



[An Evening With 007](#) - The Halle Orchestra POPS Concert at Bridgewater Hall

Reviewed by [Matthew Dougall](#) December 2016

The final concert of this season of POPS Concerts also marks the last concert for the Halle Orchestra this year, and they finished in fine flourish and stupendous style with music from possibly the most famous and longest running film franchise. The films are where everything is shaken but not stirred, and although the plots and characters may be a little tired by now, the music, as was attested this evening, was fresh and alive and sounding as good if not better than ever.

The one thing about the Bond films, apart from all the other obvious cliches, is that the music is not only instantly recognisable as a piece of Bond music no matter who composed it, but they are also excellently crafted and atmospheric pieces of film composition. Bond obviously brings out the best in the composers who have dabbled with his music, from the original John Barry (who scored an unbelievable 11 films) right through to the present day with Sam Smith's scoring of Spectre.

And so this evening, with the orchestra looking very suave in white dinner jackets for the men and black evening wear for the ladies we were treated to 21 pieces of music spanning the whole gambit of the Bonds. To help bring these pieces to life, two soloists were enlisted, and they came along and blasted out numbers made famous by their respective original recording artists to much appreciation and admiration of the hard-core Bond fans in evidence tonight.

Alison Jiear, a soprano I had hitherto never heard of, but one whom I shall certainly be looking out for in the future, showed off her versatility and talent with numbers ranging from You Only Live Twice, through Goldfinger and For Your Eyes Only, to the more modern and difficult Skyfall; singing with apparent ease and with such a powerful and emotionally charged voice too. One could not help but to be captivated by her. She also showed a lovely warm and bubbly personality too, as she dedicated the song Nobody Does It Better to the conductor, Stephen Bell.

Matthew Ford provided the male vocals for numbers such as Thunderball (without fainting after the final held high note!) and Duran Duran's A View To A Kill, and although these were sung extremely well, Ford is primarily a lounge singer in the style of Frank Sinatra, and his voice best suited those songs which lent themselves to crooning; especially From Russia With Love and We Have All The Time In The World.

Our conductor, Mr. Stephen Bell was also in merry mood this evening, flirting with Jiear and heckling the late-comers - but it was all in the best of all possible tastes and we warmed to him all the more because of it.

Of course the orchestra played wonderfully and not only did the music get the Bond treatment, tonight it also was given the Bell treatment and sounded superb! Sadly and annoyingly though I do have one negative comment to write at this juncture; and if it were only me thinking this then I would probably not comment, but during the interval it was also mentioned by others too, and therefore I feel it needs commenting upon. The electric guitarist was very poor this evening. It felt like he was a learner in comparison the musicians around him, playing by numbers almost and not understanding the melodic line of the piece he was playing at all. Such a shame really when he was playing the most famous of all Bond themes.

Guitars notwithstanding, Bond will let the Skyfall on 2016 proving beyond doubt that his music at least, is as popular now as ever.