



### Theo Parrish: Teddy's Get-Down

Barbican, London, UK

Theo Parrish believes in preparation. There's no support act for his live show at the Barbican, just a play-through of his forthcoming album, using the impressive sound system's full frequency range, but quietly enough that the few in the auditorium have to listen carefully. As the hall fills up, a distinctive smell wafts around. My companion laughs. "It's the same incense Theo burms when he DJs so he can get away with smoking weed," he says. But that's not it. As with the use of his own music as warm-up, Parrish is subtly occupying the space with his own signatures, making the place his own, then welcoming us into it.

As his group begin to play, though, there's a moment of suspicion that this meticulously constructed vibe is going to be window dressing. The opening groove is extraordinarily glossy and hard-edged, bringing to mind other dance acts who've succumbed to the dynamics of rock to fill arena spaces. How can this grandiose and

conventionally well-mixed sound square with the finesse of Parrish's counterintuitive productions, which are geared towards the intimacy of club spaces?

The answer: it doesn't square with it. As the opener resolves into a version of Brass Construction's "Top Of The World" (which Parrish and Moodymann sampled on 1996's "Lake Shore Drive"), we realise that what we're watching is essentially a virtuoso disco outfit, whom Parrish introduces as The Unit. But the readjustment is easy to make, firstly because the playing is so locked into the groove that fears of rockism are abandoned, and secondly because the four dancers at the front of the stage transform the show into Parrish's party. Varied in physique, each performs combinations of jazz, ballet, Latin, house moves, popping, micro-controlled animation and expansive B-boying – a visualisation of the foundational components of disco and its offspring. As the set moves into Parrish's own music, their routines have the crowd standing and dancing.

title a compound of alchemical concepts. The composer translated alchemical texts into notated music – binding musical material, piano action and resonance. The piece set Pace's virtuosity against holding patterns of resonance, in a stuttering, distended, gargantuan performance.

Laimonas Puisys's surrealist film, inspired by Soviet director Lev Kuleshov, juxtaposed footage from *Intolerance*, *Battleship Potemkin* and *Man With A Movie Camera*, with live music from Ensemble

Angarde that moved from ambient to vaudeville. There was more surrealism the following evening at the United Sandrine Factories, with François Sarhan's *The Last Lighthouse Keepers* for pianist, percussionist, Foley artist and actor. The audience sat on the floor, in the centre, while the beam of an imaginary lighthouse switched on and off. Voices doubled instruments and a cartoonish stage design

The Unit are not there to try and approximate Parrish's machine loops and frequency manipulations, but to take his

themes and jam the living daylight's out of them as they did with Brass Construction's. The take on 1998's "Sky Walking" is as spacious as the original, but through those spaces tumble guitar and piano solos and vocal extemporisations. "Soul Control" (from 2007) is as perfect a play of chaos and control as a Kandinsky painting, the two female dancers enacting the tension of being owned by the music yet retaining autonomy. "Going Through Changes" (2009) has the complexity of jazz fusion but this, again aided by the dancers, feels as if it is for pleasure, not to demonstrate virtuosity.

The band, including veteran Detroit keyboardist Amp Fiddler, second generation Afrobeat drummer Myele Manzanza, bassist Akwasi Mensah and Public Enemy sideman Duminie DePorres on guitar, retain this principle throughout. Whenever things threaten to slip into jazz funk, rock or salsa noodling, they reassert the prime directive

was mobilised and finally destroyed.

Liv Kristin Holmberg's *Les Ténébres* – "ritualistic music theatre for a church space" – ran through the festival: each performance of this music based on Messiaen's last organ piece *Live Du Saint Sacrement* and Heidegger's philosophy was for an audience of one. Having booked my slot, I knocked on the Korskirken west door, was blindfolded and led into the church. It was curiously relaxing being made to lie down and wrap up in what felt like a rug, as the strange ceremony came to its climax.

The festival's high point, for me, was Fausto Romitelli's *San Index Of Metals*, the Italian composer's final work, written in 2003. Romitelli studied spectral techniques at IRCAM in Paris, which he brought together with a passion for psychedelic rock. *Index* is scored for soprano and 11 amplified instruments. It's anchored in a reiterated chord from Pink Floyd, heard in a playback,

of disco – to dance. And disco for this group means not a genre, but a space of generic possibility in which they can navigate between the essences of "Maggot Brain", "Good Times", "Space Is The Place" and "Can You Feel It" in a few manoeuvres.

By the finale of 2002's "Solitary Flight" – which uses Vangelis's "Memories In Green" theme from *Blade Runner* to devastating emotional effect – and recent chant-along "Footwork", there's no question that tonight's set also represents disco as the vital core of a shared culture. The onstage dancers exchange moves, not in competition but as friends would in a club, and the crowd dance unself-consciously, bursting into an unfettered riot of applause at the end. Audience members look at each other in disbelief at the spontaneity of this explosion, and Parrish and his crew look out at us, likewise stunned. But it is deserved: this show has been prepared precisely so such wildness could take place. Chaos and control are not such opposites.

Joe Mings

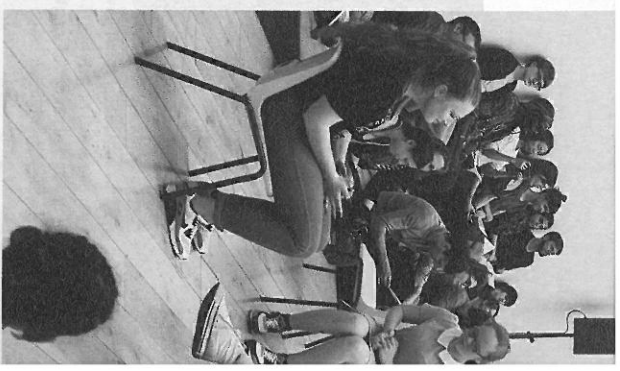
overlaid with vinyl applique and glitches.

This visceral piece treats sounds as physical objects – gissando is the dominant kind of movement – with a video of Rorschach ink tests and op art. The BIT20 chamber ensemble's performance was totally un-chamberlike, with bass guitar a key element.

Close to *Index* was *Constructing Jungle* Books by Øyvind Torvund. The 24 member Splitter Orchestra were dispersed round Bergen Kjøtt, a former meat-processing plant. The Berlin based ensemble featured Axel Dörner on trumpet and Burkhard Beins on percussion, and their instrumental vocalisings fitted seamlessly with bird and animal recordings. Finally a mention for an extended version by Felix Kubin of his *Porokronoia* from 2004, a cross between a lecture performance and a live radio piece, which worked tightly with the Borealis theme.

Andy Hamilton

Egle Trezzi/Sound Signature



### Marina Rosenfeld

ROYGBIV&B (Version For South London)

South London Gallery, London, UK

Marina Rosenfeld's work plays with two things above all: scale and translation. *ROYGBIV&B (Version For South London)*, a performance originally presented at New York's Museum of Modern Art, does multiple strange and wondrous things with all aspects of the production. Rosenfeld leads choirs of children from the local area, including Peckham schools, into a densely layered performance loosely based on the idea that it is possible to sing all the colours of a rainbow, or perhaps more literally sing colour. The production brings with it geography, class, unity and difference, age, ethnicity; the rainbow is the room. The sound is multilayered, with voices not quite in unison but staggered, singing letters and phrases from everyday speech and incomplete lines from pop songs – "Just be", "Oh", "I keep on falling", "Why don't you love me?", "You are beautiful" – which forms a kind of unequally balanced choir in which the youngest voices are often the strongest. The words and lyrics have come, in part, from the performers themselves, and you feel their delight and confidence as the work grows and builds.

### Borealis

Various venues, Bergen, Norway

The theme of this year's Borealis festival was Alchemy, and alchemical transmutation took various forms through a brilliantly conceived and executed programme. The cost of the Splitter ensemble and staging for François Sarhan's new work *The Last Lighthouse Keepers* meant that there were fewer events. But it continued to attract a strikingly young audience.

The programme opened with *Free Exercise* by Marina Rosenfeld, written for Bergen's Kunsthall, with a Norwegian naval band plus Karin Hellyvist (violin) and Heloisa Amaral (piano). The players' motivic and rhythmic exercises were meant to cross four exhibition rooms, but an errant conductor went off script, segregating musicians and disrupting the performance's unity. No such problems elsewhere. Pianist Ian Pace performed Alistair Zaldúa's *Spagyrta*, its