

And in the end the lines will probably have to be closed because they have become unsafe. A lot of it is happening in areas like mid-Wales and Cumbria where one government after another has been hopelessly trying to drum up jobs and encourage industry to thrive.

For the same money, said one enthusiastic rationaliser, you could give the people a more frequent, more efficient, "and possibly even free," bus service. He didn't seem like anyone who would give the public anything free as long as income tax still exists, but apart from that the theory sounds fine.

Except that anyone who has spent a lifetime waiting for buses and trains knows which is more likely to turn up when it says it will; and which is more likely to be stuck two miles down the road in a traffic jam, according to season, chilling or broiling any paying customers foolish enough to place their faith in it.

## MOIRA KELLY

Waldemar Januszczak

## Sue Coe

SUE COE is a mad dog artist. She barks loudly at everyone, presumably on the principle that one of them is sure to be the burglar. Her victims range from prostitutes to President Reagan, from junkies to the Pope, from Bobby Sands to Mac the Knife. None of them get either respect or sympathy — all of them have been forced out on to the streets where they are shown keeping one foot in the gutter. A pre-holocaust society is shown behaving itself like a post-holocaust one.

Sue Coe's excesses are based on those of her victims (and also those of George Grosz and the German mad dog artists who went sniffing down similar alleyways in pre-war Berlin). Where her junkies use too much heroin, she uses too much black, smearing in their features with what looks like last year's mascara. Where the British police use too much force, Sue Coe describes it with too much red paint. England is a Bitch, screams one blood-soaked title. Defend Yourself to Death, advises another.

The work likes to give the impression that it was made in a hurry, collaged, drawn, splattered, improvised in the nick of time. In the magazines in which much of it originally appeared this must have seemed telling and appropriate. But here, with three roomfuls of pictures, it soon becomes clear that rabid haste is just a stylistic feature, like the blackmail-note lettering of the titles. Sue Coe's viciousness is as

carefully affected as the tears in a punk's T-shirt.

Her shock tactics are often too obvious. The Pope gives a Nazi salute by Bobby Sands's death-bed. Our newly-wed royals perform oh so un-speakable acts together. In her back-street version of Brecht's Threepenny Opera the cast is headed by Charles Filch, "whose ambition is to be a successful beggar." Sue Coe's ambition is too close to Filch's to worry us for long.

Sue Coe at Moira Kelly's Fine Art, 97 Essex Road, Islington, NI, until June 19.

## FESTIVAL HALL

Edward Greenfield

## Del Mar/ RPO/Ogdon

THE TRAGIC break in John Ogdon's virtuoso career may have dimmed memories of how powerful and poetic he could be playing Rachmaninov. It was more than usually heartwarming to welcome him in this triumphant performance with Norman Del Mar and the Royal Philharmonic of the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, all his old flair restored and even intensified.

At 48 hours notice he was stepping in to a concert which was originally to feature James Galway, while Del Mar was replacing Riccardo Chailly, simultaneously stricken down. I suspect that that challenge to everyone helped to give the special flavour to this Rachmaninov performance in particular. It was faster than I have ever heard the piece before, but such was Ogdon's command that it never for a moment sounded merely breathless: as it should, the speed added excitement, at times almost the thrill of a roller-coaster.

If Ogdon's reading was in some ways exaggerated — with extreme tempi in both directions and molto pesante instead of poco for the Dies Irae theme — that brought extra clarity in the structure.

Far more than usual each variation was sharply characterised, with the great climax of the lyrical 18th variation made the more powerful when Ogden started it so gently and sweetly.

For the orchestra too it is a virtuoso piece, and Del Mar directed with keen sympathy. I suspect he had been unusually generous with his rehearsal time for it. Sibelius's Fifth Symphony after the interval was rougher, passionate and volatile as one would expect of Beecham's orchestra under the baton of a Beecham disciple, but finding full intensity only at the ends of movements, powerful in the outer movements, crisply cut off in the central Andante.

The special delight of Prokofiev's Classical Symphony as starter was the delectable flute-playing of Patricia Lynden, guest principal for the occasion. Another guest principal, John McIntyre, played the darkly gorgeous cor anglais solo in Sibelius's Swan of Tuonela and there his finesse was well matched by a half dozen regular RPO soloists, not least the cellist, David Strange.

## ALMEIDA

Meirion Bowen

## Prokrustes

PROKRUSTES, or the Law of Hospitality, is an opera by the Swiss composer Jean Jacques Dunki, updating the Greek legend, with pretensions to some comment on the relation of violence to music in modern times. It is cleverly staged by Pierre Audi at the Almeida Theatre, with a fine cast, led by Donald Beckett in the title role, and John Latham-Koenig conducting his own ultra-proficient ensemble; the performance repeated tonight.

Embarrassingly, the piece comes across more as a kind of black comedy with Trausylvanian overtones. The guests at Prokrustes' house are greeted with drink, music, room soup and murder. Assisting Prokrustes in his dirty deeds are his servants Anthea (Graham Titus) and Philomena (Jenny Miller). When Prokrustes refuses to become an instrument of the state of the army, using violence under official sanction, he is abandoned to lie on his own bed. Overnight a woman makes his bed more comfortable, but in the mor-

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