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Issue No. 7157

TUESDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2001

COMING

MOZART: FLUTE CONCERTO; BEETHOVEN: Pastoral Symphony; STRAUSS: Wind Serenade. Oxford Studio Orchestra. Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (formerly St Philip & St James Church), Woodstock Road (opposite Leckford Road) Sunday 7 October at 4pm. £5 (concessions £3) at the door. TABLA CLASSES (INDIAN DRUMMING) begin Wednesday 3rd October. Telephone 552000



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Horror spoof revisited.

AMELIE (15) Thurs 4 October: 2.10, 5.40, 8.40
From director of 'Delicatessen'.

Odeon George St 0870 5050007
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Undercover cops, street racers and a hijacking ring.

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THE MASK OF ZORRO (PG) Wed 3rd October: 10.45am
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Ultimate Picture Palace 245288
JOSIE AND THE PUSSYCATS (PG) Daily: 7.00, 9.00
Teen satire on the pop music industry.

Phoenix Picture House 512526
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Thriller-cum-romance about enigma machine.

MOULIN ROUGE (12) Daily: 4.00 (Tue 3.30), 6.30 (not Mon/Tue), 9.00
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AIMEE AND JAGUAR (15) Mon 1.40
War time lesbian drama.

GOHATTO (15) Tue 1.40, Weds/Thurs 2.00
Destructive nature of love.

ANGELS OF THE UNIVERSE (15) Tue 6.00
One man's battle against mental illness.

FLASH GORDON (PG) Thurs 4th 11.40pm
Gordon's alive!

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Next issue Wed 3rd October
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NEW TO OXFORD ?

Thoroughly researched and packed with anecdotes and humour, the Cheeky Guide to Oxford will take you on a rollercoaster ride through this world-famous city. Featuring the usual Cheeky trademarks, the book provides information on the city's famous music scene, its vast array of drinking establishments, restaurants, shops, museums and shoddy selection of nightclubs.

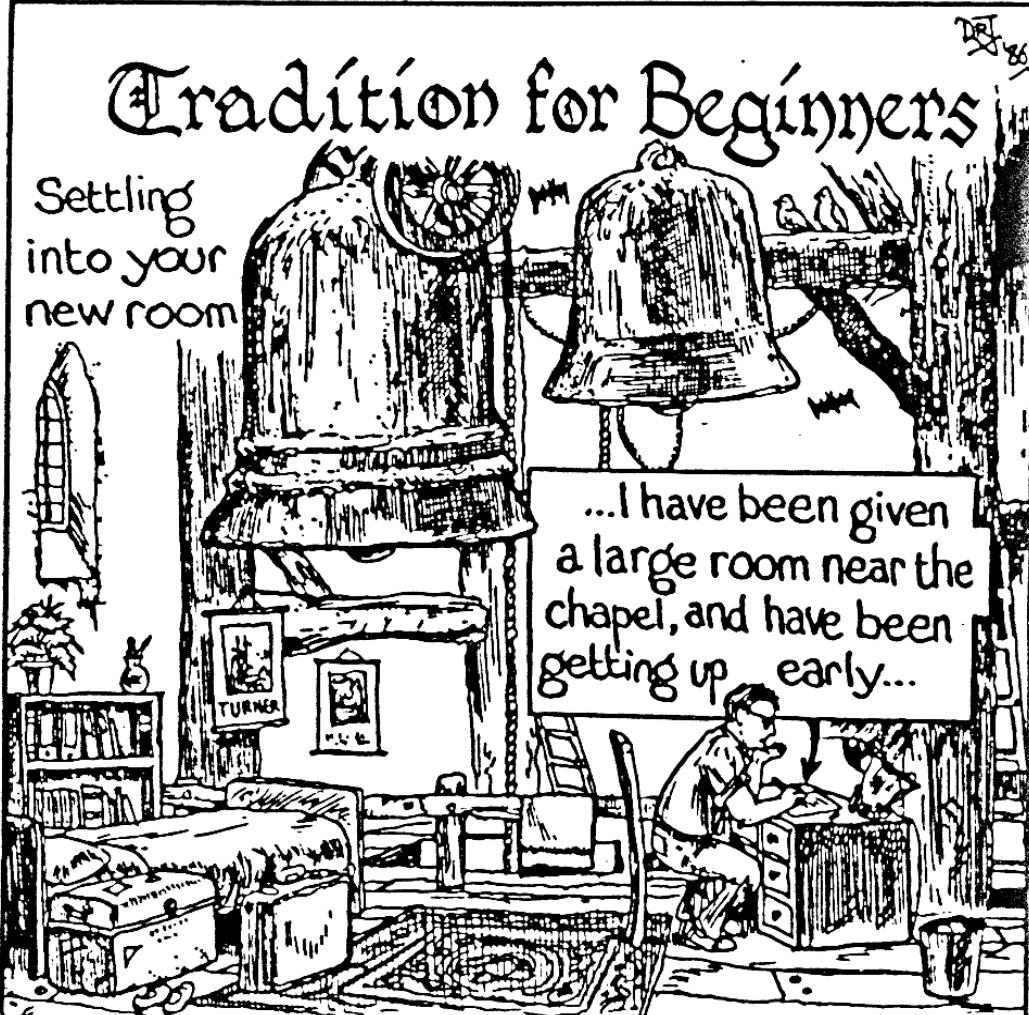
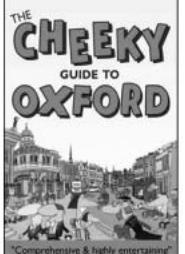
Prepared with cartoons and illustrations by local artists, this guide really does give an insider's perspective on Oxford and even includes information on famous movie locations and a spotters guide to local celebrities and eccentrics.

Of course Oxford wouldn't be the same without the students, and the Cheeky Guide includes an A-Z of the many ridiculous University traditions, from tortoise races to hitting Marks and Spencers with sticks, as well as providing detailed information, funny stories and maps to some of the city's most celebrated colleges.

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REVIEW: THEATRE

Turandot

(Puccini, completed by A Ifano)

Chisinau National Opera, Apollo T theatre, 27th & 28th September 2001
(NB: Daily information has been weekly in the vacation, hence we could not place this review at a more appropriate time. We include it for the record, in case you encounter the Chisinau National Opera in the future.)

The Chisinau National Opera's production of Turandot, presented by Ellen Kent and Opera International at the Apollo this week, aims for grandeur in its interpretation of Puccini's last, unfinished work. While the large chorus often seems a bit cramped on the set, they make a grand noise - shaking the rafters when they hail the emperor of a thousand suns - and add a certain gravitas to the spectacle of Turandot's court. The staging is conducted with a solemn respect to ritual, striving to imbue the thin lines of Puccini's fairy tale plot with a sense of myth and magic.

Monica Chabros's full, rich voice effortlessly conveys Turandot's majesty and immovability, and her on-stage presence is commanding, each gesture, each pose entirely worthy of a diva, or indeed, a princess. Her would-be lover Calaf is rather more wooden in his posture (and that perhaps owes more to Puccini's static characterization than to his acting), but Oghnyan Nicolov's voice is extremely pleasant, negotiating Nessun Dorma with ease. Rosa Lee Thomas's performance of Liu is conducted with much pathos, and her Act Three aria was beautifully and movingly sung. One only wishes that she had dropped the cowering stance of a slave at this point, allowing the ultimate declaration of her love to transform her with dignity - she seemed to cringe right until the moment of her self-sacrifice.

The comedic aspects of the show are not neglected either. Turandot is rather an oddity, in that its tragic action is frequently interrupted by the delightful capers of Ping, Pang and Pong, three comic characters quite unnecessary to the plot. It is difficult not to speculate, watching this threesome whose antics seem so incongruous in what is supposed to be a "Great" tragedy, that Puccini owed a debt both for their characterization and their percolating musical trio to those masters of light opera, Gilbert and Sullivan, whose Mikado sparked such a rage for Chinoiserie in the nineteenth century. The choreography cheekily acknowledges this possibility, when Ping, Pang and Pong assume a distinctively coy position with fans in front of face, like three rather corpulent maids from school.

This is a good, solid production, with fine singing from all the principals, and a lusty sound from the chorus. The sets and costumes are slightly threadbare, and the staging a bit muddled at times, but it is thoroughly satisfying in terms of the music and acting. The only possible dissatisfaction is the nagging question, had Puccini lived, how would he have finished the opera? Alfano completed the score with a reprise of "Nessun dorma," and yet it does sit uneasily that Turandot, ice-maiden, killer of so many men, should be so easily thawed, permitted to luxuriate in Calaf's conquering love without any penance for her hideous murders. Turandot is always something of an enigma, with its comic interludes in conflict with the grimness which underpins its archetypal fairy-tale plot, and its air of the belle epoch out of synch with the twentieth century in which it was written, but that is all the more reason to return to it again.

Sharae Deckard, 27 / 9 / 01

COMPETITION

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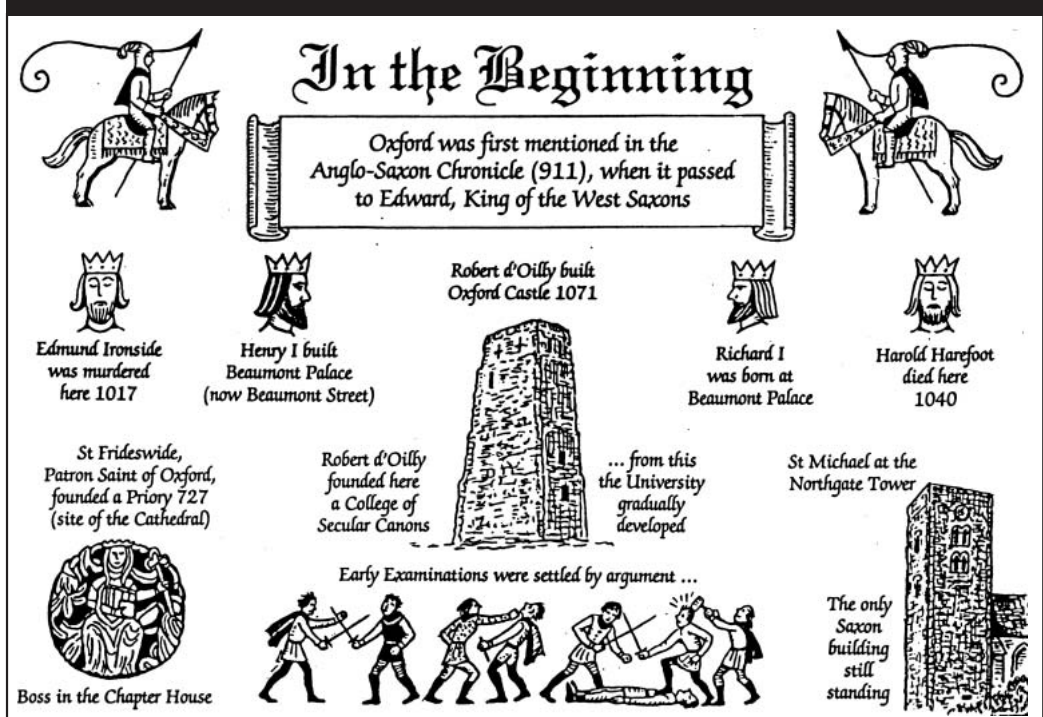
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LANDSCAPE PAINTING / Talk / 1.15-2.00pm / Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont Street. Tel: 278000
"THE AMERICAN QUESTION AND THE PALESTINIAN INITIATIVE" / Talk by Dr Eyad Sarraj / Middle East Centre, St Anthony's, 68 Woodstock Rd / 6pm

CONCERTS

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