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Music

Glyndebourne's *The Rake's Progress* is as fresh as ever

David Hockney's designs are matched by memorable music. Plus: Stravinsky, Mozart and Walton at the BBC Proms



Glyndebourne's 'The Rake's Progress' © Bill Knight

Richard Fairman AUGUST 7 2023

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It looks as if *The Rake's Progress* at Glyndebourne has set an all-time record. Until recently, the Royal Opera's *Tosca*, made for Maria Callas in 1964, was the longest surviving opera production in the UK to be in regular performances, but now Glyndebourne's historic production of Stravinsky's opera has outlasted it.

Originally presented in 1975, it has classic designs by David **Hockney**, the prime reason for its popularity. Conceived with reference to Hogarth's prints from his series of paintings of the same name, they still look as fresh as the day they were new. **Hockney** himself was watching this performance from the foyer circle and had every reason to be pleased.

With fresh-faced young principals, this revival never feels stale, even if some of the singing has been surpassed in previous years. There is an outstanding Tom Rakewell in New Zealand tenor Thomas Atkins, a graduate of the Royal Opera's Jette Parker Young Artists Programme, where he sang the final scene of this opera in the end-of-year showings. He has vulnerability, humour, innocence, plenty of vocal power and sings the text with impeccable clarity.

Louise Alder makes a nice match for him as Anne Trulove, leavening the character's sweetness with strength of purpose and singing beautifully in the final scene (though others before her, such as Felicity Lott and Sylvia McNair, were ravishing). Sam Carl is an urbane Nick Shadow, unleashing infernal power as he summons Tom to his death in the graveyard scene, and Alisa Kolosova makes a delightfully bossy, fruitily sung Baba the Turk. Carole Wilson's Mother Goose and Rupert Charlesworth's auctioneer are bright lights among the rest.



Louise Alder and Thomas Atkins as Anne Trulove and Tom Rakewell © Richard Hubert Smith

With Robin Ticciati getting plenty of detail from the London Philharmonic Orchestra and more tenderness than Stravinsky himself offered, there was heart as well as neo-Baroque satire to be found. **Hockney** and the original director, John Cox, came on stage to an ovation at the end. With its 50th anniversary coming up, this production looks well placed to set more records.

★★★★☆

To August 27, [glyndebourne.com](https://www.glyndebourne.com)

A pair of Proms on Sunday offered commensurate rewards. In the morning John Butt and his Dunedin Consort travelled from Edinburgh to perform Mozart's C Minor Mass, as finished by Clemens Kemme, and some Bach family extras. Everything was worth hearing, but there were two exceptional items. CPE Bach's *Heilig ist Gott*, with its lavish double choir, made a real Proms showpiece. In the Mozart, soprano Lucy Crowe soared with heavenly beauty through the ravishing "Et incarnatus est".

★★★★☆

In the evening a packed Royal Albert Hall gathered for a concert by John Wilson and the Sinfonia of London, his handpicked group of musicians who are brought together for special projects (spot the faces familiar from London's full-time orchestras).



Alim Beisembayev plays Rachmaninov, conducted by John Wilson © Chris Christodoulou

A change of pianist introduced Kazakhstan pianist Alim Beisembayev, winner of the Leeds Piano Competition in 2021, to play Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2. He proved he has the heft and agility to live up to Rachmaninov's virtuoso writing, and much the same can be said of the orchestra, though towards the end the power and passion it was pumping out dwarfed the solo piano — and Beisembayev is no small-scale pianist.

In Walton's *Symphony No 1* Wilson and his team faced the competition of André Previn and the LSO, whose blistering performance from 1970 has gone down in Proms legend. This one started out at a lower emotional level, like a coiled spring, less raw in tooth and claw, but by the blazing finale today's team were running neck and neck in the virtuosity stakes. Their encore, an arrangement of the second of Gershwin's *Three Preludes*, was deserved.

★★★★☆

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