

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Jones, Jonathon, "Bird's-eye View", The Guardian, Jan. 4, 2000

Photography

Bird's-eye view

Jean-Luc Mylayne

Photographers' Gallery,
London

★★★★

Robin redbreast is a blur, he's so close to us — a huge black eye appearing to return our gaze as we creep towards him. The field where he perches on a twig is more in focus. We might dwell on that, might see the little bird as almost an incidental character in the photograph, except when you register the shaky image you realise you have never seen a photograph in which a bird seemed so conscious. Alfred Hitchcock wouldn't have liked this show.

Mylayne's big colour pictures of birds are intimate encounters, photographic equivalents of the moment David Attenborough was admitted into a family of gorillas. Mylayne is a romantic who insists these are not objective studies of another species, but subjective records of his relationship with animals he believes have a right to individuated portraits.

Mylayne's pictures are the fruit of field trips in which he befriends birds to the extent that a mother lets him photograph next to the nest as she feeds her young. He selects the scene — a muddy pool, a thicket — arranges it with artificial lighting, then waits for his particular befriended bird to flit into view. We see a synthesis of animal and artist: the world blown up huge, a thicket become a forest, a field an ocean, water and sky merging without up or down.

To grasp his work's strangeness you have only to compare it with mainstream wildlife

photography. Animals have been exposed to the camera since the 19th century in the name of objective knowledge and sentimental pleasure, but always as objects, as creatures without consciousness. There seems no limit to the animal spectacles we can catch on camera, from Eadweard Muybridge's photographs of horses in motion to the BBC's *Walking With Dinosaurs*, which proved that, even after being dead for millions of years, animals can still be photographed and filmed for our delight.

Mylayne's photographs are not documentary. He doesn't name species and instead captions them with the number of months he spent on each. The way he lives — spending his time following his subjects like a migratory bird — is part of their meaning. In one, a bird poses above its own reflection in a muddy pool. The bird might be studying its reflection or studying him. We are transported. "How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way," asked William Blake, "Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?"

Jonathan Jones

Till January 29.

Details: 0171 831 1772.

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<h2>Rock, pop & jazz</h2> <p>Cinematic Orchestra You missed Coldcut's alternative Pirate TV tour last month, tonight offers a second chance to catch Jason Iscoe and his multi-media film junk project The Cinematic Orchestra. Iscoe, currently on Coldcut's Ninja Tune label is a breed of artist fusing electronic, art and technology and giving the live experience into the next century. The Cinematic Orchestra Live acts Swinscoe's gamut of vocal and artistic influences, in the age of eight he and guitar and while playing a fine arts degree he led his first band and led to experiment with film-based music informed by jazz and American soul. By the mid 80s his band had split and Swinscoe's musical direction led to the alternative dance scene. Diving around the</p>		<p>country as well for a pirate radio station in South London. By his first release for Ninja Tune, Goatee Part 1, he started incorporating samples with live instruments, heavily influenced by 60s and 70s jazz and soundtrack scores. At the beginning of this year Swinscoe, with contributions from saxophonist and pianist Tom Chant, bassist Phil France and percussionist Daniel Howard, released The Cinematic Orchestra's excellent debut album, Motion. Jazz Cafe, Parkway, NW1 (0171-916 6060) 8.30pm, £10, adv £7.50.</p> <p>Matthew Keating</p>
<h2>Classical</h2> <p>Mozart Festival Orchestra Bach's Air on a G String, Handel's Let The Bright Seraphim, Jeremiah Clarke's trumpet tune, and Vivaldi's Four Seasons, all performed by candlelight in full period costume, directed by Ian Watson from the horseshoe Barbican Hall, Barbican Centre, Silk St, EC2 (0171-638 8891) 7.30pm, £10.50-£28.50.</p> <p>Rainer Hersch Gets Brahms And Liszt... And makes them wince with a razor sharp demolition of classical music and all its follies. Supported by his idiosyncratic orchestra, "the best musicians available in their price range", Hersch is a rarity amongst musical comedians in that he manages to make music even funnier than it actually is. Purcell Room, South Bank, SE1 (0171-960 4242) 2.30pm & 8pm, £10, concs £8, mat £6.</p> <p>Christopher Lambton</p>	<p>Michael Frayn makes the world of nuclear physics thoroughly entertaining and compelling in this imagining of what might have taken place during the 1941 meeting between two men central to the development of the atomic bomb. Duchess, Catherine St, WC2 (0171-494 5076) 2.30pm & 7.30pm, £15-£30.</p> <p>The Kissing-Dance It is All Fool's Eve, a night when in the realms of love, the world can be turned upside down, and the Lord of Misrule can take control. Return of Howard Goodall and Charles Hart's musical which is based on Oliver Goldsmith's classic 18th-century comedy She Stoops To Conquer. The production has been lavishly praised. Lindbury Studio, ROH, Bow St, WC2 (0171-304 4000) 7.30pm, £9-£15.</p> <p>Lyn Gardner</p>	
<h2>Theatre</h2>		<p>Jean-Luc Mylayne This French artist loves birds so much he has dedicated his life to photographing them, travelling around looking for them - just common birds. Jean-Luc Mylayne has been photographing birds since 1978 yet has only produced about 150 pictures. What he seems to be trying to do is photograph not just the bird but its point of view - a bird's eye view of the world. Photographers' Gallery, Great Newport St, WC2 (0207-831 1772) 12pm-6pm, until January 29.</p> <p>Jonathan Jones</p>
<h2>Exhibitions</h2>	<p>Peter Pan Since his arrival as artistic director in 1994, the acclaimed choreographer John McFall has quietly transformed the Atlanta Ballet (AB) - the oldest provincial ballet company in the US - revitalising its "dusty Balanchine-heavy repertoire" with dynamic contemporary choreography. For its debut visit to the UK, the company brings JM Barnes's bedtime classic to life in a spectacular production with Carmon Delone's score performed by the Royal Sinfonia. McFall's AB's gifted soloists recreate a complete with daring fight sequences, bumbling pirates, Indian maidens, feral Lost Boys, a hungry crocodile and the irascible Captain Hook. RFFH, South Bank, SE1 (0171-960 4242) 2.30pm & 7pm, £12.50-£32, concs available.</p> <p>Matthew Keating</p>	
<h2>The rest...</h2>	<p>TUESDAY 28 DEC 1999 THE GUARDIAN.</p>	