

## Dance: Stephen Petronio Comany, Queen Elizabeth Hall, London

By Jenny Gilbert

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Meanwhile, the South Bank had the chief Dance Umbrella item of the week. New York's Stephen Petronio has the air of an old favourite, thanks his punk-era partnership with Michael Clark. In fact this was only his second Umbrella visit, revealing a mature artist with surprisingly lush tastes. For nostalgia's sake, he kicked off with an oldie, whose bondage costumes and Stranglers blast signal the tail-end of his bad-boy phase, though with hindsight you notice how classical the steps are, and how elegantly modulated the phrases, even while the dancers stiffen into a kind of manacled limp.

Petronio's current taste is for the music of Rufus Wainwright, the singer-songwriter with the sound of a fallen angel. Petronio made *Bud Suite* while he was waiting to clinch a deal with Wainwright, glowingly sensuous duets and trios made to a selection of the hit ballads. But *Bloom* was what he was after: a rhapsodic affirmation of faith in the world, set to part-Latin liturgy, part verse by Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, and danced by his company of eight in what looks like a permanent state of bliss. If *Bloom* had a colour, it would be blush pink with gilded edges. The involvement of a choir of London teenagers, singing along with Wainwright's recorded score, left me almost in a puddle on the floor.