

Now that's what I call a Jubilee!

Sounding off Andrew Clements

There is normally no need to worry about the Proms in October. But the reports leaked last weekend about plans for a special Prom next summer to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee are intriguing, not to say disturbing.

The idea, it seems, has been masterminded by Poet Laureate Andrew Motion, who has been commissioned by the King's Singers to concoct a 21st-century equivalent to The Triumphs of Oriana, a celebratory set of madrigals assembled during the reign of Elizabeth I. Motion is writing one of the texts, and he is bringing together a group of his fellow poets (Grace Nicholls, Iain Sinclair and Jo Shapcott have been mentioned) to provide the others. Their contributions will then be set by a group of British composers. The composers who have been mentioned so far are Jocelyn Pook, partly responsible for the soundtrack to Stanley Kubrick's Eyes Wide Shut, and Howard Goodall, best known for the theme music for BBC TV's Blackadder, but a highly versatile musician. So there's not much hope that this will be a truly representative work.

The original Triumphs of Oriana contained some 24 numbers, which were assembled by the composer Thomas Morley and finally published after Elizabeth I's death in 1603. Some of them, predictably, were written by figures whose music has not survived the test of time, but the list of those involved also includes Wilbye, Weelkes and Tomkins, as

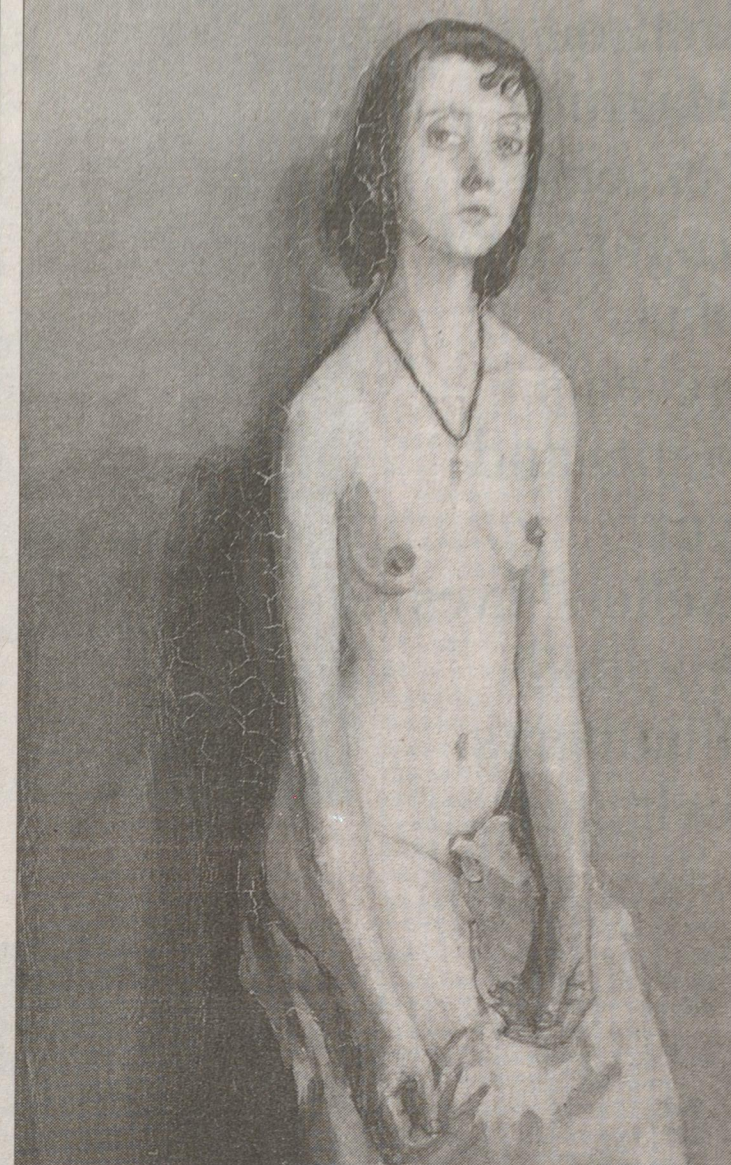
well as Morley himself, all of them leading composers of the first Elizabethan age.

There was a similar collection of unaccompanied part-songs put together for the coronation of the present queen in 1953. It was called A Garland for the Queen, and the line-up of the composers involved reads like a Who's Who of British music in the post-war era – there were settings by Bliss, Bax, Tippett, Vaughan Williams, Berkeley, Ireland, Howells, Finzi, Rawsthorne and Rubbra. It was a real and comprehensive musical snapshot of an era (Britten was a notable omission, perhaps because he was too busy writing his coronation opera Gloriana).

And that is what the new Jubilee project should be aiming for, too. It shouldn't be there simply to provide easy-on-the-ear entertainment, which might be performed a few times during the celebrations if it's lucky and then be quietly forgotten. Surely there should be some attempt to represent the full breadth of musical creativity in Britain? Such an all-embracing collection need not exclude the likes of Pook and Goodall, and in fact would benefit from their presence. But it should also feature the composers who are the leading figures in serious British music. Even if other commitments prevent the likes of Colin Matthews, Thomas Adès, Robin Holloway or Peter Maxwell Davies from contributing something, they should at least have been asked. But my enquiries about these names have drawn a blank.

I hope this is not a policy of deliberate exclusion. However, there seems to be a widespread feeling that the living composers whom audiences want to hear are a separate breed from those whom the new-music establishment (whatever that is, though it probably includes me) regards as important. It's a fallacious and divisive view, and one that something like this jubilee celebration could do a great deal to dispel.

In this country we have a long and totally continuous stylistic spectrum of composers; Pook and Goodall may be at the listener-friendly end of it, but figures like Harrison Birtwistle and Brian Ferneyhough are equally part of the same culture. If this new Triumphs of Oriana, or whatever it is going to be called, reflected that whole spectrum by inviting a genuinely wide range of composers to take part, then it might just demonstrate to the sceptics that the apparent separation of the populists from the iconoclasts was really an illusion. In fact, it might actually become a bit more than a bit of banner-waving.



Merritt's Love Locked Out (far left) and Gwen John's Nude Girl

feet, white-slave traffic in the form of a European mother and daughter cower and try to hide their nakedness. This was painted 10 years after journalist WT Stead bought a 13-year-old girl in a London street in order to expose the scandal that any Englishman could do such a thing if he wished. England, it seems, was still in denial about its own darkest desires.

And what do we make of the prevalence, from the 1860s, of images depicting women luring men into harm? Eve, Lilith, Circe, Medusa – the usual scapegoats are over-represented in late Victorian art. Femmes were increasingly seen as, literally, fatales.

With vast numbers of soldiers rendered unfit for service through venereal disease, the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s saw the enforced medical inspection and the imprisonment of suspect women – the male being considered only the recipient of the infections – while conviction rates for the crime of "annoying male persons for purposes of prostitution" soared.

Does this help us to understand the laughable scenario of Herbert Draper's Ulysses and the Sirens (1909), where men who look to be modelled on middle-aged army captains are terrified out of their wits by three naked teenage girls coming aboard? Some girls were deemed to be so corrupting that one of the reasons cited for denying female artists access to life-drawing classes (effectively curtailing their careers) was that artists' models could contaminate their morals.

Even by the turn of the century, it wasn't quite decent for a woman to paint another woman. Anna Lea Merritt's Love Locked Out (1889) was originally to have been a bronze statue for the grave of Merritt's husband, who died when she was 33; the love that is locked out is Merritt herself, the widow, outside the tomb, but she has personified herself as a teenage boy.

Gwen John had worked as a life model and hated it, citing persistent sexual propositions from male pupils. Her own Nude Girl (1909-10) meets the viewer's gaze with coolness and dignity – and is that a slight sneer? Quite possibly. John was drawing a woman she loathed, Fenella Lovell, and couldn't wait to be rid of the picture so she would never have to see her again.

Women painters and photographers were better off focusing on children, the next creatures down the food chain of the image business. Which is really the strongest theme to emerge from Exposed. No matter that this is a highly intelligent survey of the many and intermingling currents in the century's art history, you leave it with a sure sense of who framed whom in the 19th century.

Exposed: The Victorian Nude opens on Thursday at Tate Britain, London SW1 (020-7887 8008).

Sins and omissions

The Victorians loved seeing naked flesh, provided it was graceful, unthreatening – and didn't show *those* bits. Sarah Wise reports

Over 200 naked bodies but scarcely a pubic hair in sight – it could only be the Victorians.

By the mid-1840s, the art world had been infected by the cult of respectability, and the results of 70 years of attempts at self-policing are to be seen in Tate Britain's show Exposed: The Victorian Nude. Painter William Mulready knew the score: "Female beauty and innocence will be much talked about and will sell well. Let it be covertly exciting, its flesh and blood approaching a sensual existence, and it will sell much better; but let excitement appear to be the object, and hypocrites will scream and scare away the sensuality."

The hypocrites had forced William Etty (1787-1849), one of the most prolific artists of the Regency, into a permanently

defensive stance. Etty specialised in nudes of both sexes: voluptuous grown-ups, full of passion and muscle and beautifully distributed fat, as the five glorious Ettys in Exposed show. A deeply religious man, he did not understand why his works had started to offend. And there is a pitiful example in Exposed of Mulready doctoring his own fine work: his red-chalk study of a male nude (1845) shows the exquisite musculature on a half-crouching figure, but at some point Mulready took an eraser to what is the natural focal point of the sketch, and instead of a penis we are looking at a crimson blur. The holy of holies – the driving force behind almost all the works in Exposed – is like the host who no-shows at his own party. Search these six rooms as long as you like, you won't find a proper grown-up winkie.

With professional reputations at stake, a new type of body came into favour in painting. Both sexes took on the attributes of classical statuary: a streamlined silhouette and paler flesh-tones, and for women, small breasts, long thighs and hardly any muscle. Women also appear to be bystanders to their own bodies – they are there for others' uses. Pen Browning, sculptor son of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett, had his wonderfully energetic Dryope bronze rejected by the Royal Academy in 1883 on grounds of impropriety. Dryope is enjoying her body, and confidently meets the gaze of the snake (Apollo in disguise) entwining her. This was going too far. (Browning's model, Adelia Abbruzzesi, had been terrified by having the 10ft python around her for hours, and Browning had shot it when it wouldn't deconstruct.)

It was surprising what could pass muster. Paintings that to today's eyes are overtly homoerotic raised few eyebrows. The Bathers (1867) by Frederick Walker was criticised only for being "a study of vulgar little boys bathing", where to us it looks as though the artist has lingered indecently long on the bodies of naked adolescents.

It was borderline acceptable to show improper behaviour from non-Aryans. An extraordinary amount of canvas was given over, in the last 25 years of the century, to flesh market scenes – pictures of women being bought, sold, evaluated and compared, usually in middle eastern bazaars or in scenes from antiquity. Bondage (1895), by Ernest Normand, has Rameses II showing off a proud Nubian beauty – she doesn't mind being sold and everyone revels in gawping at her. But at the Nubian's



Pook... listener-friendly

Has the man behind Bergerac and Darling Buds got another hit? By Will Hodgkinson

The feelgood factory

Portrait of the week

No 81: Man Ray's *Rrose Sélavy* (1921)

Artist: Man Ray (1890-1976), dandy, dada, and the most

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nose, the hawkish profile. This 1921 picture of Rrose is based