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# Laurence Osborn

## Selected Reviews

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### **Absorber**

#### **Zubin Kanga, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (November 2021)**

"More rewarding musically was the set from pianist Zubin Kanga, in which spacey, clangorous sounds obtained by electronically distorting a piano were often laid alongside familiar musical gestures, including (in Laurence Osborn's *Absorber*) processions of guileless common chords, sullied gradually by foreign notes – a fascinating effect." **Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph***

### **Micrographia**

#### **Riot Ensemble, CD Release (March 2020)**

"This lithe, witty piece refracts (via poet Joseph Minden) Hooke's 1665 treatise describing objects viewed through a microscope." **Steph Power, *BBC Music Magazine***

"Laurence Osborn's *Micrographia*, in which Dacey is joined by soprano April Frederick, delights in the wondrous microscopic world of the 17th-century natural philosopher Robert Hooke (text by poet Joseph Minden)." **Fiona Maddocks, *The Guardian***

"The music, detailing things as seen through a microscope is very graphic in its instrumental colouring especially 'Wings of Flies' with whirling strings and the use of kazoos!" **Alan Cooper, *British Music Society***

### **CTRL**

#### **Riot Ensemble, Kings Place (February 2020)**

"Between these pieces came a vocal extravaganza, the tripartite *Ctrl* by Laurence Osborn (b1989), setting words by himself. And what words they were. "I was born without a heart. I was born face first into the pulp of processed male history" is the opening strand, initiating the theme of the futility of masculinity. The cabaret-style singer — the soprano Sarah Dacey, in male attire, with facial hair daubed on — essayed, with electronic aid, all sorts of distorted male voices. The second part, *Body*, was equally provocative, comprising 29 assertions beginning with that word — from "Body is amazing" to "Body is inescapable" — then erupting into a blatant ensemble version of the football chant "We do what we want". Part three was a sort of abstract, eviscerated lullaby, recalling the "exquisitely tired and four-in-the-morning" quality the composer Constant Lambert found in Ellington's *Mood Indigo*." **Paul Driver, *The Sunday Times***

### **The Mother**

#### **Mahogany Opera, Polish Social And Cultural Association, London (May 2018)**

"If the action evokes the inter-war avant-garde, Osborn's music also pays tribute to the 20th century. Intricate, animated and predominantly atonal, it contains snatches of parlour song as the *Mother* waxes nostalgic, and jazz rhythms flash through its lucid textures." **Yehuda Shapiro, *The Stage***

"Fantastic absurdity... Osborn's score draws on the eclectic, intoxicatingly democratic soundworlds of Ligeti, Stockhausen and Gerald Barry in its garish grotesques, creating memorable moments of surreal beauty and wit, with the help here of an outstanding young cast and the accompaniment of Chroma and conductor Jamie Man." **Alexandra Coghlan, *The Tablet***

### **CTRL (première)**

#### **Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (November 2017)**

"If these pieces interrogated the essence and origin of sounds, in Laurence Osborn's remarkable *CTRL* sound came politically charged. This song-cycle exploring masculinity is sung by a soprano (the magnificent Sarah Dacey) heard through an autotune device, chosen by Osborn for its illusion of invulnerability. Dacey, sporting five o'clock shadow, turned the dial between "male", "female" and "alien", according to the narrative, transforming her voice from shrilly synthetic gurgle to flaccid bass."

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"I was born without a heart" launches in at full-tilt, words often subsumed by the noisy glitter of its music, swooping bass riffs and shrieking flute frosted with the roar of a metal sheet. In part two, "My body", Osborn conjures a sleazy, surreal cabaret: Dacey's deep, distorted intoning of "we do what we want" gathers into a queasy anthem punctuated by all-too human screams from the ensemble. At one point her voice is left naked in a limping lullaby, "rock me", the Leviathan breathing of deep bass waves recalling Britten's Grimes and Midsummer Night's Dream. That's no accusation, but a tribute to writing of powerful resonance and fluency. *CTRL* suggests a prodigious dramatic talent: indeed, Osborn is currently developing an opera, *The Mother*, for Mahagonny Opera."

**Helen Wallace, *The Arts Desk***

"The most assured piece was Laurence Osborn's *Ctrl*, which showed a confident hand with larger forces and a talent for synthesising different kinds of harmony and stylistic reference points in a manner reminiscent to Thomas Adès or Maxwell Davies."

**Stephen Chase, *Tempo***

"I'm sure I can't have been the only person in the hall to feel as though Osborn had personally punched me in the chest... *Ctrl* was clearly something special and possibly – time will tell – important."

**Simon Cummings, *5:4***

### ***April in the Amazon***

#### **Lore Lixenberg and CHROMA, The Platform Theatre (July 2014)**

"An exuberantly colourful and emotionally volatile sonic tapestry"

**Rupert Christiansen, *The Telegraph***