

EXHIBITIONS

HUON MALLALIEU

TRAVELS THROUGH LANDSCAPES AND GARDENS

Fosse Gallery, Stow-on-the-Wold
4th-24th March

An 'English garden-painter' might suggest the rather waffly watercolours of the Edwardian Jolly Hollyhook School, but Louis Turpin's vibrantly coloured paintings are far from that.

Turpin is very much an *Oldie* artist. He is not only a masterly painter of gardens, allotments, sheep and landscapes, but he enjoys a parallel career as singer-songwriter and guitarist with the Turpin Brothers Blues Band. Born in 1947 – the son of Digby Turpin, a film-maker and animator who worked on such shorts as *Is this a Record?* (for the *Guinness Book of Records*) with Willie Rushton and various Pythons – Louis was brought up in London, but has been based in Rye, East Sussex, for many years.

He intended to study architecture, but realised that he was much more attracted to two-dimensional art. All was abstract at that time, and although he soon made the unfashionable transition from abstract to figurative, his brief flirtation with it still shows in the form and texture of his work.

Thereafter Turpin turned to commissioned portraits for a living but, in 1981, his first solo show was of interiors. Visits to Sissinghurst showed him that he could also find the patterns and colours that he enjoyed out of doors, in the 'rooms' of walled gardens.

Turpin developed his own style, a slight Impressionism which prevents his exactitude in portraying plants from

seeming obsessive. In the same way, he is a very good portraitist of trees without needing to detail every branch.

He has exhibited widely and, in 2015, his first solo show at the Fosse, Landscape Journeys, was a considerable success. I must declare an interest, in that I bought a small painting then, and I enjoy it anew every morning as I draw the curtains. It is of a pair of sheep against snowy Sussex fields, and they have presence and personality. I love the way that the earth scrapes through the light snow covering.

Turpin says that sheep pose particularly expressively in winter because they hope to be fed. There are more of them in *Travels through Landscapes and Gardens*, the current exhibition, both in paintings and very striking, Indian-ink landscape drawings.

Along with his staples, such as borders at Sissinghurst and Great Dixter, Turpin has found new gardens and new landscapes: Owlpen, Painswick and Rodmorton in the Cotswolds, Tremenheere and others in Cornwall and Devon, and the Edinburgh Physic Gardens with glorious mists of Himalayan Blue Poppies.

New subject matter came with a recent visit to a village in Andalusia where his parents lived for 16 years, and where he and his sons went to scatter their ashes. Artistic first fruits are Indian ink and watercolour studies of palm trees at Ronda.

In several cases, paint is more or less obviously laid on a gold ground. In some, though it may take the viewer a moment or two to realise it, the gold bursts through to make up the whole sky; in others, it glints between colours to add richness and mystery. I don't know of anyone else working in this way. A hint of Klimt? 🍷



Scoring a century: Leonard Bernstein

barely three notes to her name; so it will be interesting to hear how this more musically correct performance sounds when it is released on CD. Maureen Lipman had the right feel for the piece when the show came to London in 1986 but, like Miss Russell, Lipman is a bit of a one-off.

The LSO programme summed up the problems surrounding Bernstein the composer. As his friend Aaron Copland recognised early, Lenny possessed a vibrant rhythmic sense that worked well when writing for the stage. But his principal vocation was probably conducting. 'One gets the impression,' Copland wrote shortly after the appearance of *The Age of Anxiety*, 'that the serious music isn't always entirely necessary.' Ironically, *The Age of Anxiety* may have found its ideal resting place in dance. The Royal Ballet revives Liam Scarlett's staging on 15th March for a three-week run.

If the 2018 centenary is unlikely to change our view of Bernstein's music, there is much it might achieve as we revisit the life of a man who was entitled to boast, in Walt Whitman's phrase, 'I am large, I contain multitudes.'

In an age when inspirational, no-holds-barred talk about classical music to a mass audience is a vanished art, let some TV network re-broadcast Bernstein's 1976 Norton Lectures, *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard* – music's answer to Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* or Bronowski's *The Ascent of Man*.

And what of Bernstein's game-changing role in a centenary that really did alter the musical landscape, the Mahler centenary of 1960? But more of that another time.



The English Klimt: Louis Turpin's oil on canvas *Church in the Hill*, on show at Stow