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Next issue Fri 19th October
Deadline 10am, Thurs 18th Oct.

THURSDAY 18TH OCTOBER 2001

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PLAYGROUND! / US Garage Anthems club night with djs E3 / Backroom @ The Bully, 162 Cowley Road; Tel: 244516, Fax: 202457, Email: info@thebully.f9.co.uk
GUITARIOUS WITH STEVE VITTI / Guitar / 11pm-2am / Freud's, Walton Street; Tel: 311171, Fax: 311171

CONCERTS

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KONEVETS VOCAL QUARTET / Singers from St. Petersburg, Russia. Tickets £6, concs. £4 on the door. / 8.00pm / Merton College Chapel, Merton St

MEETINGS

Thursday 18th October
SÁNDOR ELES / British actor recites poetry from his native land, Hungary / 8pm / Oriol College, Oriol Square; Tel: 276555
MARGARET DRABBLE / Public Speech and Public Silence / 5.00pm / Gulbenkian Lecture Theatre, St. Cross Building
'WHISPERING' BOB HARRIS / Signing his new book / Borders bookshop, 9, Magdalen St, Oxford OX1 3AD; Tel: 203901
BACK ROOM POETS / Open Mike poetry / 8.15pm / Borders bookshop, 9, Magdalen St, Oxford OX1 3AD; Tel: 203901
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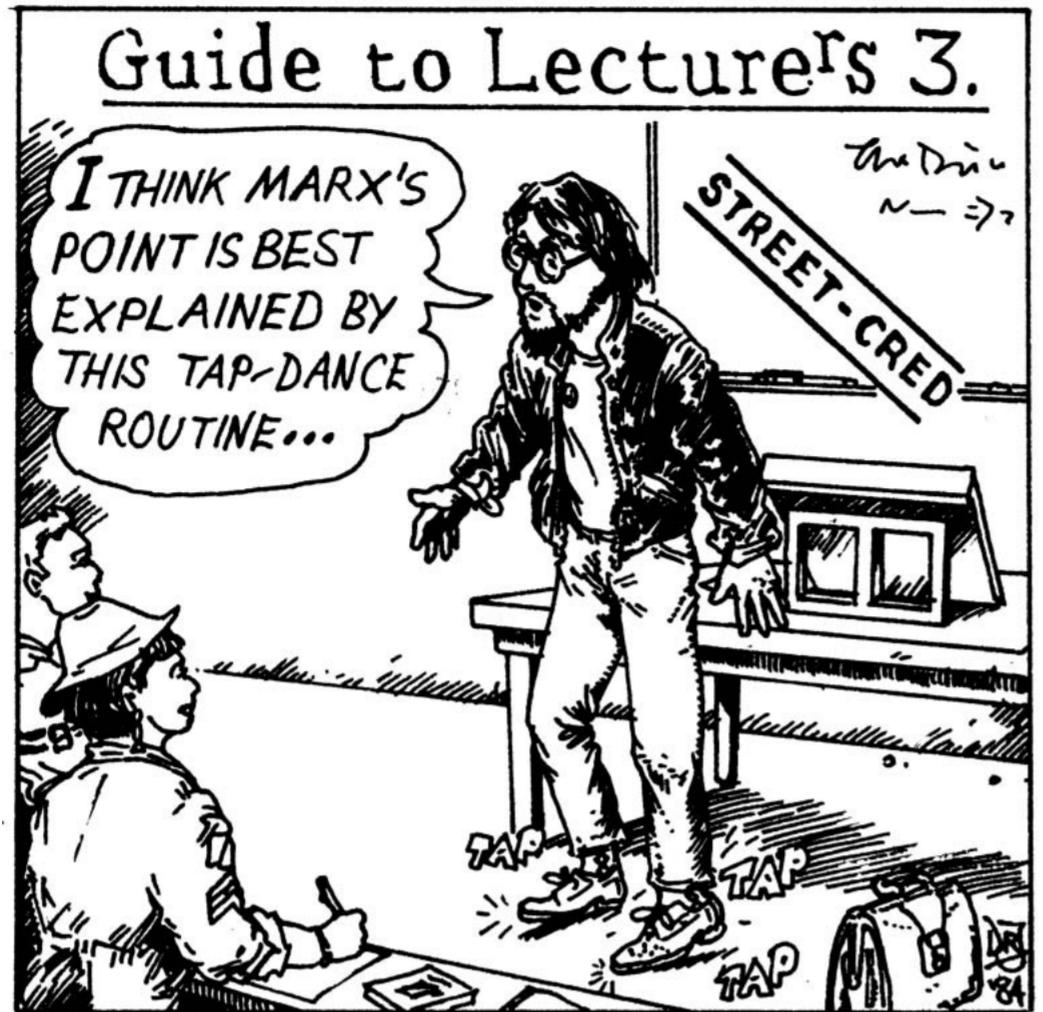
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STONED AND SORTED / Fascinating results from 20 drawers / Pitt Rivers Museum, Parks Road. Open Mon-Sat 1pm-4.30pm, Sun 2pm-4.30pm. Tel: 270927 (info 270949), Fax: 270943, Email: prm@prm.ox.ac.uk
TRANSFORMATIONS : THE ART OF RECYCLING / Including an installation by Joachim Schmid. Ends 1st June 2002 / Pitt Rivers Museum
EXPERIMENT/EXPERIENCIA -ART IN BRAZIL 1958-2000 / Sculptures and installations by 17 of Brazil's finest. Ends Oct 21st / Museum of Modern Art, 30 Pembroke Street. Opening times: Tues-Sun 11am-6pm, Thurs 11am-9pm; Tel: 722733, Fax: 722573, Email: generalenquiry@moma.demon.co.uk
RETURN TO SENDER : WHERE DO YOU COME FROM? / A exhibition for visitors by visitors! / Pitt Rivers Museum
OUR MAN IN LADAKH: HIMALAYAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY COLONEL RCF SCHOMBERG / 16 rare photographs made in Ladakh including images of royal family / Pitt Rivers Museum
MICHAEL BENNALLACK-HART. / Ends 30th October / Pierpoint Fine Art, 1 Folly Bridge; Tel: 798833, Email: kate@pierpointfineart.co.uk
MONET'S GARDEN / Photographic exhibition by Fred Jarvis (free) / 9am-6pm / maison@herald.ox.ac.uk / Maison Francaise, Norham Rd, Oxford, OX2 6SE; Tel: 274220, Fax: 274225, Email: maison@sable.ox.ac.uk
REQUIEM / Debut essay in photographic art by Fiona Brett. / 12noon-5pm, mon-sat / St. Giles's Church, St. Giles; Tel: 01865-311198
MARBLING ON SILK - DUC VAN VESSEM / Scarves and evening wraps / Mon 15th 10am-5pm / Green College, Woodstock Rd
OPULENCE AND DEVOTION / Brazilian Baroque Art / free / Tues-Sat 10am-5pm, Sunday 2-5pm / http://www.ashmol.ox.ac.uk / Ashmolean Museum
ACTS OF FAITH / Brazilian Contemporary Photography / free / Tues-Sat 10am-5pm, Sunday 2-5pm / http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk / Ashmolean Museum
GENERAL TOUR / A guided tour around the gallery (£2, Concessions available) / 2.15pm / Christ Church Picture Gallery, Christ Church (entrance via Canterbury Gate / Oriol Square) Opening times: Mon-Sat 10.30-1.00, 2.00-4.30, Sun 2.00-4.30 (Easter-end Sept closes 5.30); Tel: 276172, Fax: 202429
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REVIEW: THEATRE

Comedians

by Trevor Griffiths

Oxford Playhouse to Sat 20th Oct

"Comedy is medicine." So says Ron Moody's Eddie Waters to his six students early in the first act. They have been learning with him for three months, in preparation for performances in a northern club, which follow in Act 2. He tries to give them the attitude that comedy can educate audiences, can bring people to a point where they can see their fears more clearly and start to deal with them, can, in short, be a force for good in a troubled world. "You're not working towards laughter, you're working through laughter."

So far, so funny. But he is then forced to reveal that the judge for the evening is an old adversary with very different views, whose comic ideal is Max Bygraves and who believes in giving people exactly what they want, even if that only confirms them in their prejudices. The

stage is set, as it were, for a struggle between integrity and success. The students like and admire their elderly mentor, and seem, grudgingly perhaps, to accept his views, but with several of them seeing comedy their only escape from dull lives, one is not surprised when expediency erodes their planned performances.

The exception is Gethin Price (David Tennant), a very intense and angry young man, who gives an astonishingly 'alternative' performance. His integrity cannot be questioned, but an act based on anger is limited in its power to amuse. So what's the answer? What 'should' an aspiring comedian do?

The post-mortem, back in the classroom, does not offer any answers. The more accomplished traitors get their rewards and shuffle off, embarrassed. We learn that Waters, once a hard-hitting young comic with a real 'edge', gave up performance when he stopped finding the world funny after World War II. He is clearly a good teacher, but can do no more than hope his students fare better than he.

The performances, I assume, are excellent, as I did not once stop to think about whether they were any good or not. This, in a

play all about performance, has to be a positive sign.

Comedians was first performed in 1975. Its themes of struggle and integrity have not become dated. What may seem a little old-fashioned is the way the play focuses so continuously, relentlessly even, on the one or two questions it raises. I got the feeling that a modern equivalent would have needed to be "cleverer", to link in more minor ideas, more comedic references. But Trevor Griffiths had the confidence, it seems, to decide that what he examines is important enough to stand without embellishment. This reviewer agrees entirely. The play makes you think and entertains you. Perhaps more of the former than the latter, but in an age of consumer-driven, lowest-common-denominator infotainment we should be grateful. *Comedians* is medicine, with more than enough sugar to keep it palatable. I suggest you go and get dosed.

Ian Threadgill 16/10/01



CINEMA

To Thursday 18th October

Odeon Magdalen St 0870 5050007
AMERICAN PIE 2 (15) Thur 12.10, 3.10, 5.55, 8.50

The teenage search for sex continues.
MIKE BASSETT: ENGLAND MANAGER (15) Daily: 1.10, 6.10
Football comedy starring Ricky Tomlinson.
THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS (15) Daily 3.30, 8.30
Undercover cops, street racers and a hijacking ring.

Odeon George St 0870 5050007
THE PLEDGE (15) Daily: 2.10, 5.20, 8.35
Retiring detective (Jack Nicholson) pledges to catch child killer.

ENIGMA (15) Daily: 2.45, 5.45, 8.40
Against-the-clock code-breaking drama.
AI - ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (12) Daily: 1.30, 4.45, 8.10
Spielberg takes on Stanley Kubrick's last project.
AMELIE (15) Daily: 2.15, 5.15, 8.15
From the director of 'Delicatessen'.
MOULIN ROUGE (12) Daily: 1.45, 5.00, 8.25
Sumptuous musical hedonism.
THE SCORE (15) Daily: 2.30
De Niro, Brando in Heist thriller.
AMERICA'S SWEETHEARTS (12) Thurs 6.10, 8.50
Romantic comedy.

Ultimate Picture Palace 245288
MOULIN ROUGE (12) Thur 7.00, 9.30
Sumptuous musical hedonism.

Phoenix Picture House 512526
BATTLE ROYALE (18) Daily: 4.20, 9.10
Japanese killing spree
AMELIE (15) Daily: 1.40, 4.00, 6.30, 9.00
From the director of 'Delicatessen'.
STARTUP.COM (15) Thur: 2.00, 6.40
Perils of internet capitalism.
YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES (PG) Thu: 11.30pm
Elementary school?
HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH (18) Thu: 11.30pm
Failed transsexual's musical career.

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THEATRE

Playhouse 798600
COMEDIANS Tue 16th - Sat 20th: 7.30 (Fri: 8pm) Thu & Sat Mats: 2.30
Deconstructing humour... See review.

Pegasus 722851
A DARK RIVER Thu 18th & Fri 19th: 8.00
The big picture company

Apollo 0870 6063500
ERROL BROWN Thu 18th : 7.30pm
Hot Chocolate frontman's solo show.

Old Fire Station 794490
AMADEUS Tue 16th - Sat 20th: 7.30pm. Sat: 2.30, 7.30
Shaffer's operatic drama.

Burton Taylor 793797
GRAVE Tue 16th - Sat 20th: 7.30pm
Kane's penultimate work

TALES FROM OVID Tue 16th - Sat 20th: 9.30pm
Translated by Ted Hughes. See review.

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REVIEW: THEATRE

amadeus

by peter shaffer

tight productions
t the old fire station
16th - 20th oct

Shaffer's play is a tragic tale, the dark subject of which could just as well be transposed to a different time, with different figures to play out the story.

The humour is also dark, and dynamic: the story is narrated by Salieri, who in the hour before his own death, recounts his story to the ghosts of the future, or rather us, the audience. We watch from Salieri's point of view, as the benefactor, admirer and enemy in disguise of Mozart, of whose talent he is quietly but ardently jealous...

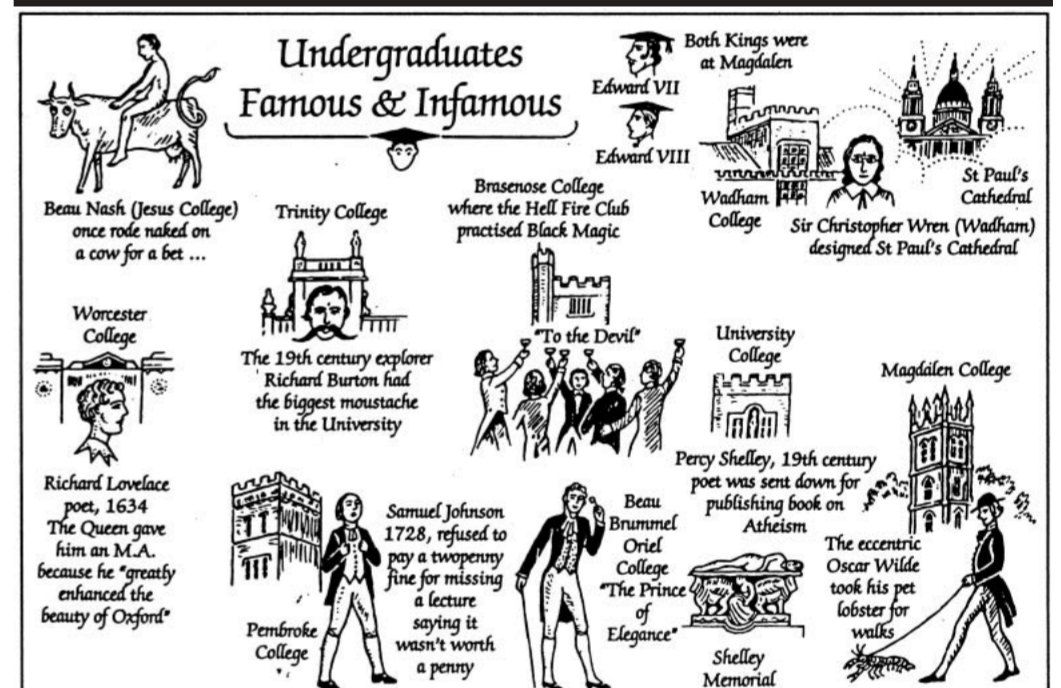
Salieri is played by Prasanna Puwanarajah. He was really good. The character of Salieri came straight through, and as the storyteller, his voice guided us in and out of real time and memories, suspending our mind's eye with the intonation and measure of his words.

Mozart is portrayed as a precocious and 'horrible creature' by Shaffer, and delectably well by Rob Riddell, whose dribbly facial expressions leave Rik Mayall and Rowan Atkinson with minimal repertoires in comparison. Rebecca Leek, who played Constanze, was very natural and believable. The quality of the acting and the interaction between the actors buzzed along nicely, all the characters were well formed right down to the most unwieldy of non-speaking parts. The characters' emotions were sincerely rendered, the comedy was free flowing, and the audience responded similarly.

Dora Wade's set was unreal enough (although realistic as opposed to abstract) through the placing of the furniture and the simplicity of its representation, to bring the play alive in that period, without stifling the imagination as can happen when a set is too literal. The music happened in all the appropriate places, and we were also treated to fervent excerpts from the Mass in C Minor and the Requiem.

Pip Johnson

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