My truth *Dilyn the dog* / **Painting the pandemic** *Lara Prendergast* / **Napoleon on screen** *Theo Zenou*

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'I was really interested in painting the relaxing of lockdown. I wanted to find people again': 'Relaxing of Lockdown I, The Royal Crescent, Bath', 2020, by Peter Brown

Art

Pete the Street

Lara Prendergast

'I've been seeing the bare bones of London,' explains the landscape artist Peter Brown, who is known affectionately as 'Pete the Street'. We meet on the corner of St Martin's Lane, where he is painting the view facing north, taking in the Coliseum, the Duke of York theatre and an Iranian restaurant called Nutshell. 'The pandemic has been a good opportunity to paint all these West End theatre awnings.'

What has he noticed about London during the pandemic? 'UPS vans, everywhere,' he says. How about Deliveroo bikes? 'I've spotted less of those.' Has London changed over the past year? 'I met a bloke on Old Compton Street who described how it feels really well to me,' Brown says. 'He used to work as a performer and spent a lot of time touring theatres in English seaside towns. Back in their day those theatres were grand and impressive, but they had become neglected and rundown. He said London now reminded him of the faded glory of Blackpool.'

The city may be looking a little forlorn but has it not been an opportune moment to paint the capital, with the streets cleared of the usual crowds? 'Well, it was great seeing the actual architecture and it was interesting on a technical level seeing the lie of the land, say between Fleet Street and Ludgate Hill. Ultimately, though, it was really depressing.'

In the first lockdown, Brown decided that he couldn't really claim his work was 'essential' so instead he retreated indoors, along with the rest of the country. He lives in Bath and spent most of last spring painting his family as they readjusted to their new life, staring at their phones, baking in the kitchen, doing the washing-up. In one of his paintings, there is a bottle of Ribena and a tube of Heinz ketchup on the kitchen table. It feels familiar.

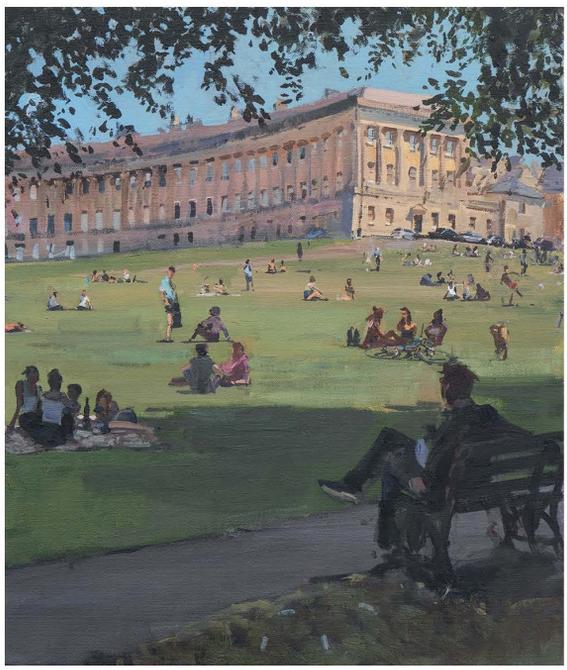
But still life — or at least slow life — isn't his normal subject matter. He prefers painting outdoors, because you have 'less control'. His pictures often feature blurred crowds. As the first lockdown started to ease, he focused on Bath's outdoor spaces. 'I was really interested in painting the relaxing of lockdown. I wanted to find people again.' His pictures from the Royal Crescent show groups spread out evenly across the grass, adhering to social distancing guidelines. 'Some people were spread out, some weren't. It was a really weird time.' In years to come, I wonder whether someone looking at these paintings will even be able to tell what is going on. The scene doesn't look particularly out of the ordinary.

London reminded him of the faded glory of Blackpool

Brown travelled around the country as much as he could. He spent time in Bristol — 'London with camper vans' — and Harrogate. 'You know when the papers were going on about these "awful people" going down to Bournemouth? Well, I went down to Bournemouth. I just did what everyone else did. But you get there and then realise, oh no, I'm a crowd! I painted it and there were masses of people on the beach, although it wasn't as crowded as the photographers made it look.'

When the second lockdown arrived, he 'painted through it'. 'I came back to London. I painted New Bond Street. All the lights were on in the shops and the security guards were outside but it was all very quiet.' His paintings tend not to feature individual, identifiable figures but the pandemic has, he says, revealed some of the sadder aspects of London life that are concealed by all the commotion. 'Lockdown has exposed what is there normally in London: people with chronic mental health issues, people who are homeless, people who are really sad. You hear and see them more when everyone else is gone. A crowd can be a lonely place.'

But Brown is the first to admit that his art is neither revolutionary nor political. 'I'm really bad at conveying a message. I don't have an agenda at all. When something like Black Lives Matter happens, I don't feel qualified to make any decent comment on it. That's a problem I have but I am just interested in the everyday, the mundane. I'm not doing anything other than recording ordinary life. I suppose there is some use in that as a record.'



Despite his modesty, Brown holds the distinguished post of being president of the New English Art Club, which was founded in 1885 as an alternative venue to the Royal Academy. His own influences are what one might call classic English: Turner, Constable, Sickert (who was one of the founding members of the NEAC). Brown is particularly fond of paintings of London from the 1950s. 'What I love about them is the sense of time past.' He tells me about an artist called Christopher Chamberlain, who studied at the Royal College of Art and taught at Camberwell School. 'He never really exhibited. He was just into painting local scenes. Normality painted beautifully.'

The past year has been anything but normal. Will Brown miss anything about his time recording it? 'At the moment, as with all moments in time, when you are trying to capture it, you want it to freeze. So I want to make sure that I capture as much of this as I can while it's here. But I'm looking forward to this city coming back although I suspect it is going to happen slowly.'

As the crowds start to return to London, it will become harder to spot Brown. I first came across him earlier this year when I noticed his easel propped up outside the Pret in Trafalgar Square while he bought a coffee. I asked whether his current painting was for sale. It was, but was somewhat out of my price range. His pictures tend to go for thousands.

In busier times, I probably wouldn't have noticed him. I get the impression he prefers it that way.

Classical music

Mozart's footnotes

Richard Bratby

Sturm und Drang 2
The Mozartists, Ian Page (Signum Classics)

Kozeluch: Concertos and Symphony
Camerata Rousseau, Leonardo Muzii (Sony Classics)

There are worse fates than posthumous obscurity. When Mozart visited Munich in October 1777, he was initially reluctant to visit his friend, the Bohemian composer Josef Myslivecek. Myslivecek was in hospital, undergoing treatment (as he told it) for a facial cancer brought on by a recent coach accident. But this being the 18th century, and Myslivecek having a reputation as a gallant, Mozart suspected venereal disease. When he finally appeared at Myslivecek's bedside, he was appalled by what he saw: 'The surgeon, that ass, has burned off his nose! Imagine the agony he must have suffered.' Within four years, the luckless — and noseless — Myslivecek had died in poverty, aged 43. His music effectively died with him.

Well, he's back again, on a recording by the British period-instrument ensemble the Mozartists that contains no Mozart, but does feature several composers who are now remembered principally as footnotes in Mozart's biography. Myslivecek's there, naturally, and Johann Wanhal — best known as the cellist in a celebrity super-quartet that convened in Vienna for one night in 1784 with Mozart on viola and Haydn playing first violin. There's also a symphony by Johann Christian Bach: the 'English Bach', buried at St Pancras, whose great friend the castrato Tenducci was rumoured to have fathered a child years after the snip. Being triorchic, Tenducci carried a fully functional reserve gonad internally — or so he told Casanova, anyway.

Anyhow, *Sturm und Drang 2* is the title of the disc — the second of seven proposed recordings devoted to the fashion for emotional turbulence that, according to the conductor Ian Page, 'swept through music and other art forms between the 1760s and the 1780s'. Historically, it's a slightly dubious concept. Much of the music that is now labelled 'Sturm und Drang' ('Storm and Stress' is the standard translation) actually predates the play by Maximilian Klinger, from 1776, that gave the trend its name. Certainly, no one seems to have used the term much before the 20th century. It's a bit *1066 and All That*: 'One of the most romantic aspects of the Elizabethan age was the wave of beards which suddenly swept across History and settled upon all the great men of the period.'

In the case of 'Sturm und Drang', it was a wave of furious minor-key-symphonies, characterised by driving rhythms, extremes of volume and expanded horn sections looming like thunderclouds in the sonic middle-distance. The Mozartists go at this music with ferocious brio. The violin playing stings like a razor cut, and the woodwinds are just the right side of raucous — the oboes, in particular, crying out over torrential strings like seabirds riding a storm. Page wields his virtuoso ensemble like a rapier, with the full orchestra flashing downwards, hitting the bottom of a phrase and rebounding with a rhythmic verve that's almost funky. The album cover shows an apocalyptic seascape with a blood-red number 2 slashed across it. Perhaps they should have gone full Meat Loaf and put the text in Gothic too.

For respite, try the debut disc by another period-instrument ensemble — the Geneva-based Camerata Rousseau, conducted by Leonardo Muzii. Pink clouds and blue Canaletto skies decorate the cover of this collection of concertos (plus a symphony) by the Bohemian cousins Jan and Leopold Kozeluch. The USP here is the terrific Italian bassoon soloist Sergio Azzolini, whose recent recording of Vivaldi's complete bassoon concertos is rapidly becoming a minor cult. Azzolini's warm sound and playful charisma bounces

The effect is like having your face licked by an over-affectionate pug

entertainingly off Jan Kozeluch's high-classical swagger; the effect is like having your face licked by an over-affectionate pug.

The orchestral playing, meanwhile, has a wide grain, with woodwind and brass flaring out around the note — producing a tangy, gamey sound that registers on a modern ear as slightly off, but which might actually be closer (not that we can ever know) to what 18th-century listeners accepted as normal. It's not a sound that you'd encounter on the London orchestral scene, where bulletproof accuracy — whether in film scores, Mahler, or 18th-century symphonies whose composers would neither have expected nor recognised it — is practically a religion. Anyone who believes that orchestras all sound the same these days simply hasn't been listening — that's one moral here.

The other? Listen to all this perfectly serviceable music by successful, well-connected composers and consider that Wanhal wrote at least another 130 symphonies, that J.C. Bach's death in 1782 was reported across Europe, and that even poor pox-ridden Myslivecek composed and premièred some five full-length operas after losing his nose. Posterity is the toughest critic: barring recordings like these, probably 99.9 per cent of all the music ever written will end up unplayed and forgotten. Bear that in mind the next time someone tells you that the neglect of a particular composer must necessarily be down to some grand socio-political conspiracy.