

to understand young talent to bring quality musicians in front of a deserving public. In this he has found the ideal collaborator in Helga Schmidt, whose influence at the Royal Opera House was legendary in past decades.

On 18 May Ian Rosenblatt presented the Peruvian tenor Juan Diego Flórez in the Royal Festival Hall with Riccardo Frizza conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra. Flórez has already shown Londoners that he has the rare technique to project the articulation and elaboration called for by Rossini in such operas as *Otello* and *Cenerentola*. Small wonder that he is already engaged by every major Opera House throughout the world.

After Frizza and the Philharmonia had given us a sparkling Overture from *La gazza ladra*, Flórez showed Rossini's genius in *Viene fra Queste Braccia* from that opera and later the intensely dramatic *Ah come mai non senti* from the Second Act of *Otello*, the opera with which Rossini proved himself to be a serious composer. However, the icing on the evening's cake came from the First Act of *La Semiramide*, the brilliance and dramatic force of which is still with me as I write.

On 8 January 2003 Flórez will be back at Covent Garden in the Royal Opera's revival of *Cenerentola*, an event not to be missed.

In the meantime a call to Emma Rosenblatt on 020-7955-0880 or an email with your details to opera@rosenblatt-law.co.uk will bring details of further concerts in their series. DENBY RICHARDS

**Kintamarni Saxophone Quartet
in Manchester**

There can be few more enticing titles of a concert than *Hot Lipped and Full Bodied* but that was what was promised by Kintamarni, the all female Saxophone Quartet who played at Manchester's Green Room on 24 May.

If image is anything to go by then these four RNCM Graduates certainly score full marks in how to put on a show. With a clever use of lighting and good sound management this old converted railway

arch played host to a remarkable ensemble who put together a surprisingly varied programme.

With Saxophone Quartets still sufficiently rare enough to be taken for a novelty, these young ladies quickly dispelled any ideas that they were just pretty faces. Complemented by the excellent percussionist Elliott Henshaw, the first work, *A Small Dream of a Dance* by Paul Mitchell Davidson, had more than a hint of a Chorale to it. Purity of tone was the key here and it provided an excellent scene setter for the rest of the concert.

Bob Mintzer's First Quartet, in three movements, which followed, again leant towards a classical construction with melodies intertwining over *ostinato* patterns and it was this rather minimalist style that supplied the tension.

Composer James Hesford introduced his commission, *Trilogy for Saxophone Quartet*, a work that made the most of Henshaw's percussion technique and gave the girls a chance to show off with a few solos, before the open harmonies of the drone-based second movement. The work coming to a head in the Big Band, toe tapping, angular rhythms of the third.

A complete change of mood ended the first half as tribal rhythms and aggressive battle cries came from Andrew Tweed's *Gig* in a reflection of some of the troubles in Northern Ireland's recent history.

The second half brought changes of outfit and Pedro Iturralde's *Pequena Czarada*, which could easily have been Incidental Music for a kind of Spanish Film Noir movie and, though quite atmospheric, lacked a little of the excellent balance heard so far.

This was soon put to right in three *Tangos* by Astor Piazzolla entitled *Histoire du Tango* in what was probably the best playing of the evening. An instinctive

communication between the players synchronised every breath, finished off every phrase and, as a result, created a wonderfully dark atmosphere full of style and *panache*. Tremendous technique and a willingness to take a few risks certainly paid dividends in the third *Tango*, making it easily the most full bodied performance. The cumulative structure of Michael McGlynn's *Rithim* worked well, with solos shared equally between Ruth Darby, Katy Hird and Katherine Brown on Soprano, Alto and Tenor Saxes respectively, showing a superb dynamic awareness, and the five pieces contained within Andy Scott's *New Work* combined Big Band Shouts, swinging Percussion, clear harmonies with a jazzy edge and one Chorale type section that sounded to me like late-night Bach!

Kintamarni's obvious sense of the sheer fun of music making came over very well in the penultimate work, Andrew Tweed's *P R Girl*, with Jo Luckhurst really earning her corn with a very energetic Baritone part. For the final work, *Full English Breakfast*, by Mike Mower, the girls went for a full out Big Band sound, though their purity of tone and well nigh perfect sense of timing almost provided more of a hindrance than a help, lacking some of the raw edge needed for a real jazz sound. All this mattered little as Elliott Henshaw's virtuoso jazz drumming, constantly changing accents, dropping bombs all over the place, helped the Quartet to really rock the room and earn a deserved applause.

JOHN BYRNE

*Kintamarni Saxophone
Quartet*

