their instruments are 19th-century, the soloists excellent, and the fervour authentic. The performance (in German) is worth having just for Mendelssohn's blazing, new overture. Whatever would Handel have thought?

enough, Wagnerians have taken up the symphony since then, nor enough German orchestras. But Daniel Barenboim and his Simonskappelle Berlin follow their highly praised recording of the Second Symphony with this equally entrancing and performance of the First. Wagner longs large and the music is conceived in broad, deeply emotional paragraphs. As we can hear from his periodic grunts, it is music that Barenboim clearly loves.



**Haec Dies: Music for Easter**  
Choir of Clare College, Cambridge  
Harmonia Mundi  
★★★★★

Here is Easter music ancient and modern. Graham Ross and the Choir of Clare College, Cambridge, look through the long-distance lens in a programme that ranges from Taverner and Palestrina to Rachmaninov and Vaughan Williams. The tone is predominantly uplifting in its celebration of the Resurrection – lively rhythms in settings of "Haec dies" by Byrd and the contemporary Matthew Martin, heart-warming English harmonies from Hadley and Stanford. The choir ends with virtuosic singing in Lassus's *Magnificat* (extra! *toni super: Surrexit factus rutilius*), like a slightly madcap encore.



**Elgar Symphony No 1**  
Statenkappelle Berlin  
Decca  
★★★★★  
Hans Richter, who gave the premieres of *Stiffelio* and *Götterdämmerung*, also conducted the premiere of Elgar's Symphony No 1. Not

## World David Honigmann



**Konono No. 1**  
Konono No. 1 Meets Barika Crummed  
★★★★★  
The buzzing drones and distorted thumb pianos of Kinshasa noise band Konono No. 1 sound quintessentially metropolitan but the group originated in the far east of Congo, near the Angolan border. Accordingly, this collaboration with Angolan-born, Lisbon-based producer Barika, finds a commonality between the band's shifting rhythms and his electronic beats in "Yambadi Mama" organic and electronic meld almost imperceptibly before the distortion reannounces itself. But the core of the album is unmistakably the Konono sound.

## Jazz Mike Hobart



**Michael Formanek & Ensemble Kolossus**  
The Distance  
ECM  
★★★★★  
The Brooklyn-based bassist/composer's third album for ECM expands his small-group downtown aesthetic to an 18-piece big band. Impressively, there is the same sense of intimacy rather than of working a pre-arranged plan. The title track stands alone with warm tenor sax supported by gently ominous brass. But the remainder consists of the eight-part *Ensemble Suite*, a programmatic opus of saw-edged riffs, genre abstraction and fully free-jazz roar. Inspired writing, great solos and gut-builed double bass.