

No. 505 - JANUARY 2019

A Happy New Year to All Our Readers

President: Nickolas Grace Vice President: Wayne Sleep OBE

Edward Fox speaks at the Vic-Well's AGM

A Report by Professor Liz Schafer

The guest speaker at the 2018 AGM was veteran actor Edward Fox. Our President Nickolas Grace introduced Edward and a lively discussion, covering a wide range of topics, ensued. In some places the discussion was so lively that Edward commented at the end of the evening 'I hope you don't think I'm a total rotter'! Edward argued passionately that the decline of repertory theatre is seriously affecting the theatre industry because repertory enables young performers to learn from working alongside experienced actors and acting school is only the beginning of the journey. Edward also expressed strong views on the union

Equity. He hasn't been a member for 40 years but Nickolas did point out that Equity provide protection over contracts, pay and insurance, which is particularly important for impoverished members of the profession.

Edward didn't go into acting straight away when he left school – in fact he claimed that after Harrow he just wanted a life of debauchery! But National Service with the North Lancashire regiment followed and then he auditioned for RADA. Despite a successful career on stage, Edward is still probably best known for film and television roles such as *The Day of the Jackal* (1973) and the television series *Edward and Mrs Simpson* (1978). Frankie Lonsdale (Donaldson), Edward's aunt, had written the biography of Edward VIII on which the series was based and Edward claimed that, when they thought the lines weren't good enough, he and Cynthia Harris (playing Mrs Simpson) worked with Frankie to smuggle in rewriting that they felt worked much better than the



original script. Frankie was the half-sister of Edward's mother Angela Worthington, a very good comedic actress, and the illegitimate daughter of Frankie's father, the playwright Freddie Lonsdale. Because illegitimacy was such an issue – Angela was born in 1912 – she had no contact with her father until very late in his life. Many of the Fox family have had careers in theatre – and Edward's son, the actor Freddie Fox, has previously proposed the toast for the Vic-Wells Association at Shakespeare's birthday party; however, I hadn't realised that family connections were the reason Edward was brought in to



take on the role of Winston Churchill in the 2013 play *The Audience* – starring Helen Mirren as the Queen – when Robert Hardy became ill before opening night. The show's producer, Robert Fox, knew his brother Edward could learn lines very quickly and Edward had only 3 days to rehearse before the opening performance.

The first time I saw Edward onstage was the mesmerising 1979 production of T.S.Eliot's *The Family Reunion*, a Manchester Royal Exchange production that transferred to the Roundhouse in London. What I didn't remember was that in Manchester the part of the dowager was played by Beatrix Lehmann who fell ill during the run. Edward spoke movingly about Lehmann's sudden illness, her insistence that she should go on despite feeling ill, and her determination to communicate the meaning of the words even when she was having difficulty speaking clearly. Later it was found she had had a stroke and she died a few days later.

On a happier note Edward quoted what he called 'the best lines in the world', taken from *Twelfth Night*. When Duke Orsino offers Feste payment 'for his pains' in singing, Feste replies 'No pains, sir, I take pleasure in singing'. Edward said that he felt very fortunate to have taken pleasure and 'no pains' in his work – and his hope in the theatre is always that audiences go out feeling pleasure, and more alive.

Aladdin at the Hackney Empire

Michael Ellison enthusiastically embraces the start of the pantomime season



Clive Rowe as Widow Twankey and Justin Timberlake as Abanazer Photography: Robert Workman

If you have not got a child or grandchild, borrow one from a neighbour and make your way to the glorious red plush and gilt of the Hackney Empire for their pantomime, *Aladdin*. The building and the children's excitement alone are worth the ticket price. You could be deafened by their shouts of "He's behind you!" and damp-eyed at their absolute ability to live in the moment.

On stage there is magic, music, mayhem and mischief. The Genie flies, there is an amazing dragon, two comic policemen and a whole pandemonium of dancing pandas. Clive Rowe as Widow Twankey is a delicious Dame, sending himself up and making the occasional rude joke for the adults:"You can take the girl our of Clapton..." followed by a look that sweeps the audience as if daring them. Tony Timberlake, as a very wicked Abanazar with his evil plans to steal the magic lantern, has the children shrieking with alarm.

A word of warning - don't sit in an aisle seat of the stalls, as Widow Twankey, is a costume of inestimable vulgarity, has an ability, an inbuilt intuition perhaps, to select the right person not to shrink with embarrassment or, worse, take over the show.

So gather up a bottle of something to lubricate your throat, ear plugs and, dispensing with any disbelief, journey down to Hackney for a real Christmas treat!

Ian McKellen on Stage at the Old Vic

A message from Ian McKellen on his solo tour - with Tolkien, Shakespeare, others and, he hopes, you!

I'm celebrating my 80th birthday by touring a new solo show to theatres I know well and a few that I don't. The show starts with Gandalf and will probably end with an invitation to act with me on stage. In-between there will be anecdotes and acting. I open at my local arts centre in January and end up by August in Orkney. I will be performing at the Old Vic on 17 February 2019.

Live theatre has always been thrilling to me, as an actor and in the audience. Growing up in Lancashire, I was grateful to those companies who toured beyond London and I've always enjoyed repaying that debt by touring up and down the country myself, with the RSC, the National Theatre, Prospect Theatre, the Actors' Company, as well as with commercial productions.



I joined Laurence Olivier's new National Theatre company at The Old Vic in 1964, as a nervous Claudio in Franco Zefferelli's glorious Much Ado About Nothing. I was nervous to be onstage with Maggie Smith, Albert Finney, Derek Jacobi and Robert Stephens. More confidently, I was back in 2004/5 in pantomime, as Widow Twankey to Roger Allam's dastardly Abanazar. Now in my new solo show, I shall reprise Shakespeare (and others) on The Old Vic's historic stage. Profits will benefit plans to improve access facilities and, at last, double the number of ladies' loos. Long live the dear Old Vic! See you there, I hope!

For details of tour venues and dates go to <u>http://www.mckellen.com/stage/19-mckellen-on-stage/index.html</u>

Inside the Vic-Wells - News and Views

Send your news, views and comments to the Broadsheet Editor vwbroadsheet@hotmail.co.uk



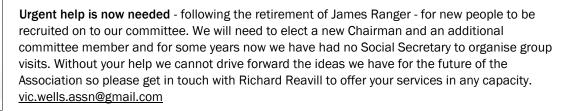
Giles Terera - best known for his Olivier Award-winning performance as Aaron Burr in the West End production of Hamilton, will be joining the already announced cast of Arthur Miller's The American Clock , opening at the Old Vic on 4 February 2019.

VW's President - Nickolas Grace directed the Armistice Concert for the Royal Central School, performed in the rococo Ballroom of the Savile Club. Nickolas also performed in Christmas Carol Concerts at St Marylebone and St George's, Hanover Square with contributors, including Dames Judi Dench and Eileen Atkins, Jeremy Irons, Aled Jones and Sir John Major.

Ballet Now - is a 5-year project supporting the development of choreographers, composers and designers who show originality and insight by offering them an opportunity to work on the largest scale. Ballet Now will support 30 new artists providing them with BRB's world-class resources, facilities and experience. It is overseen by a Creative Consortium of industry leaders who offer inspiration, mentoring, development and support.



Vic-Well's member - Sarah Agha - will be reading an extract from We are Displaced by Malala Yousafzai which will be featured on Radio 4's Book of the Week starting Monday 7th January 2019. Malala is the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. Sarah will read the story of Zeinab, a Yemeni refugee.





Sincere thanks - to the majority of Annual Members who renewed their subscriptions promptly. A small number of renewals are still outstanding and this will be the last Broadsheet to be sent to those members. Annual members renewing by Standing Order were sent a form to update their subscription rate, eight have still not responded. Please let the Treasurer know if you have done so directly with your bank or need a replacement form.



Older and disabled VW's members - who have been unable to attend our VW's parties, because they are unable to climb stairs, have been given good news with the the announcement that access facilities are to be improved at the Old Vic. See page 7 for more information.



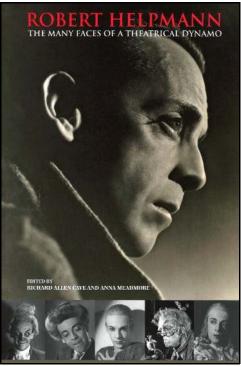
Book in now - for Matthew Bourne's Romeo and Juliet - a passionate and contemporary re-imagining of Shakespeare's classic love story, featuring a live orchestra. Four-week summer season at Sadler's Wells from Wednesday 7 August to Saturday 31 August 2019.

Robert Helpmann Book Launch

Professor Liz Schafer reports from the book launch hosted by the Royal Ballet Upper School

It was lovely to see so many Vic-Wells members at the launch of *Robert Helpmann: The Many Faces of a Theatrical Dynamo*, edited by Richard Cave and Anna Meadmore, and published by Dance Books. This amazingly diverse collection of essays really reminds readers of how extravagantly talented Helpmann (1909-1986) was; he achieved dazzling success as a dancer, actor, choreographer, and director, and ranged across the worlds of ballet, stage, television, opera and film. The book is dedicated to the late David Drew and includes a CD tribute film to Drew's inspired work in bringing the Helpmann choreography of the ballet Murder in the Gorbals back to life in 2014, when it was staged by the BRB in 2014. Drew's excavation of the original choreography, supplemented by additional choreography by Gillian Lynne, drew on the memories of original cast members in a series of extraordinary workshops which are glimpsed at in the CD.

The launch was hosted by the Royal Ballet Upper School and guests included the young dancer Audrey Freeman. This young dancer, who is studying at the Royal Ballet Upper School, is a distant relative of Helpmann via the Gardiner family; Helpmann's mother Mary (Maytie) was born a Gardiner. Maytie was a very talented amateur performer – and perhaps not really cut out to be a grazier's wife in Mount Gambier – and all three of her children worked in entertainment. Helpmann's younger sister Sheila and brother Max both worked as actors – Sheila in Australia and Max largely in Canada. The Gardiner artistic genes also passed to Audrey's great great aunt Shirley (Freeman) Williams, who danced for J.C.Willamson Ltd, the theatrical company, which operated a virtual monopoly in the Australian entertainment industry until the 1970s.



Robert Helpmann: The Many Faces of a Theatrical Dynamo Edited by Richard Cave and Anna Meadmore Published by Dance Books

Audrey has become a student of The Royal Ballet Upper School in September 2018, at the unusually young age of 15. In concentrating on ballet she has

turned her back on a career in gymnastics – she was an elite rhythmic gymnast – and her family have relocated to London to support her. She also has 79.3 K followers on Instagram and examples of her extraordinarily fearless dancing can be seen on YouTube.

Let's hope Audrey has as much success - and fun - in London as Robert Helpmann did.

An actress remembered...

Christine Kendall reminisces about her connection with the actress Teresa Moore



Teresa Moore was born in 1932 and christened Teresa Hermione Idena Robertson, later known as Toppet.

As a student at Rose Bruford College in July 1950 she was awarded the Silver Medal, which was presented by Margaret Rutherford. There followed a period of stage and radio work, such as in October of that year with the Winwood Theatre Company playing "a very touching Ophelia" according to the reviewer in *The Stage*. Hubert Gregg was her Hamlet.

1951 saw Toppet playing small parts in two productions that were part of a London Season of the Arts for the Festival of Britain. These were Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* at the St James's Theatre, London. They were prestigious productions, as the company was led by Laurence Olivier and included Peter Cushing, Maxine Audley, Robert Helpmann and Vivien Leigh.

In May 1954 she married Nigel Forbes Adam, a member of a landed family whose home was Skipwith Hall in Selby, Yorkshire, a Queen Anne house with extensive grounds. After marriage and, in time, four sons, professional acting took a back seat, but in 1966 Nigel and Toppet were in the cast of the *York Mystery Plays* as Pilate and his wife, Percula. *The Mystery Plays* are performed every four years, at that time in the Museum Gardens, and are an important event in the community. It is the tradition to

engage a professional director, and a professional actor plays Jesus while the rest of the cast is non-professional. That year the director was Bill Gaskill, and John Westbrook played Jesus.

I came to know them both in the mid-1970s, when they kindly allowed YUDS (York University Drama Society) to do a performance of *The Importance of Being Ernest* in the grounds of Skipwith Hall.

Toppet then became involved with YUDS, and in the autumn of 1978 we were both part of the company that went to Edinburgh for the Festival. Toppet was in a student-written play in which she played the wife of a "memory man," someone like the character Mr Memory in Hitchcock's 1935 film *The Thirty-Nine Steps*.

I now realise how sporting it was of her to stay in a flat with a bunch of students. She was very considerate, taking a flask of black coffee (always black) to bed with her so that she didn't disturb anyone in the mornings, as no doubt she was awake earlier than most of us. In our free time she and I used to go to performances and exhibitions. "Shall we stagger down to the Degas today?" was a typical invitation.

I have a mental picture of her in a long dark skirt, blue and white striped shirt and the navy blue fisherman's jersey she always wore until she lost it at the Fringe Club one evening. I don't remember her ever talking much about herself, but I do recall the way she spoke, which was pre-war, not quite Celia Johnson but along those lines.

In 1980 Annie Castledine, who had been a mature student at York and a professional director since 1977, founded the Northern Studio Theatre along with Kate Taylor and Toppet. The NST's aim was to develop a writer's theatre in the North and to promote the work of women wherever this was possible.

In 1984 Toppet was in the cast of *Romeo and Juliet* at Leeds Playhouse and she played Edna the maid in a 1990 radio production of *An Inspector Calls*.

She died in 2005 and is buried in Petworth, where she spent the last years of her life. The oldest Forbes Adam son Charlie manages the estate, in whose grounds the small theatre, known as the Little Theatre, is used mainly for conferences and weddings.

Late Autumn Visitors to Sadler's Wells

Two of the dance companies which visited Sadler's Wells in the late autumn -Birmingham Royal Ballet (BRB) and Rambert 2 (with Rambert 1) - are reviewed here by Richard Reavill. Both events, he says, were interesting, but for different reasons

BRB split their week between *La Fille mal Guardée* and a double bill of David Bintley's *The King Dances*, and *Ignite*, choreographed by Juanjo Arques entitled "Fire and Fury".

Why BRB choose to market their multiple bill programmes under such strange titles is unclear, though the connection with fire was evident from the flaming torches carried by dancers in *The King Dances*, and from the title of *Ignite*. It was good to see *The King Dances* returning to the repertory. It is one of the most original ballets produced in recent years, and is a fitting tribute to Bintley as he leaves BRB. The work is a distillation of what was believed to be a 12 hour entertainment devised and

led by the 14 year old King Louis XIV of France, and was also the origin of ballet. The dance was both baroque and classically modern. The principal role of Le Roi Soleil and the multiple role of La Nuit/Le Diable/Cardinal Mazarin were danced by Max Maslen and Tyrone Singleton, both excellent. Singleton projected a sinister image despite a courtly wig reminiscent of one of the characters in the Dilbert cartoons. This was no small achievement as both roles were created with regard to the particular qualities of two dancers no longer with BRB.

Ignite also had a relationship with fire, as it concerned the Turner painting of the burning of the Houses of Parliament in 1835. I wondered if this would have registered with the audience without the help of the programme note. True, the dancers donned smocks in red, orange and yellow over their neutral all-over body stockings, matching the colours of Turner's painting. Mathias Dingman as "Sky" and Delia Mathews as "River" performed a spectacularly athletic pas-de-deux. Celine Gittens and Brandon Lawrence crackled brightly as "Fire". The cast brought great energy to the work, but if I had been more familiar with the Turner painting, it would have meant more to me. Also, would *Ignite* have been better placed as the first ballet, as *The King Dances* was the stronger work?



Celine Gittens and Brandon Lawrence in Ignite Photo: Andrew Ross

Rambert 2's First Performance

Attending the first performance of "Rambert 2" at Sadler's Wells in November I was reminded of the comic ballet *The Prospect Before Us*, choreographed by Ninette de Valois in 1940 as a bit of escapism in the dark early days of World War II. Not that the evening with the Rambert dancers was in any way similar to the de Valois one-acter, nor as much fun as when it was revived by BRB a few years ago. That ballet concerned the rivalry between two theatre managers, and the trouble this causes to a troop of dancers. At one point, the dancers protest with placards, one of which says "pity the poor dancers". So, why this memory at the first performance of Rambert 2?

The performance signalled the creation by Rambert of a second small company of 13 young dancers in their first professional engagement. Many dance companies have a second company of newly trained dancers, often from the company's school, to give the new graduates professional experience and act as a feeder to the main company. American Ballet Theater and Nederlands Dance Theatre do so, but I think this is the first example of a UK company making such a decision. So, congratulations to Rambert for taking this initiative, but the selection of works for them to dance did not all convince.

The programme was a sandwich, with Rambert (1?) providing the filling, a performance of Christopher Bruce's *Ghost Dances* by members of the main Rambert company. The first slice of "bread" in this sandwich aired a new work, *Grey Matter*, by the company's then "Guest Artistic Director" for this season, Benoit Swan Pouffer. Mr. Pouffer, a French/American, directed the New York based Cedar Lake Contemporary Dance Company, and has now been appointed as Rambert's new Artistic Director. His work with Cedar Lake is highly regarded, but his *Grey Matter* did not appeal greatly to me, very well danced though it was by the Rambert 2 troop. Its theme, the neurons of the brain (Poirot's "little grey cells"?), and their control of all our actions,



Christopher Powney, Paul Liburd and Jan de Schynkel in *Ghost Dances* Photo: Anthony Crickmay

might be difficult to comprehend without the help of the programme. The sound track, over-loud and hard driving, contrasted with the lighting, too dim and generally rather flat.

The second item was a revival of a duet by Rafael Bonachala, created in 2004 in the London location of its postcode title: *E2 7SD*. It was danced by Conor Kerrigan and Aishwarya Rant to a sound-track of disjointed human speech. Themes of interpersonal competition, aggression, and perhaps reconciliation were apparent, and it was danced with great strength and commitment.

So to *Ghost Dances* from 1981, a quiet but quite compelling work, which was given a sincere performance by members of the main Rambert company. That it had more impact than all the energy and noise of the earlier works says much for its theme, oppression in South America, and the skill of the

choreography by Christopher Bruce. This programme was advertised as the last performances of *Ghost Dances*. If so, this is a shame. The Rambert back-catalogue contains some important works which should be kept alive by occasional performance, and *Ghost Dances* is one such work. The Rambert policy of continual creation of new works is admirable. Without such a policy, the repertory would become a museum, the treasures of the past would never have been created, nor would the major works of the future. Without revivals of fine past works, there will be no bench-mark of the quality of the new works. This might help the lesser new works, but will not help to maintain and improve standards.

Finally, Rambert 2 again with a revival of *Killer Pig* by Sharon Eyal to a strident score by Ori Lichtik. This is contemporary dance at its most "in your face", super-athletic, astonishingly sustained for 50 minutes, and the dance equivalent of a marathon.

At about 30 minutes the pace slowed just a little, and I expected an ending. But no, the work changed up a gear and pounded on, long after it seemed it had run out of choreographic ideas. However, it was remarkably well danced, and even though the word "killer" in the title could be most appropriate, it was even more remarkably sustained.

"Without revivals of fine past works there will be no bench-mark of the quality of the new works"

No Variety

All the material for the Rambert 2 dancers was very similar. Apart from *Ghost Dances*, the programme had no variety, and that work seemed to be provided as a respite from modern dance at its most powerful and perhaps least audience friendly. Is this the right policy for the launch of a new small company, due to tour to new venues and seek new audiences? Is it the

way to win audiences? As the kids seem to delight in noise at levels near the pain threshold, perhaps it will. Stay tuned, the answer to this question could be available in a year or so.

So, "pity the poor dancers"? No! Commendations to the excellent young dancers, but an awareness that they need to have an audience to which to perform should be prominent in the compilation of a multiple work programme. Even the most adventurous of dance companies need an audience.



OV Tomorrow

We all love our old Old Vic building but 200 years of world-class productions can take its toll. The theatre reports that the ladies' loos (or lack thereof) is their customers' number one complaint! And accessibility for disabled visitors to the theatre has also been a problem. The Old Vic is keen to make upgrades to the building. These will include:

- ★ A new accessible entrance from Waterloo Road into the reconfigured foyer which will allow disabled patrons access to The Old Vic foyer for the very first time in its 200 year history.
- \star An accessible lift from the new entrance to the basement café and loos.
- ★ Doubling (yes doubling!) the amount of ladies' loos with additional cubicles in the basement and on the top level.
- ★ A reconfigured foyer area with new bar facilities and box office, again accessible for everyone to use.

Why hasn't this been done before now? The Old Vic is a registered charity in receipt of no regular public subsidy – that means they don't get a regular grant from the Arts Council or local authority. Every penny they raise through ticket sales or donations from generous supporters is needed to create their work on stage and for community initiatives. So a major fundraising drive is underway.

The Old Vic is asking for donations to improve their loos and access. They desperately want to make these improvements but need your help.

With 'Light Up The Theatre' you can help modernise the Old Vic by lighting up a square with your donation. Or, you could 'Name a Seat' for yourself or a loved one in the auditorium for the next 10 years - and similarly help modernise the Old Vic for a 21st century audience. For more information go to: www.oldvictheatre.com/ovtomorrow

Work on these projects are due to start work in January 2019 - so please donate today.

COMING SOON



Sadler's Wells, Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4TN 0844 871 0090	
Main Theatre	Stills from Sadler's Wells website used with permission
4 Dec - 27 J	lan Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake – New Adventures
10 Jan - 2 F	eb London International Mime Festival 🕩
8 - 9 Feb	Sadler's Wells Sampled
14 - 17 Feb	Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch - New Piece 1
	Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch - Bon Voyage, Bob
	Richard Alston Dance Company - Quartermark
	BalletBoyz -Them/Us
12 Mar	CONTEXT Festival
	Russell Maliphant & Vangelis - The Thread
	Mark Morris Dance Group - Pepperland
	Northern Ballet - Victoria 🖉 🗭
	English National Ballet - She Persisted
	Damien Jalet & Kohei Nawa - Vessel
	Aracaladanza - Play
24 - 25 Apr	Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Jean-Guihen Queyras &
Lilion Povlic	Rosas - Mitten wir im Leben sind / Bach6Cellosuiten
Lilian Baylis Studio	
	Olivier de Sagazan - Transfiguration
	A Night with Thick and Tight
26 Jan	Breakin' Convention presents Back To The Lab
2 Feb	Royal Academy of Dance - Into Hip Hop Dance
	Elmhurst Ballet School - Origins
	Masters of Ballet - Chipolino
4 - 5 Apr Peacock The	Albert Quesada & Zoltán Vakulya -OneTwoThreeOneTwo
Portugal Street, Kingsway, London WC2A 2HT	
-	PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP - Sleeping Beauty
29 Jan - 16 Feb German Cornejo's Tango Fire	
25 Feb - 9 Mar Cirque Éloize - Hotel	
12 - 31 Mar Yamato - Passion ④ ►	
	ENB & ENB Ballet School - My First Ballet: Sleeping Beauty

www.sadlerswells.com



Old Vic Theatre Waterloo Road, London SE1 8NB

4 February - 30 March Arthur Miller's The American Clock The American Clock turns, fortunes are made and lives are broken. In New York City in 1929, the stock market crashed and everything changed. This ground-breaking play is directed by visionary director Rachel Chavkin.

www.oldvictheatre.com 0844 871 7628 15 April - 8 June Arthur Miller's All My Sons

America, 1947. Despite hard choices and even harder knocks, Joe and Kate Keller are a success story. But nothing lasts forever and their contented lives are about to shatter. Jeremy Herrin directs Sally Field and Bill Pullman.



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