

Artist	Cauld Blast Orchestra	
Venue	Queen's Hall	18.8.02.

I knew I was going to enjoy this having been a fan for years. The band are now a 9 piece with the addition of double bass and create a huge complex sound which has a real compositional style in spite of the number of composers involved. Only one new piece, Fanfare for CK by Steve Kettle but that is indicative of not enough time available to develop new work. All the members of this group are busy with numerous other projects and it is difficult to find any wages for rehearsal time.

Highlights of the evening were Tango For a Drowning Man, Tower of Babel Stomp and Rune for George MacKay Brown. Also featured was a large part of Stones and the Sea commissioned by An Tobar.

I found the PA sound disappointing with the cello and guitar suffering particularly.

The venue was atmospheric and efficient as I've almost always found it. I suppose the pillars are a bit annoying but I quite like being able to see over the rows in front from the higher seats in the pews.

Artist	Eliza Carthy	
Venue	The Bongo Club	18.8.02.

Another None of the Above events. What excellent value for money they are and what a brilliant but eclectic programme. I'd hoped to catch Colin Reid earlier but was too late, arriving just in time for the last set by Eliza Carthy who started off solo and slowly built up the band to football team proportions by the end. The music went from contemporary songs through old ballads to some powerful English dance music. Great stage presence, good sound, a guest appearance by Greg Molleson, who runs the place, on sax, thundering dub bass and Donald Hay on drums. Can't think of any criticism.

Artist	The Wrigley Sisters	
Venues	An Tobar and Iona Library	16/17.8.02.

Not really Edinburgh Festival I know but they are playing there as well, in the Reid Concert Hall. Good that someone (Stoneyport Agency I imagine) is presenting a major programme of Scottish traditional(ish) music. The loss of the Acoustic Music Centre has still not been replaced though, as this venue does not have the different performance spaces and bars to hang out in that the old Chambers Street venue had.

The 2 concerts on Mull and Iona were excellent, both packed with appreciative audiences. The girls sound so good, so effortlessly, and there is always just the right amount of humour thrown in. They are such an advert for Orkney as well.

The Tobermory night fell on their birthday as well so we all had to eat cake.

Artist Dejan Lazic playing Schubert's Piano Sonata in Bb.
Venue The Usher Hall 10.8.02.

Brilliant musician playing faultlessly and expressively. This was one of the series of £5 concerts to bring in a larger audience for classical music. Seemed to be successful numbers wise but I felt the Usher Hall looked as if it was really set up for another concert and our show was being fitted in a quiet spot. A solo piano concert in such a big venue meant I was struggling to hear properly. All the immediate brightness and sparkle from a grand piano was lost and I was only half way back. Does the classical music world need to embrace quality sound re-enforcement? Today's equipment could add to most of the audience's experience, especially the older members who may have hearing problems. Hearing aids squeaking can be as distracting as microphone feedback. The lighting for the concert was minimal and gave the impression of being left on to cover for the fact that £5 meant no lighting engineer. So no marks for presentation then.

Artist Karas presenting Luminous
Venue Playhouse Theatre 12.8.02.

The buses let me down and I arrived slightly late for the start which meant I wasn't going to be allowed in. Fair enough I thought but fortunately a member of staff allowed the handful of latecomers into the upper circle, which was empty, so we didn't have to miss the first half. I found the performance riveting from start to finish. Minimal set design made startling use of light and simple props, the music, apart from some Mozart in the second half, was atmospheric industrial noise and occasionally got so loud as to be very uncomfortable. How much can you bear was the phrase that came into my mind, which made the performance even more affecting. Each half mixed solos with some extraordinary ensemble pieces, the dancers creating an endlessly innovative selection of shapes from different styles all brought to a level of magic realism by the music, set and lighting design. Dancers hung from the ceiling, appeared and disappeared as if by magic and glowed in the dark (at one point a pair of luminous checked trousers performed some disembodied steps). The company featured Londoner Stuart Jackson, blind from birth, who danced as part of the ensemble and took part in a very moving duet with choreographer Saburo Teshigawara. The only negative comments on the company were – I felt Teshigawara's solo was a touch overlong in the context of the whole piece and they mis-judged their last bow to the audience at the end. The worst aspect of the evening was the audience themselves who treated every quiet moment as an opportunity to cough – very disrespectful to the performers and incredibly irritating to those of us who had our senses trained on the show. The programme (which was another negative point -£2 for a collection of ads and at most 50p worth of information including a shockingly poor quality low res digital photo) requests that we switch off mobiles – how about a request that you cough outside or bring a sweetie with you. Is it just me or has audience behaviour seriously deteriorated over the past 10 years?