

SNAP: Art At The Aldeburgh Festival

Snape Maltings, Snape, UK
Benjamin Britten inspires a show of contemporary art? That is the unlikely proposition in rural Suffolk, where SNAP forms part of the celebrations marking the centenary of the composer's birth. To kick off, here's a billboard by Scott King, erstwhile designer of album covers for Suicide, Pet Shop Boys and Earl Brutus, among others. Here, he reappropriates the Royal Bank of Scotland advert that (ab)used Britten's "Playful Pizzicato" from *A Young Person's Guide To The Orchestra*. The blow-up of the score is occasionally played by a string quartet braving the cold east wind. So, Debordian détournement then, but I couldn't get Bono out of my head: "The RBS stole this one from Britten, now we're stealing it back." Round the corner in a derelict barn space – a real ghost

box – Benedict Drew's *Matériel* (2013) recalls the fictive worlds of Julian House and Jim Jupp. His film is a meditation on the musique concrète of Pierre Henry, whose constructions were performed at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1954 at Britten's invitation. Much magnetic tape mangling enjoyably ensues.

Nearby, in another abandoned rural industrial space, Momus's voice has replaced Bono's in my head ("So what, you've got a big cock" (So What)). Well, Sarah Lucas's are bigger. Her two giant cock sculptures *Eros* and *Priapus* (both 2013) lie surrounded by the rusted machine detritus that once powered the Maltings. A Duchampian gag on power and sexuality perhaps referring to Britten and his partner Peter Pears, they're oddly mirrored by two Morris Minors, once sky blue but now caked in filth. This is also the site for Julian

Simmons's *Numberstream100*, where he rescors parts of Britten's opera *Peter Grimes* "utilising FFT analysis" and quad diffusion. On paper, with its mention of "employing a Karplus-Strong algorithm", this might appear intimidating. The result, though, is a tad prog, at moments more reminiscent of Tomita and his mucking about with the classics than the Britten music Simmons has rescored. One Barbour-wearing Olympian passes and brays forth, "It's not very imaginative, I've seen this sort of thing before." It wasn't clear if he meant the performance or the penises.

There are more pithy works elsewhere, such as Cerith Wyn Evans showing a neon piece, *340.29 m/s (The Speed Of Sound {approx} At Sea Level)*, in Snape Maltings' cavernous main concert hall. Then there's Juergen Teller's billboard *William Eggleston Listening To Tchaikovsky, Memphis,*

Tennessee (2010) which looks great on a gable overlooking the reeds and the waters

Organiser Abigail Lane shows *Under The Abject Willow* (2013), a sound work emerging from, naturally, a large willow tree. We hear what Lane calls a British Bird Orchestra: tweaked tweets of birdsong 'performing' some of his shorter works. It's a real singing ringing tree, as charmingly odd as the old East German TV series of the same name. Continuing the theme of 'sound as found' in Britten's work, such as car springs in the *Church Parables*, we find Emily Richardson's *Rising 5th (re-staging of a test for an unrealised memorial to Benjamin Britten)* (2013). In this film and sound piece, we finish on the Aldeburgh to Thorpeness road with the wind blowing those melancholy Suffolk notes that meant so much to Britten.

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