

# INTO

What you're into if you're into sound and music

## SOUND TRAVELS

Sonic culture  
in South  
Korea

**JULIAN ANDERSON**  
Sounds of wonder

**DIFFERENT SPACES**  
New homes for classical performance

**HOW TO...**  
Hack electronic notation




What happens when classical music is taken out of the concert hall and into Soho pubs and Berlin nightspots? Phil Venables says a change of scene is what's needed to keep live music fresh.

Berghain is the best nightclub in the world. On a Sunday morning at 4am, in a disused power station on the east side of Berlin, you can queue for hours and, if you're lucky enough to get in, it's like nowhere else on earth. You can listen to world-class minimal techno, dance like crazy, take drugs, get drunk, have sex in public and even, would you believe it, smoke a cigarette indoors.

But on Monday night I came here to see countertenor Andreas Scholl sing Dowland, Purcell and Haydn, with interludes of recorded Shostakovich over the towering speakers. When I arrived I was struck dumb: 500 people, most of them in their twenties, queuing to get in. It felt like 4am on a Sunday.



# DIFFER DIFFER



# DIFFERENT SPACES, DIFFERENT FACES?



Yellow Lounge, the promoters of this event and many others like it, regularly present unadulterated classical music to throngs of young people in the places where those very people usually hang out. They know that finding new audiences is vital for classical music to prosper, and they don't expect the uninitiated to wander into concert halls. Let's be honest, they aren't exactly welcoming places.

Don't let anyone tell you there isn't a problem. Classical music in the UK is painfully inaccessible across social, ethnic and economic demographics, and we are doing little about it. Recent research by the University of Sheffield suggests that people on the street haven't a clue what a symphony or a concerto is, but they can tell a water-colour from a still life. Even urbane 20-somethings planning time out with friends might consider a play at the Donmar, an exhibition at the Tate Modern or a gig at Ronnie Scott's, but rarely a concert in the Royal Festival Hall. And that's in London: you're screwed if you live in Bradford, Dundee or Sunderland.<sup>1</sup>

Statistics back this up. The Arts Council's annual *Taking Part* survey indicated 60.3% adults (30 million people) engaged in the arts at least three times in the past twelve months, down from 62.5% in 2006, of which 15% is classical music, opera and ballet. You might think this doesn't seem bad, and

indeed a different Arts Council survey with more relaxed criteria produced conflicting results showing audience figures rising recently to about 17%. But these figures hide the demographic imbalance: our concert halls are packed with old, white, middle-class people whereas ethnic minorities, young people or those on low incomes are conspicuously absent. The Arts Council's "box ticking" approach (to quote Jeremy Hunt) has not worked. But if we take a public subsidy for our work, we have a moral responsibility to be as inclusive as we can. *We know* that music can provide enjoyment, enlightenment, health, achievement, self-esteem, a sense of citizenship, shared experience, escape, solace, inspiration, skills, community cohesion, productivity, compassion and empathy and – music to George Osborne's ears – investment.<sup>2</sup> Why wouldn't we share that around?

So, a revolution! Let musicians out of their concert halls! Let them speak out, dress down, loosen up! In a recent *Guardian* interview, Jonathan Harvey said, "Nobody should be deprived of classical music, least of all by silly conventions." Absolutely! These conventions have nothing to do with the music, but merely alienate swathes of society.

Harvey caused a stir. The torrent of responses was starkly divided, some of those vehemently against smacked of snobbishness, which belied their authors' lack of understanding of

1/ [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/howaboutthat](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/howaboutthat)

2/ A selection of items identified by the Culture and Sport Evidence Programme. [www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)



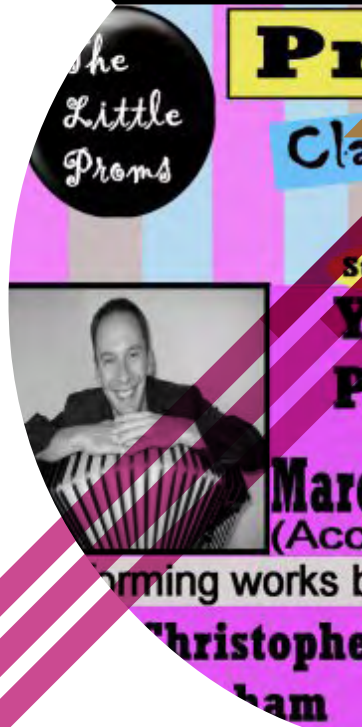
S SCHOLL AT THE YELLOW LOUNGE

*Classical music in the UK is  
painfully inaccessible, and we  
are doing little about it*

young people. They implied that the austere conventions of classical performance somehow *enabled* a meaningful listening experience. What rubbish! Acoustic singer-songwriter nights in pubs, poetry readings in bars, performance art shows in cabaret venues and experimental jazz nights in warehouses show young people sitting riveted, silent, capable of full attention without any tedious ritual.

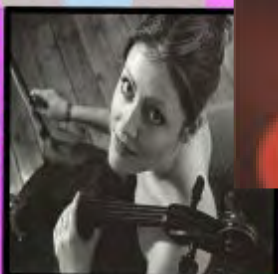
So what are we doing about it in the UK? Events as successful as Yellow Lounge are sadly few and far between. But one such is the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's Night Shift series, which is most successful when at the Roundhouse in Camden (normally a pop and rock venue). Earlier this year they performed Beethoven's Seventh Symphony with Vladimir Jurowski, using mild amplification to help the period fiddles fill the back of the hall. 1,200 people were 'permitted' to go to the bar, walk around, chat during the performances. 80% were under 35 and 33% were students: most had rarely or never attended a classical concert. The players (albeit still wearing black concert dress!) talked about the music without condescension and with genuine enthusiasm. The crowd was silent, still, captivated.

Another organization working magic like this is The Little Proms.

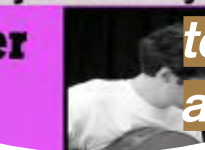




starring  
**Vonne**  
**Parsons**  
(Cello)  
**cus Tilt**  
(Cordion)



by Debussy



*'We'd like to make it as easy to go to a classical concert as it is to go to an indie or rock gig' – Little Proms*



Although the repertoire they cover could be a bit meatier, The Little Proms puts on magnificently unpretentious and well-attended concerts in a pub in London on the first Sunday of every month – all for free. They say, “We’d like to make it as easy to go to a classical concert as it is to go to an indie/rock gig”, and it seems they have followers. David Cameron would be delighted: hoodies have been spotted there hugging and dancing to the music.

Other initiatives appear to do the right thing but in reality achieve less when it comes to broadening access. ENO and Punchdrunk’s 2010 production of *The Duchess of Malfi* took place in a deserted building in London’s docklands, but the audience was predominantly a regular ENO audience, a little irked at having travelled all the way from Notting Hill during tube disruptions. Of course, ENO had laudable artistic aims behind this production (as I wrote in June’s *INTO*), but they couldn’t really stake a claim to ‘outreach’: leaving the opera house and taking your audience with you doesn’t count.

Contemporary music has naturally been more daring when it comes to getting out on the streets. Projects like Twisted Lounge, Shunt, Café Oto and Latitude Festival really help, but none of them addresses the core problem, head on, of opening up the heart

of classical repertoire to the wider world. And then there’s embarrassing events like the Serenata Festival, peddling Katherine Jenkins *et al*, which, like so many ‘crossover’ events, don’t help foster audiences for classical music any more than *Strictly Come Dancing* fosters an audience for ballet.

So, composers, performers, promoters: next time you put on a concert, think again about where and how you present it. Don’t shut up the bar after the concert like they do in the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Don’t wear clothes that you last wore to a funeral. Don’t ambivalently enter and exit the stage without at least talking to the crowd that has paid money to see you – *yes, you* – perform. Bring your music to pubs, clubs, bars, pop music venues, youth clubs, shopping malls.

A serious, appreciative listening experience can be achieved without banal traditions in boring venues. We all, young or old, want to meet people, find a community of like minds and expand our horizons through attentive, inspiring, collective experiences. Life outside the concert hall can be infinitely more exciting. Embrace it; others will follow.

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## Listening post



LITTLE PROMS



[Yellow Lounge live videos](#)



[The Night Shift](#)



[Performances at Shunt](#)



[Reverie at Little Proms](#)

