

reviews

Classical

Berlin Philharmonie, Live in HD

MAHON OMNIPLEX, CORK

★★★★★

Operas and ballets from the Metropolitan Opera House and Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre have become familiar, popular, welcome presentations at cinemas throughout the country. The next best-thing to attending these venues and experiencing their remarkable productions — at reasonable prices. The world-renowned Berlin Philharmonie is the first orchestra in Europe to realise this potential. I doubted that I, a 'live music snob', would enjoy their concert in a cinema. Despite mild reservations regarding the restlessness of the camera, I loved the experience.

It was a privilege to see the state-of-the-art Berlin Philharmonie concert hall and to listen-in on conversations, about the music, between the conductor and players and then to see and hear that music being performed. Gustavo Dudamel, the brilliant, 32-year-old Venezuelan music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and the Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra, Caracas, conducted an imaginative programme of well-known and unfamiliar music.

The familiar music was by two Viennese contemporaries, Beethoven (1770-1827) and Schubert (1828-1828), who met once. We heard the 4th symphonies of both, one in each half of the programme, each preceded by one of Igor Stravinsky's (1882-1971) Suites for Small Orchestra.

Each Suite is made up of several short, pithy, easily whistled tunes of great charm. It is the quirky harmonies and the scoring, however, that catch one's attention. Stravinsky had a knack of making 'wrong' chords sound logical, along with a remarkable ability to create unique orchestral colours by combining the most unlikely instrumental pairings.

The symphonies were impeccably played, noticeable for the beautiful shading of orchestral colour, the obvious variety between the players, and the superb communication with their very underconstrative, but marvelously communicative, sensitive conductor.

■ New Year's Eve Gala, Dec 31, 4pm
— Declan Townsend

Theatre

The Colleen Bawn

BLACK BOX THEATRE, GALWAY

★★★★★

By the law of averages, a Druid show will fall flat on its face. On the Galway theatre company's current form, however, any such mishap looks a long distance off. Their new production, a revival of Dion Boucicault's 1860 melodrama, *The Colleen Bawn*, is stupendous and reveals a company in rude health.

Druid's director, Garry Hynes, make no bones about creating popular theatre — a theatre for the people, a theatre that entertains. In this, Druid are unrivalled. Yet, in the conceptual stakes, too, few can match the rigour Hynes brings to a text to make it sing. *The Colleen Bawn* is a perfect example.

The plot of Boucicault's comic melodrama hinges on a secret marriage between an aristocrat and an Irish peasant girl. It ignites when a misunderstanding convinces the gentleman's servant to kill the girl. Hynes cherishes the play's humour, as she does its perfect plotting, and it makes for an exciting, hilarious show.

What makes it better still, however, is the way that Hynes quietly electrifies the play's social commentary.

Thus, in Aaron Monaghan's dejected 'bad guy', a cripple who adores the same authority figure that buckled him, and Maeliosa Stafford's odious govt.-man magistrate, we can see the origins of the post-colonial mire in which Ireland now wades. Hynes's staging also makes clear that *The Colleen Bawn* is a battle over language.

The performances are thrilling. Aisling O'Sullivan delivers a dotty Anglo-Irish spin on Katherine Hepburn, Monaghan channels a full-on glaze of comic darkness, and Marie Mullen gets great gas from swapping her two roles.

As subversive stage Irishman, Myles-na-Coppaleen, meanwhile, Rory Nolan is full of splendid wit and brio.

At one point, late on, his 'deus-ex-machina' character even becomes divine.

It all makes for a stunning sense of popular theatre and the only decent thing you can do is relish it.

■ Until Dec 21; Tours in 2014
— Pádraic Killeen

Letting in the light divine

A new exhibition illustrates William Burges's plans for St Fin Barre's Cathedral in Cork, writes Tina Darb O'Sullivan

IT'S one of the most iconic features on the Cork skyline. First established as a monastic site in 606 AD, St Fin Barre's Cathedral now houses a French neo-gothic cathedral designed in 1862 by William Burges of London.

Searching For A New Jerusalem is an exhibition of stained glass cartoons and maquettes used in the realisation of Burges's architectural scheme for the cathedral. The exhibition at the Glucksman in UCC is curated by Richard Wood, a fine arts and heritage enthusiast with an encyclopaedic knowledge of St Fin Barre's. "You can view this exhibition on two levels," he says. "One is just to see the process of how the artwork on the cathedral was created, the other is to find out what lies behind it."

Burges's design scheme for St Fin Barre's included the architecture, stained glass, statuary, mosaics and furniture. While the commission stated that costs should not exceed £15,000, Burges presented a book of his designs to Bishop John Gregg. "Burges was quite a control freak," says Wood. "He was insistent that his design would be used throughout and that no other artists would be employed. Not because he was mean about it, but because there is this wonderful faith which is told through the artwork and that each cartoon was properly drawn out

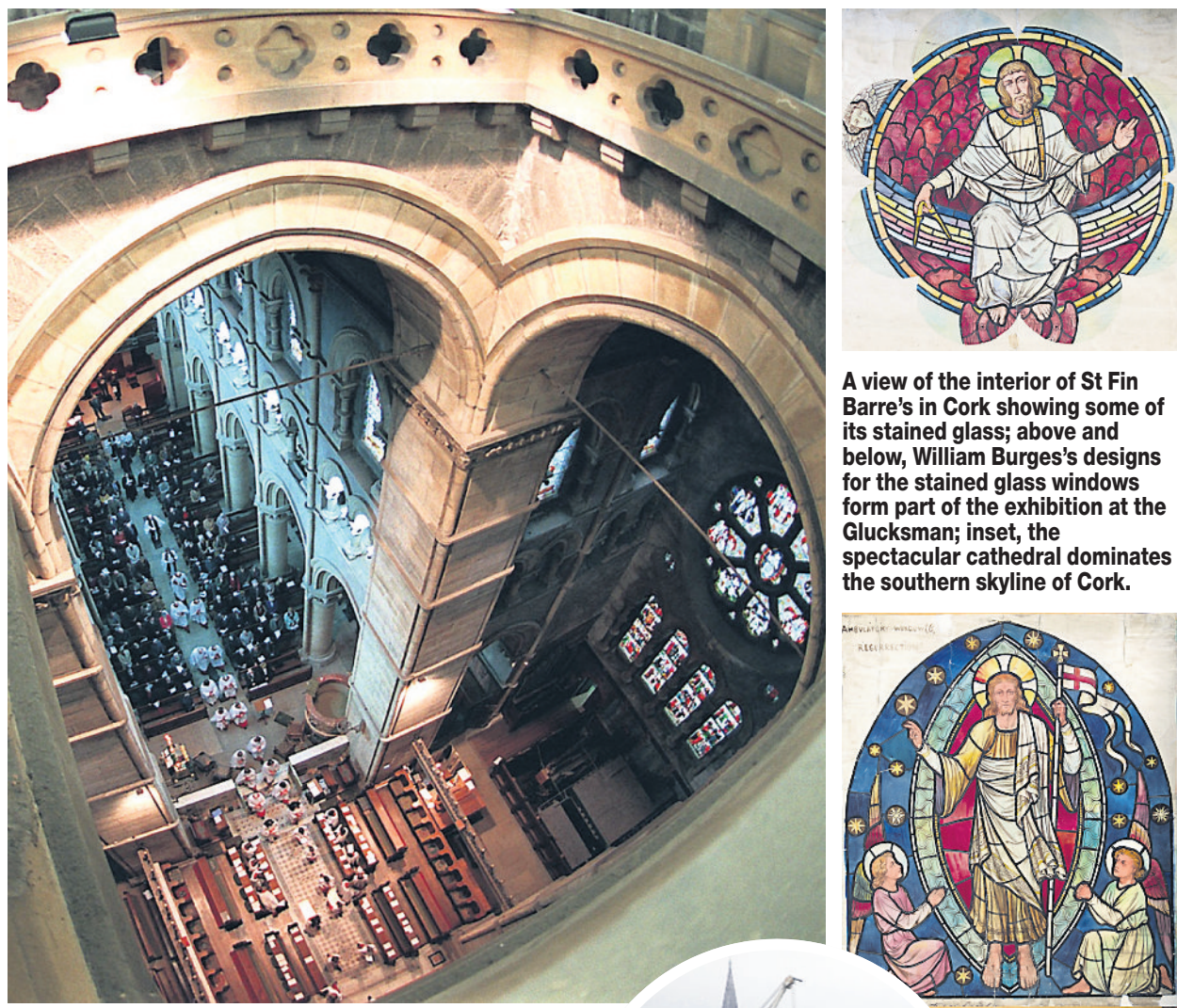
rightly. And aesthetically it would have damaged the cathedral if the work of another artist was intruding on Burges's designs."

While the overall vision was led by Burges, the cartoons themselves were mostly made by artist Horatio Lonsdale, appointed by Burges. Burges was interested in gothic revival architecture and was deeply concerned that the stained glass should adhere to the fundamentals set out in medieval stained glass practice.

"Stained glass had become a very debased art form," says Wood. "It ended up by being more or less painting on glass. The windows that you see from the 17th and 18th centuries seem to be landscapes with events taking place in them, with a vanishing point on the canvas. As a sort of courtesy to the stained glass tradition they would put in the odd lead line here and there, but it was intrusive and meaningless. Those windows are pretty awful."

"So Burges, along with others, went to Canterbury Cathedral and various other places where they could find medieval glass and they found three things about the glass that were essential. Firstly, the leading lines were an essential part of the whole composition. Secondly, the picture was two-dimensional, not three-dimensional, there was no or little vanishing point, and thirdly, they found that areas of one single colour varied in intensity considerably in medieval glass."

Burges insisted that Lonsdale went the extra mile and that each cartoon was properly drawn out



A view of the interior of St Fin Barre's in Cork showing some of its stained glass; above and below, William Burges's designs for the stained glass windows form part of the exhibition at the Glucksman; inset, the spectacular cathedral dominates the southern skyline of Cork.

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and finished with heavy watercolour rather than the charcoal sketches normally used. The background was never neglected; a block of colour was made up of different intensities, the colour inserted in the making of the glass rather than painted on afterwards.

"Lonsdale did a stunningly good job," says Wood. "In fact every picture that we see in this exhibition, every cartoon is well worthy of a public exhibition on its own, even though it was designed as part of a process to create a stained glass window. We have this wonderful collection which is a by-product of the creation of the cathedral."

The drawings on display are the actual working drawings of the day, with little directive notes scribbled alongside the images and the odd tea stain. They were initially brought to public attention in 2005 for Conserving the Dream — Treasures of St Fin Barre's Cathedral, an exhibition in Cork Public Museum. Since then the entire collection of cartoons have been restored by conservation specialist Paul Curtis and have a new permanent home, in the storage wing of UCC's Boole Library. Jason Ellis is responsible for the restoration of the plaster maquettes that

accompany the exhibition of cartoons. The maquette of Christ Enthroned in Glory was intended for use by Burges in the cathedral, but did not get used. This is one of the few points on which Burges failed to win over the congregation. Protestant sentiment at the time forbade the use of images of Christ but Burges managed to feature several images in his scheme of stained glass panels illustrating the Passion of Christ and the Resurrection.

The cartoons depict scenes from the Old and New Testaments. Read from the bottom up, as with medieval glass, the story unfolds as one walks through the cathedral. Burges had a flair for the dramatic, sometimes embellishing animals with wings and fire to add excitement to the drawings. "It's so simple and yet it's hugely sophisticated and exciting," says Wood.

■ Searching For A New Jerusalem continues at Lewis Glucksman Gallery, UCC, until Mar 23. Richard Wood leads a free tour of the exhibition at 1pm on Friday, Jan 10

Richard Wood curates the exhibition. Before Burges, he says, "stained glass had become a very debased art form."

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The Deal (Hachette Books Ireland) builds on the considerable ghost of Clifford's 2001 debut, *Ghost Town*, with a taut tale about successful gleesman Karen Riney and her doomed venture into the underworld of recession-proof growth houses.

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THE PERFECT MOMENT: The World Press Photo exhibition presents prize-winning images in Dublin. TOMORROW IN ARTS >>>



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From San Fran to the Everyman

When Lisa Zagone from San Francisco ended up in Cork on holidays 13 years ago, she fell for the city and made her way to the Opera House to make enquiries about work. Within two days of meeting her, Declan O'Malley, now stage manager of the Cork Opera House, proposed to the smitten American. They married and now have a 10-year-old daughter.

Zagone is now the costume and set designer for *Jack and the Beanstalk*, the pantomime at the Everyman in Cork. Her studio in the Camden Palace Hotel arts centre in Cork is like an Aladdin's Cave, full of the colourful tools of her trade.

Zagone says she approaches each job with a sense of challenge. She says it's unusual for one person to be responsible for both the set and costume design. "But I like doing both. The costumes have to complement the set. I have an overall vision of what the entire show will look like and how the set is going to function."

Since arriving in Cork, Zagone has worked mainly with the Opera House but has now crossed the river to the city's other main theatre.

Zagone has been working in set and costume design for 26 years, having started at 16. She considers everything she creates as being part of a larger body of her work. "I put my own style into design in the same way I would if I was painting."

Zagone says she was careful not to step on anyone's toes when she decided to work and live in Cork.



American set and costume designer Lisa Zagone has been involved in theatre in Cork for 13 years.

"But I brought my own way of doing things to Cork. My sets push the envelope and are a little bit more sculptural than what I saw when I first came here. I started using new and different materials that are now commonly used here, such as canvas, polystyrene and plastics for making masks and shaped objects."

"Instead of painting a backdrop, I use a form of plastic that looks like brick from a distance. I used a lot of that for the 1916 Rising scenes in 'Michael Collins, the Musical'."

Fascinated with the strong tradition of pantomime in Ireland, Zagone took time to learn the craft. "I got her head around the notion of the dame."

"Coming from San Francisco means I'm used to men in drag but the dame isn't a man in drag. She is something completely different. This year, the dame will make a grand entrance riding a bike wearing pink bloomers based on Amelia Bloomer's bicycle suit."

It's all in a day's work for Zagone.

■ Jack and the Beanstalk runs at the Everyman until Jan 12.
— Colette Sheridan

XX1 - V1

Irish Examiner
Thursday 12.12.2013

Alex by Pierre Lemaître, €11.50

The first English translation from French author Lemaître, Alex (MacLehose Press) opens with an apparently conventional story of an abducted young woman and a bloodthirsty serial killer before turning the genre on its head and subverting the reader's expectations.

Black Bear by Aly Monroe, €11.50

The fourth novel to feature British spy Peter Cotton, *Black Bear* (Faber and Faber) finds Cotton in post-WWII Washington DC, where he has been abducted and injected with a truth serum. Monroe's elegant prose is a bonus in this terrific spy novel/character study.

Bad Monkey by Carl Hiaasen, €10.99

The poet laureate of American bad journalism, Carl Hiaasen's *Bad Monkey* (Sphere) marks a real return to form. Former police detective Andrew Yancy, now a restaurant inspector, takes it upon himself to investigate a missing air hauled aboard a marlin fishing boat, with blackly hilarious consequences.

Graveland by Alan Glynn, €18.75

The third in Irish author Alan Glynn's globe-trotting trilogy, *Graveland* (Faber and Faber) investigates the consequences of apparently random murders of Wall Street's movers and shakers. The pacy momentum belies a cleverly crafted exploration of the clash between the powerful and the powerless.

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Books: crooks and cooks

Expecting a few vouchers in your Christmas stocking? Declan Burke and Roz Crowley pick their favourites from the best of the crime fiction and cooking books on the shelves, on tablets, and online

thrillers



With over 50m copies of his books sold, crime author Michael Connelly is one of the most successful writers working today. 'The Gods of Guilt' is his latest offering.

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