

World music

Carminho Sings Jobim

Barbican

★★★★☆

To an outsider they can sometimes sound like two different languages. With its soft, nasal shades, the Portuguese we hear on a João Gilberto record can make the cadences of the motherland appear harsh and guttural. Bossa nova is all about understatement; fado, the folk music of Portugal, is much more declamatory, sometimes downright melodramatic.

The two traditions were woven together in this compelling display at the EFG London Jazz Festival, with the young fado singer known as Carminho (full name, Maria do Carmo Carvalho Rebelo de Andrade) paying homage to António Carlos Jobim. For this project she could not have had better guides. The cellist and arranger Jaques Morelenbaum is a master of this kind of chamber music and the Jobim connection was made flesh in the self-effacing form of the composer's son, Paulo, on guitar, and grandson Daniel on piano.

Admittedly, Morelenbaum's presence did sometimes leave you wishing that his wife, Paula, could have been there too. No singer caresses *Sabiá* or *O Grande Amor* with as much tenderness and precision. Yet if Carminho's versions did not flow as seductively, her more jagged approach and broader dynamic range had compensations of their own. On *Retrato em Branco e Preto* she gave Chico Buarque's lyrics the full measure of ruefulness.

Morelenbaum added washes of subtle colour, while the drummer Paulo Braga gave the quartet just the right amount of momentum. *Wave*, a song that Anglo-American singers often turn into stodgy MOR, took flight here. Before she left, Carminho soared on *Saudades do Brasil em Portugal*, a lament by Jobim's collaborator, the poet and diplomat Vinicius de Moraes. Two continents came within touching distance.

Clive Davis

Comedy

Greg Davies

Eventim Apollo, W6

★★★★☆

Greg Davies is an outsized presence in British comedy, plying a vision of barely fettered vitality in *The Inbetweeners*, *Cuckoo*, *Taskmaster* and his starring sitcom *Man Down*. These claims to small-screen fame, he warns at the start of *You Magnificent Beast*, don't quite hint at the material he's about to bellow at us. "I am a very dirty boy."

Well, he wasn't so dirty before, and maybe that's why I was less persuaded than usual by his biggest-selling and least charming live show. Davies is still a strong storyteller, a big kid forever astounded and amused by life's capacity for ludicrousness. This burly, 6ft 8in comic sells us on his tall stories: the man-sized teddy bear his mum made for him; the three-hour speech that Chris Eubank gave when he visited the school where Davies taught drama. At his best, when he describes



Robert Murray as Tom and Victoria Simmonds as Baba the Turk

On the merry road to Bedlam

First-rate performances and a magical setting launch the inaugural production of a new company, says **Rebecca Franks**

Opera

The Rake's Progress

Wilton's, E1

★★★★☆

There may be a more atmospheric and appropriate theatre in which to stage Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, but I wouldn't bet on it. The intimate Wilton's Music Hall is right in scale and feel. Just as the composer refracted the 18th century in his bittersweet neoclassical score,

a London of the past is preserved in the venue's faded splendour. In one of the Georgian bars, I could almost believe I had seen Tom Rakewell himself stopping for a tot of gin on his Hogarthian journey from bucolic bliss to brothel to Bedlam.

A choice setting, then, for the inaugural production of OperaGlass Works, set up by the actor-director Selina Cadell and the dramaturg Eliza Thompson to bring chamber operas up close to audiences. With Alan Bennett, Stephen Fry and Vanessa Redgrave on the list of supporters, this fledgling outfit has cachet. And this is a fine outing for Stravinsky's morality tale. A little safe, perhaps, but drawing first-rate performances.

If Cadell doesn't entirely overcome the opera's occasional longueurs, this period-dress production scores in other ways. The interplay between art and life, artifice and truth, for instance. Laurence Cummings directs the spirited Southbank Sinfonia on stage, initially sporting a resplendent wig that would have made Handel jealous. A chorus member glances knowingly at the audience as he sprinkles leaves to suggest a garden. Wooden ladders dotted around the stage are used literally and metaphorically, a banner depicting a snake completing this devilish game of luck and fate.

Almost every word of WH Auden and Chester Kallman's libretto is clear, and it is a good choice to dispense with surtitles. Robert Murray makes a moving Tom Rakewell, an affable innocent, his voice always sweet. And who wouldn't be lured in by Jonathan Lemalu's gravelly, smiling Nick Shadow, there to make Tom's every wish come true? Victoria Simmonds relishes Baba the Turk, with a beard to rival Kenneth Branagh's Poirot moustache, while Susanna Hurrell's Anne Trulove is a joy throughout.

Fine turns too from the supporting roles and chorus, and special mention for the trumpeter Etty Wake's solo, bright as a gold coin. Best of all is the mad scene, the emotional truth of the opera wrapped up in a delusion. As Tom, believing himself to be Adonis, declares his love for Venus, Anne sings him to sleep with infinite tenderness. **Box office: 020 7702 2789, to Sat**

Jazz

A Concert for Alice and John

Barbican

★★★★☆

Five stars for the Modigliani show at Tate Modern **First Night, main paper**

Fifty years after the death of John Coltrane and a decade after the death of Alice Coltrane, the influence of the husband-and-wife pillars of spiritual jazz is growing. The Coltranes believed that universal musical structures transcended humanity's divisions. After listening to three and a half hours of sublimely transcendent, Coltrane-focused music, you could only conclude that they were right.

The 77-year-old free-jazz master Pharoah Sanders was the main event, but with the Denys Baptiste Quartet and the Alina Bzhezhska Quartet interpreting John and Alice respectively this was a rare concert (part of the EFG London Jazz Festival) in which each beautiful element was as important and captivating as the next.

Bzhezhska, from Ukraine, shares with Alice a mastery of the jazz harp, a niche among niches, and put her own slant on the cascading glissandi of *Lovely Sky Boat* while bringing out the ancient mystery of *Journey in Satchidananda*, the latter featuring a remarkable solo by the saxophonist Tony Kofi. The Denys Baptiste Quartet followed with compositions

Dance

Pavement

Sadler's Wells

★★★★☆

Kyle Abraham has become a force in American dance since founding Abraham.In.Motion in 2006. This past weekend his company made its London debut with an hour-long production inspired in part by John Singleton's powerhouse 1991 film *Boyz n the Hood* as well as by the writings of the civil rights activist WEB Du Bois. The good news is that Sadler's Wells has already promised to present more of Abraham's work.

Pavement is an oblique yet powerful consideration of urban American life, particularly in terms of race relations. Singleton's film revolves around the fates of three young black males in inner-city Los Angeles. *Pavement* is sketchier, eschewing narrative in favour of a looser construction that allows us to read more into the alternately expansive and suggestive interactions between four black men (including Abraham), two white men and one black woman. Abraham's experience of growing up in two primarily black neighbourhoods of Pittsburgh was another key influence.

The setting was simple: a metal fence upstage and above it a basketball hoop behind which images of residential buildings were projected. This left plenty of space for the cast to express themselves physically and to some extent verbally. Their sometimes tellingly detailed movement slipped continuously between the vernacular and the virtuosic, all of it cued by a richly layered soundtrack featuring Vivaldi, Bach and Britten as well as Jacques Brel and Sam Cooke.

Whether deceptively casual and throwaway or sharply precise, nothing the cast did was overstated or dramatically dishonest. Yes, *Pavement* might have benefited from greater visual texture, but what it conveyed about the complexities of human relations was delivered with notable integrity, grit and grace.

Donald Hutera

from John Coltrane's later work and some audience participation: getting us to meditate. "Imagine you are at the top of Everest and you can see all the other peaks," Baptiste requested, adding that we shouldn't worry about the Earth being round since this was our astral place. Accompanying our journey within was the perfect blend of expression, sophistication and fun, with the quartet bouncing around John Coltrane's endlessly complex music with virtuosity, not excessive reverence.

Sanders looked like a wise old sage as he shuddered on to the stage. He recorded with both Coltranes and is the living successor to their deep approach, which goes way beyond jazz; after summoning the chaos of life itself with the wild saxophone notes of *The Creator Has a Master Plan* he chanted the statement of the title. It was impossible not to be swept up by the profundity of music and sentiment. The Coltranes were on lifelong missions to create peace and enlightenment through sound. This remarkable concert achieved that, if only for a few hours.

Will Hodgkinson