

## London Lowdown What's On In The Capital



**Out of the darkness:** Lucy and Jorge Orta's *Light Works* exhibition explores a planetary alphabet

# Shining a light on colourful process

The Ortas are famed for their *Light Works* series; colourful projections beamed on to natural landscapes and magnificent landmarks, including monuments such as Machu Picchu.

This multimedia exhibition explores the *Light Works* production process, as well as tracing Jorge's development as an artist under the military dictatorship in his native Argentina from 1976 to 1983.

Although much of his collection was sadly destroyed in a 1991 fire, the show features a selection of archive pieces that acted as platforms of resistance to the regime. There are examples of his *Arte Correo* (Mail Art), a method of artistic dissemination that

### Art Review Lucy + Jorge Orta: *Light Works* ★★☆☆☆

became popular among Latin American artists in the 1970s. Also on display is *Testigos* (Witnesses), a video of a 1982 performance piece in which Orta set fire to colourful crosses in front of thousands of spectators – an extremely subversive act at a time when public gatherings for artistic performances were forbidden.

During their *Light Works*, the Ortas project a 'planetary alphabet', a codified lexical system instigated by Jorge in the early 1970s. Comprising thousands of signs drawn from diverse cultures

throughout the ages, it's designed to foster global communication and challenge notions of national division. It's an ambitious and intriguing idea but the way it's expressed here doesn't truly have much impact. Ultimately, this small exhibition, mainly exploring the contextual backdrop to the Ortas' work and ideas, can't hope to be as affecting as their larger-scale projects.

Nevertheless, it provides an unusual insight into the workings of a pair of socially committed and truly original creative thinkers.

Amy Dawson

Until Feb 25, *Black Dog Space*, 10a Acton Street, Mon to Fri noon to 5pm, free. Tel: 020 7713 5097. Tube: King's Cross

### Opera Review *Salad Days* ★★☆☆☆

Remember a time when people could use the word 'gay' to mean 'cheerful'? If you're under the age of 127, probably not. But there's a chance to pay a visit to those more innocent times in Bill Banks-Jones's charming revival of Julian Slade's *Salad Days*.

The 1954 musical tells the story of Jane and Timothy, two recent Oxford graduates who are given a magic piano to look after.

The piano makes all who hear it burst into song and dance, and so must be banned by Timothy's dour Uncle Gus, who happens to be the minister for pleasure and pastime.

The plot is full of so many holes it could serve as a colander, and the drama flags in places but, on the plus side, there's a plethora of memorable toe-tapping melodies and a sunny optimism which



Banks-Jones refuses to send up. Instead, he creates an affectionate portrait of post-war London, with clipped accents, begloved ladies and hope for the future.

The singing is good – especially Katie Moore as Jane, and Kathryn Martin as a vamped nightclub singer

called Asphynxia – and the ensemble choreography is tight as a drum. All in all, a gay old show.

Warwick Thompson

Until Feb 6, *Riverside Studios*, Tue to Sat 7.30pm, Thu and Sat mats and Sun 3pm, £25. Tel: 020 8237 1111. Tube: Hammersmith

### Theatre Review *A Doll's House* ★★☆☆☆

Despite the huge cultural and social changes since Ibsen wrote *A Doll's House* in 1879, this groundbreaking feminist play about a woman's liberation from her sham marriage only seems dated in duff revivals.

It's a tad silly, then, for Theatre Delicatessen to trumpet this as a 'new, feminist production'. Director Frances Loy's angle is to deploy an all-female cast. The evening doesn't throw Ibsen overboard but any deep reasons for jettisoning male actors remain obscure.

The production opens with the cast parading down a catwalk-like stage in corsets and derrière-hugging Lycra. The casting here does little to illuminate the idea of gender as a performance or throw a light on this story of a child-woman just starting to puzzle her way through adult heterosexual relations.

It is already perfectly clear in Ibsen's play that doll-wife Nora and Torvald, the condescending husband who calls her icky pet names, are both playing out notions of masculinity and femininity, and playing at being married.

Sophie Reynolds's adaptation and Loy's production are supposedly set in



**Female cast:** Margaret-Ann Bain and Polly Eachus in *A Doll's House*

the present but much of the dialogue still feels in-period. However, while this staging is far from urgent, there are things here that make the time pass quickly enough.

Polly Eachus brings an innocence to the role of Nora, while Margaret-Ann Bain plays Torvald with a cocked eyebrow and a self-satisfied grin that nail the character's sexual vanity.

Maxie Szalwinska

Until Feb 5, *Theatre Delicatessen*, 3-4 Picton Place, Mon to Sat 8pm, £12. www.theatredelicatessen.co.uk Tube: Bond Street

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