



[Never Mind The Weather](#) , Halle Orchestra
Bridgewater Hall, Manchester
Reviewed by [Matthew Dougall](#) November 2017

The Halle Orchestra's POPS season continued this evening with a selection of music taken from many different musical genres from classical to rock, all with a common theme - the weather.

Welcoming the conductor **Stephen Bell** was like welcoming an old friend. His manner and love of the music is infectious and it is always a joy to hear and watch him conduct.

As for the orchestra; well I am sure they need no introduction. One of the most famous and celebrated orchestras in the world - and for good reason. With practically no rehearsal time, they are able to come up with a superb sound no matter what is thrown in front of them. They seem equally at home with Handel as they did tonight with Prince and the Weather Girls!

Helping with the vocals this evening were two soloists. Taking a break from Strictly Come Dancing, crooner and seasoned showman **Lance Ellington**, and West End leading lady **Hazel Fernandes**

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Over the course of the two hours spent in their company we were treated to gems varying from jazz standards, songs from the Musicals of yesteryear, a couple of pop songs, and some lighter classical orchestral music.

The orchestra started the whole evening off with a lovely arrangement of the theme tune to the Musical, 'On A Clear Day You Can See Forever'. The other orchestral pieces included a piece of music I had never heard before, The Storm Scene from Britten's 'Peter Grimes'. Highly dramatic and evocative. I loved it. And of course no concert about the weather could be complete without Johann Strauss' 'Thunder And Lightning Polka'.

Fernandes sang several solos this evening, but she was at her best and most confident with the two pop songs. 'Purple Rain' which she duetted with Ellington, and in the second half she pulled out all the stops for a great rendition of 'It's Raining Men'. If only all pop songs used a full symphony orchestra I might listen to and like more!

Ellington's persona and charisma shone through the whole concert, and delighted us with a couple of original arrangements. The one which stays in my mind though was scored simply for guitar, drum kit and string quartet. The beautiful 'Ain't No Sunshine'. Other favourites were 'Misty', 'Foggy Day in London Town' and 'Come Rain or Come Shine'.

The only truly disheartening thing this evening was to see a half empty auditorium. Such a shame, when the orchestra is so magnificent. Perhaps the timing of the concert - just before the Christmas season - has put punters off.