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Oxford's DAILY INFORMATION

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Next issue: Friday 13th June
Deadline: 10am, Thursday 12th June

Thursday 12th JUNE 2003 (7th week)

COMING

OXFORD IRISH SOCIETY FESTIVAL QUIZ tonight, 8pm, at the Crown House, Crown St (off Cowley Rd). Come in teams or alone to join others. Details 711885

22ND ANNUAL JAMES JOYCE EVENING BLOOMSDAY CELEBRATION. Port Mahon, St Clements, Monday 16th June, 7.45pm. £5/£3.50 conc. with Tom Paulin, Bernard O'Donoghue, Mick Henry, Gerald Garcia, Siobhan McAndrew & Jacob Wills.

College Ball Info

MAGDALEN / June 27 / SOLD OUT
www.magdalenball.com

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OXFORD IRISH SOCIETY FESTIVAL / Until 15th June. Details: 711885 / Quiz night at the Crown House, Crown St. Come in teams/alone. 8pm / greenflag@btopenworld.com

Jeremy Dennis, 10.06.03

WHAT'S ON * JOBS

JOBS OFFERED

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THEATRE REVIEW

Saturday Night Fever
Oxford Apollo until June 21st

The strut, the songs and THAT suit - the seventies are back in Oxford as Saturday Night Fever hits town. Based on the classic John Travolta movie (no more mentions of that) this high octane musical sees New Yorker Tony Manero pursuing his dreams of becoming a dance champion in the world of Brooklyn Discos.

As Manero, Stephane Anelli is a great stage presence, snake-hipped and brooding, with a light but expressive singing voice which is used to best effect on the ballad 'Immortality'. Although Anelli dominates from the start, the supporting cast are all excellent, especially Darren Carnell as the tragic Bobby C, and Jane Horn as Annette. However, even these performances are eclipsed by the songs themselves; to hear the Bee Gees numbers sung in a dramatic context brought new life to them. 'Tragedy', sung by Carnell, is a revelation as a huge tear jerking power ballad, laying to rest the cheesy version by Steps, and 'If I Can't Have You', sung by Horn, comes as a plea from the heart. Such is the quality of the songs it is hard not to believe they weren't written specifically for the stage. But of course, Night Fever has dancing as well, and here the whole cast really come into their own. Anelli, and Zoe Smith as his dance partner the social climbing Stephanie, both dance fantastically, but the ensemble dance numbers are breathtaking. In some cases saying the best bit of the evening was the end may seem rude but with Saturday Night Fever this is the case: the finale is wonderful, all the cast onstage reprising most of the songs, and either Stephane Anelli is the best actor in the world or he was having as much fun as the audience. This was one evening which certainly had the Apollo audience dancing in the aisles.

David Wooten, 10.06.03



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MEETINGS/LECTURES

PUBLICIZE YOUR SOCIETY HERE! Put YOUR meetings or lectures up - immediately, any time and free - at www.dailyinfo.co.uk

CND AGM / Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament AGM at Town Hall / CND / 7.30 - 9.30pm / 220, Cowley Rd

OED FORUM / A new corpus for the languages of Scotland / Fiona Douglas / 5pm / Rewley House, 1, Wellington Square; Tel: 270380

OXFORD COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS & JEWS / 'Reflections on Friendship': readings by members / 8pm / Friends Meeting House, 43 St Giles

'THE PRESENCE OF AMERICA AND POSTWAR-GERMANY'S CULTURAL RESPONSES' / Heinz Lohstadt. All welcome, admission free. / 5pm-6.30pm / Rothermere American Institute. 1a South Parks Road; www.rai.ox.ac.uk

THEATRE REVIEW

All My Sons
By Arthur Miller
Pegasus Theatre until Sat 14th

All My Sons is a powerful story about family loyalty, corporate responsibility, love, betrayal and society. It is set in a small American town, post WWII. Joe Keller runs a successful industrial manufacturing company that provided parts for the air force while his own sons were serving in the war. One of the sons goes missing, and his mother Kate desperately needs to believe that her missing son is returning one day. Chris, who came back from the war, is ready to head-up the family business and wishes to propose to Ann, the sweetheart of his missing brother, whom he has invited to visit his family home.

All My Sons was the first great success of Arthur Miller's influential career, winning the Drama Critics Circle award. This play is an excellent vehicle for good acting, so before we even see the performance we have high expectations.

One of the great things about theatre is that when you go to see a play the experience starts from the moment you enter the reception, and in this case it bears mentioning that the staff at Pegasus are friendly and cheerful, and once you enter the theatre you know you are about to see a show where everyone is taking care to do their part and do it well. It's that "people" aspect that separates theatre from just going to see a movie.

The set takes you right into the world of the Kellers, built as it is around the destruction of a peaceful facade. Neighbours share a peaceful moment reading the morning newspaper while there is debris and a broken apple tree on the lawn from the storm the night before. The music creates an atmosphere of somehow ominous calm, and the lighting effectively changes the tone of each scene. The set is meticulously crafted, and there is nothing here without purpose: you even strain to see the photographs behind the screen door.

This is a play about universal themes: "Once and for all you must know that there's a universe of people outside, and you're responsible to it." It's relevant today after the recent Iraq war: do we put our family first, our country first, or the world? Who are we fighting for? This is an intense play, and the theatre is hot (tip: wear a t-shirt or you'll be sorry), but during intermission everyone looked relaxed and stood about discussing the performance.

This production is an excellent ensemble performance; here, you have the rare chance to really forget that you're a member of the audience as you feel the characters' torment and become caught up in their world. Every actor has the opportunity to have their moment on stage, and they all deliver, conveying the full complexity of each character. Rachel O'Connor gives an outstanding performance as Kate Keller. You feel her struggle as a mother and wife, wanting what's right in the world. Luke Smith as Joe Keller

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CINEMA REVIEW

The Hunted
Now showing at Odeon George Street

Aaron Hallam (Benicio del Toro) is an elite special ops commando, trained to knife his human prey silently and without conscience, who becomes deeply battle-stressed. After going both AWOL and completely bananas, he ends up in the woods outside Portland, Oregon, jabbering on about proper 'reverence' for animals and the animal plight of 6 billion chickens as he guts and quarters a bunch of deerhunters. It's clearly time for the FBI to call in L.T. Bonham (Tommy Lee Jones), himself a bit of an expert tracker and animal lover, and Hallam's former trainer. This craggy old father figure still needs to teach his wayward son a lesson or two, and a cat-and-mouse chase ensues through the 'wilderness' of the city and back into the primal woods, where finally the two get to test the length of one another's blades in the bloody oedipal climax.

With all its relentless and rather dull chase sequences, where the fleeing Hallam seems to keep slowing down in order to allow Bonham to catch up, 'The Hunted' is doomed always to be one step behind the quality it so clearly pursues. Director William Friedkin, who is deservedly celebrated for 'The French Connection' and 'The Exorcist', but also responsible for films like 'Jade', here tries hard to elevate his material by referencing other, better films. Thus the first sign that Hallam is going over the edge is an image of his upturned, haunted face bathed in halflight, in a clear visual allusion to cinema's best known special ops killer turned renegade loony, Colonel Kurtz from 'Apocalypse Now'; and the casting of Tommy Lee Jones as pursuer, plus a scene involving



an escape from an overturned prison vehicle, hold out the promise of a 'fugitive'-style complexity where both hunter and hunted command the viewer's sympathy at the same time. Yet Hallam lacks the gravitas of Kurtz, and unlike the falsely accused doctor in 'The Fugitive', Hallam is a vicious serial killer, played by del Toro as an automaton rather than as a real character with whom the viewer can identify. He is even described, in a cliché that has lain dormant since the 80s, as 'a killing machine'. In the end, the biggest influence on 'The Hunted' is 'First Blood', with its fights in the forest, improvised traps, and its seemingly unstoppable soldier pursued by a concerned trainer. Except that the murderous Hallam far from being a victim of small town prejudice like Rambo, is himself the one who draws first blood (and lots of it). If only we could sympathise with Hallam in the way both he and Bonham seem to sympathise with hunted animals, then this film would have a chance of engaging our interest; but as it stands, the whole length of 'The Hunted' is merely a tedious deferral of the inevitable confrontation.

The knife fight when it finally comes is the most visceral and bloody that you are ever likely to see on screen; too bad, then, that by that time the viewer has long lost the ability to care less who wins.

Oh, and one last thing: if Bonham is so against hunting, why is there a trophy set of antlers hanging on the outside of his cabin?

Anton Bi tel. 10.06.03

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