

Not to be missed Ninette de Valois Event

Report by Liz Schafer



The Royal Ballet School's decision to host a 'conference' to mark the 10th Anniversary of the death of its founder, Ninette de Valois, looks as if it will not only celebrate the life of an '*adventurous traditionalist*' but also produce an adventurous event that is not a traditional conference nor a traditional performance but instead a real opportunity for performance, research, memory, archives and entertainment all to interact and interconnect.

The exciting event (one really can't call it 'a conference' because it gives completely the wrong impression) will take place over three days from Friday 1st April to Sunday 3rd April 2011. There will be a host of film showings, interviews, performances, reconstructions, research papers, exhibitions, refreshments, music, reminiscing and a book launch.

I will be there as an academic (and will be giving a short paper on Ninette de Valois and the articles she wrote for the Vic-Wells Association's magazine). But, for me, the really exciting event will be on the Sunday at White Lodge (coach transport from central London will be provided)

where there will be a performance of W.B. Yeats' play *The King of the Great Clock Tower* (1934) using everything that is known and documented about de Valois' choreography for the first performance. This is brave, exciting, and will be cutting edge in terms of academic research, choreography and composition.

Elsewhere, the full spectrum of de Valois' range will be covered from her poetry to her experiences in music hall and pantomime. Topics under discussion will include, for example, her training methods and those who influenced her most; her commissioning of music; her management; her choreography and her collaborators; her influence in Turkey; her connections with Bloomsbury and her contribution to dance in Ireland. What is wonderful, however, is that pupils of the Royal Ballet School will be on hand so that any discussion can be accompanied by demonstrations relating to what is being discussed. *Betrayed Girls* can talk about their interpretation of the role but differences can also, again, be demonstrated. There will be a panel on folk traditions and de Valois's work.

I hope that members of the Vic-Wells Association will be as excited as I am by this event, especially as it is hoped that the Association will be contributing one small but important item to the event: a film belonging to the Vic-Wells Association which includes seven minutes of de Valois dancing the role of Webster in *A Wedding Bouquet*.

Booking, programme of events, and information is at www.royalballetschool.co.uk/dvconference

❄ THE TWELFTH NIGHT PARTY ❄

Not to be missed! Our annual Twelfth Night Party will take place at the Old Vic on Saturday, 8th January 2011 from 5.30pm to 6.30pm in the second circle bar area.

We hope that a member of the cast of *A Flea in her Ear*, the current production at the Old Vic, will be able to cut the cake at this historic celebration.

Tickets are £6 for Members and £7.50 for Non-Members.

Please write for tickets, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope, to:
Ruth Jayes, 185 Honor Oak Road, London SE23 3RP, or call 0208 699 2376.

Our President's Busy Year

by Jim Ranger

Simon Russell Beale has had a very full year acting and singing with a little dancing.

Highlights include the following:

Old Vic

Many Members will have seen him playing Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* and Lopakhin in the *Cherry Orchard*

BBC Radio 4

He played George Smiley in the adaptation of all the John Le Carre novels in which Smiley appears.

These were aired in nineteen 60 or 90 minute full cast radio plays.

National Theatre

We saw his fantastic performance as Sir Harcourt Courtly in *London Assurance* where his dancing ability was first seen.

Royal Albert Hall

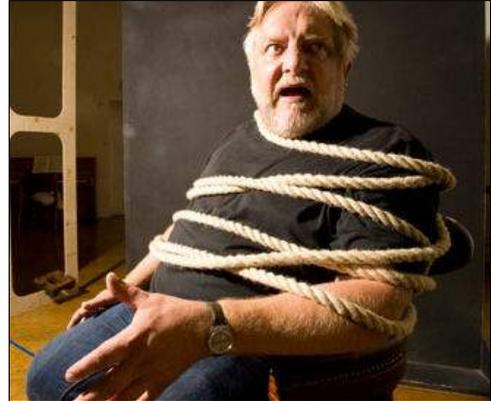
We heard him singing 'Everybody ought to have a Maid' and other songs in the *Stephen Sondheim 80th Birthday Concert*.

BBC 1

He has also been acting as the Home Secretary, William Towers in the TV production of *Spooks*.

Noel Coward Theatre

He is currently appearing in the Ira Levin's *Death Trap*. The run continues until Saturday 26th January 2011.



In rehearsal for *Deathtrap*

Photo: Sonja Horsman

Covent Garden

Next year he will make his debut with the Royal Ballet dancing the role of the Duchess in the new production of *Alice in Wonderland*.

What will he do next?

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre

Reviewed by Richard Reavill

The first major overseas visitor to Sadler's Wells this season was the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. I saw their first programme in September, when the house was packed with an audience almost young enough (and noisy enough) to be at a school's matinee. Unlike some modern dance companies, (and some international stars; yes, I do mean you, Carlos), a very full evening's entertainment was presented, with five items varied in length and style.

With any modern dance company built around the work of one choreographer, survival after the death of the founder can be difficult. Since the death of Ailey, the company has been directed by one of his leading dancers, Judith Jamison. She is now retiring, to be replaced by Robert Battle, who contributed two short works to the programme: *The Hunt*, a piece of urban combat to a percussion score was danced by six of the company's hunkiest male dancers, and drew appreciative high-pitched squeals from the (I hope) younger women in the audience, and a powerful solo for Samuel Lee Roberts, *In/Side*, who appeared to be battling personal demons.



The Company in *Revelations*

Photo: Andrew Eccles

The songs of Otis Redding were the basis of an exploration of relationships between the sexes in *Suite Otis* by George Faison, and Ronald K Brown's *Dancing Spirit* had elements of South American dance. Of course, the main work of the evening was *Revelations*, set to African-American traditional songs, and Ailey's masterpiece. This ballet is given at every performance, and it is amazing how it continues to emerge minty-fresh each time, a tribute to a marvellous troop of dancers.

News from Sadler's Wells

Sadler's Wells recently announced its programme for the Spring 2011 season. Out of the more than 40 shows coming to Sadler's Wells, the Peacock and the Lilian Baylis Studio next spring, two immediately captured the media's attention: First of all the French horse whisperer Bartabas with his show *The Centaur and the Animal*, featuring the man himself, four of his almost supernaturally well trained horses, and Japanese Butoh master Ko Murobushi. The second show already causing headlines is the Canadian choreographer Dave St-Pierre's provocative work *Un peu de tendresse bordel de merde!* (*A Little Tenderness for Crying Out Loud!*).

There are plenty of other big companies, famous names and exciting projects to tempt you to Sadler's Wells next year, amongst others the American Ballet Theatre with two diverse mixed bills, the *Pet Shop Boys* writing their very first work for the dance stage, the Forsythe Company with a mind-bending deconstruction of everything which once seemed certain, and Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker's world famous company Rosas with four of the works that established her fame in the 1980s.

body:language

Returning for a second season, *body:language* is a series of talks in the Lilian Baylis Studio about the human body – not only in dance, but also in performance art, philosophy, science, medicine, anthropology, and visual art. For each talk the dramaturg and writer Guy Cools invites a choreographer or artist whom he has worked with or knows well enough to ask probing, sometimes difficult, questions about the role the body plays in their work and life. Starting point is Martha Graham's famous sentence: "The body never lies".

The intimate and informal atmosphere created in the Studio allows ideas to flow more freely and the discussions take on a looser form than if it was a pre-planned lecture about a set subject. Previous talks, including with Wayne McGregor, Liz Lerman, and Siobhan Davies, have been filmed and clips of them can be viewed online on the Sadler's Wells Screen at <http://tinyurl.com/333zxeK>.

In the coming months you have the opportunity of spending two Monday evenings in the company of two of the most important and fascinating figures of the contemporary dance world: Dana Caspersen of the Forsythe Company on 6 December 2010, and Alain Platel, co-founder of *Les Ballets C de la B* on 17 January 2011. *body:language* is part of the

Jerwood Studio at Sadler's Wells, supported by the Jerwood Charitable Foundation.

Bourgeois & Maurice "Can't Dance"

Not technically a dance company, the devastatingly glamorous and dangerously talented musical duo Bourgeois and Maurice have lit up the London cabaret scene since their triumphant debut at Madame Jojo's in Soho more than two years ago. Since then they have performed at the Royal Opera House, Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Royal Academy of Art, the Edinburgh Fringe and a sell-out run at Soho Theatre.

"A devastatingly and dangerously talented duo"

With the nation in the grip of television-fuelled dance fever, the duo have been left with no choice but to show the world just how spectacularly well they **Can't Dance**. Mixing laugh-out-loud original songs, film projection and an abundance of astonishing outfits, this brand new show is at once outrageously bizarre and unexpectedly human. Bourgeois & Maurice will grace the Lilian Baylis Studio for three weeks in December, offering a perfect alternative Christmas show for those who are old enough to know better. Prepare to fall in love. To view a clip of Bourgeois & Maurice, visit <http://tinyurl.com/36rl5bk>



News from the Old Vic

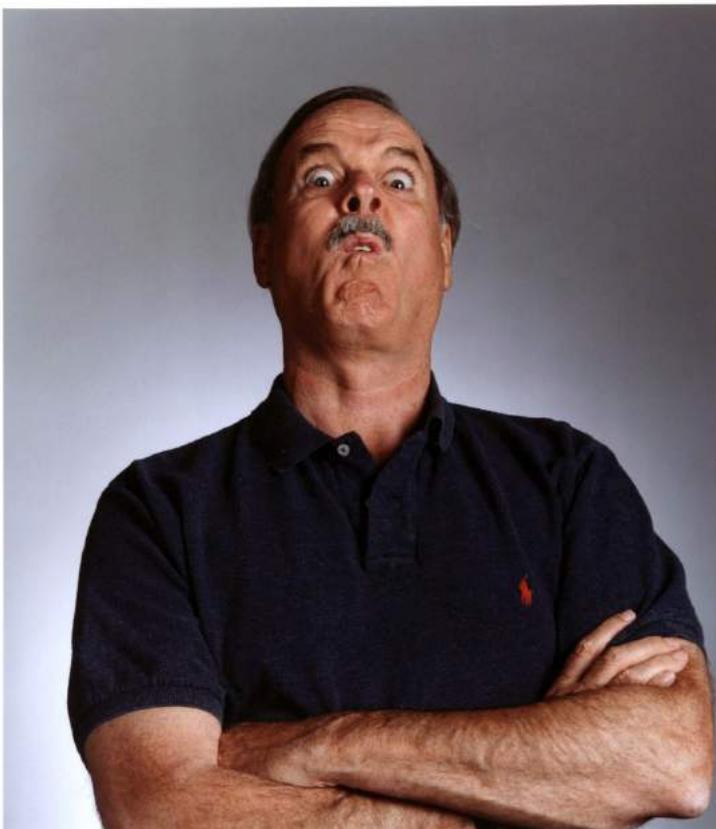
This December, Richard Eyre will direct John Mortimer's version of Georges Feydeau's 1907 classic farce *A Flea in Her Ear*. Starring Tom Hollander and Lisa Dillon, this fast paced comedy of errors is being re-staged after becoming a 'huge popular success' under the direction of Jacques Charon in its 1966 UK premiere at The Old Vic. When Raymonde (Dillon) suspects her husband Victor (Hollander) of infidelity, she enlists the help of a friend to concoct a devious plan of entrapment. Mistaken identities, bruised egos and comic disaster ensure that the laughs keep on coming. Previously starring the likes of Albert Finney and Jim Broadbent, the production has over the years enjoyed 'cascades of laughter' at the hilarious consequence of never being in the right place, or at the right time. Catch this lively show from 4th December, must end 5th March 2011.

Next year at The Old Vic, to celebrate the centenary year of Terence Rattigan's birth, Thea Sharrock will direct his final play *Cause Célèbre*. Based on the true story of Alma Rattenbury who went on trial with her 18-year-old lover for the murder of her

husband, *Cause Célèbre* is an intriguing tale of love, betrayal, guilt and obsession. Come and celebrate with us from 17th March 2011 to 11th June 2011.

Other exciting news includes the final instalment of the Bridge Project, due to open in 2012. After successful runs of *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Winter's Tale* in Bridge I and *As You Like It* and *The Tempest* forming Bridge II, Bridge III features Artistic Director Kevin Spacey himself under the award winning direction of Sam Mendes in the role of Richard III.

Lucy Faulks



Celebrity Gala returns to the Old Vic

On 21st November, the *24 Hour Plays Celebrity Gala* was hosted by **John Cleese** and included a spectacular line up of talent including actors **Richard Armitage, Kelly Brook, Ronnie Ancona, Tim Pigott-Smith and Rupert Evans**.

The unique event sees acclaimed actors, writers and directors joining forces to raise money for **Old Vic New Voices**. They are challenged to cast, write, rehearse and perform six short plays in just 24 hours, culminating in a unique performance to be seen on just this one night.

Directors including **Mark Rosenblatt, Charlotte Westenra** and **Josie Rourke** and writers **Richard Curtis, Alexi Kaye Campbell** and **Jessica Hynes** were also signed up.

Kevin Spacey commented "The audience expects an electrifying performance. We are thrilled to be working with such a remarkable collection of artists".

Birmingham Royal Ballet's Triple Bill

Reviewed by Richard Reavill

Despite BRB Friends failure to support Vic-Wells, Vic-Wells members continued to support BRB on their annual one-week stay at Sadler's Wells. Sadly, not enough supporters turned up at the Saturday matinee, and the house was barely half full. This was a shame, as the dancers, as ever, gave a bright and committed performance in an eclectic triple bill.

The show got off to an excellent start with MacMillan's breezy *Concerto*, set to Shostakovitch's first Piano

***“The choreography fits
BRB’s versatile young
dancers very well”***

Concerto. The piece was choreographed to display the classical technique of a company of young dancers, so suits BRB very well. Leading the first movement Momoko Hirata was clear and precise, and her partner, James Barton, appeared happy to gain a classical role to add variety to his range of comedy parts. In the pas-de-deux to the slow

second movement Celine Gittens had exactly the right limpid quality, and Yatsuo Asuji coped well with a partnering role which looks easy, should look easy, but in fact is quite difficult. Angela Paul led the final movement in a brisk and easy style.

I have to admit not being a fan of *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*. Yes, I know Balanchine was a great choreographer, but this was a good little earner which he rustled-up for the Rogers and Hart Broadway musical *On Your Toes*. Robert Parker made a light footed Hooper, partnering Gaylene Cummerfield's leggy Striptease Girl. Barton was back in a comedy role as one of three comic policemen, but this comedy ballet is not really funny enough. Finding a really good funny ballet is not easy. Jerome Robbins' *The Concert* and Cranko's *Pineapple Poll* are the only ones that immediately come to mind. When this triple bill was given in Birmingham, Cranko's *Lady and the Fool* was substituted as the middle ballet, which for me made an overall better programme.

All was forgiven with the last item, *In the Upper Room* by Twyla Tharp. This upper room is filled with drifting smoke, and dancers appear from a black void at the back, rather like aliens in Doctor Who. Some wear striped pajamas and trainers, others bright red costumes with matching toe shoes. The hypnotic music by Philip Glass is recorded and the lighting is spectacular. The choreography is for a large cast, covers a wide range of different dance styles, and therefore fits BRB's versatile young dancers very well. I have seen this ballet done by many companies and BRB has the best production. This revival, by Keith Roberts, is excellent, very well danced, and worth the price of the ticket alone.



In the Upper Room

A pity more people were not in the theatre to see it!

Out and About with the Vic-Wells

The Diaghilev Exhibition at the V&A

Reviewed by Tim Rooke

A group of members met at the V&A to visit this very comprehensive exhibition which was preceded by an hour long, illustrated talk by the curator Jane Pritchard, who also answered our questions.

The displays are breathtaking in both range and scope. In addition to the larger pieces (costumes etc) there are also such items as the shoes worn by the companies' ballerinas, earrings from *Scheherazade* and a prop rose from *Spectre de la Rose*.

I expect we have all seen the photograph of Karsavina in the torch dance but here on film (from 1909) we can see her *perform* the dance. This is only one short film - There are four different screens showing a large selection of their work danced by many different companies.

For me, two highlights are the iconic gold costume from the coronation scene from *Boris Godunov* as worn by Chaliapin (above right) and the massive cloth (it takes up nearly a whole gallery by itself!) from the final tableau of *Firebird*, the intricate detail of which is stunning (below). All the detail *looks* identical but, on close examination, each item is different to all its surroundings.



It is impossible to give justice to this exhibition in a short review such as this. Jane Pritchard has produced a fabulous book to go with it which, I suggest, might make a memorable Christmas present.

In her talk, Jane told us how Diaghilev started his career by launching an arts magazine. His initial presentation in London was a season of Russian Opera before (in 1909) turning to what he will always be remembered for - ballet. The Diaghilev Company danced all over the world, in the 20 years they were in existence and about half of

all their performances were in London. The company launched composers, designers, choreographers and dancers on illustrious careers and left a lasting influence on ballet and, it has to be said, *fashion*. Many of the costumes created for the company would not look out of place on any catwalk today.

I would strongly urge you to visit this amazing exhibition but be aware you will need to set aside at least 3 or 4 hours to appreciate all the work that has gone into it.

Victoria & Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL

until 9th January 2011, 10.00 to 17.45 daily

Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes,

1909 - 1929

£10 Adults, £8 Seniors, £6 Students, 12-17-year olds, ES40 holders, Free to V&A Members

WHAT'S ON



Sadler's Wells 0844 871 0090
Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4TN
www.sadlerswells.com

30 Nov. - 23 Jan. New Adventures
- *Matthew Bourne's Cinderella*

1 - 6 Feb. American Ballet Theatre
- *Two Mixed Bills*



8 - 19 Feb. Flamenco Festival



17 - 26 Mar. Pet Shop Boys & Javier de Frutos
- *The Most Incredible Thing*

29 Mar. - 2 Apr. Balletboyz - *The Talent*



Lilian Baylis Studio 0844 871 0090
7 - 23 Dec. Bourgeois & Maurice - *Can't Dance*

Peacock Theatre 0844 871 0090
Portugal Street, Kingsway, London WC2A 2HT
1 Dec. - 9 Jan. *The Snowman*
8 Feb - 3 Apr. Richard Thomas & Stephen Mear
- *Shoes*



Old Vic Theatre www.oldvictheatre.com
Waterloo Road, London SE1 8NB

To book tickets for all productions at The Old Vic: 0844 871 7642

4 Dec. - 5 Mar. George Feydeau - *A Flea in her Ear*





Photo: Bill Cooper

The Snowman
At the Peacock Theatre 1 Dec to 9 Jan 2011

REHEARSALS AT SADLER'S WELLS WINTER 2010

After the Rambert rehearsal, there were no more rehearsal opportunities for the rest of this year. They will start up again next year. If an opportunity turns up before the *Broadsheet* is published Richard Reavill, (telephone: 0149187 2574) will inform automatically all those Members who are on the email list. If you have an email address and are not on Richard's list please register with him at vicwells@tiscali.co.uk. Please arrive 15 minutes before the rehearsal time and pay £5 to the Committee Member present. We are advised by Sadler's Wells that there may be the following possible open dress rehearsals:

American Ballet Theatre 1 February 2011
Shoes (Peacock Theatre) 7 February 2011

The Vic-Wells Association *Founded in 1923 by Lilian Baylis CH*

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Please send items or letters for
publication to the Editor (details above)
to arrive before this date.