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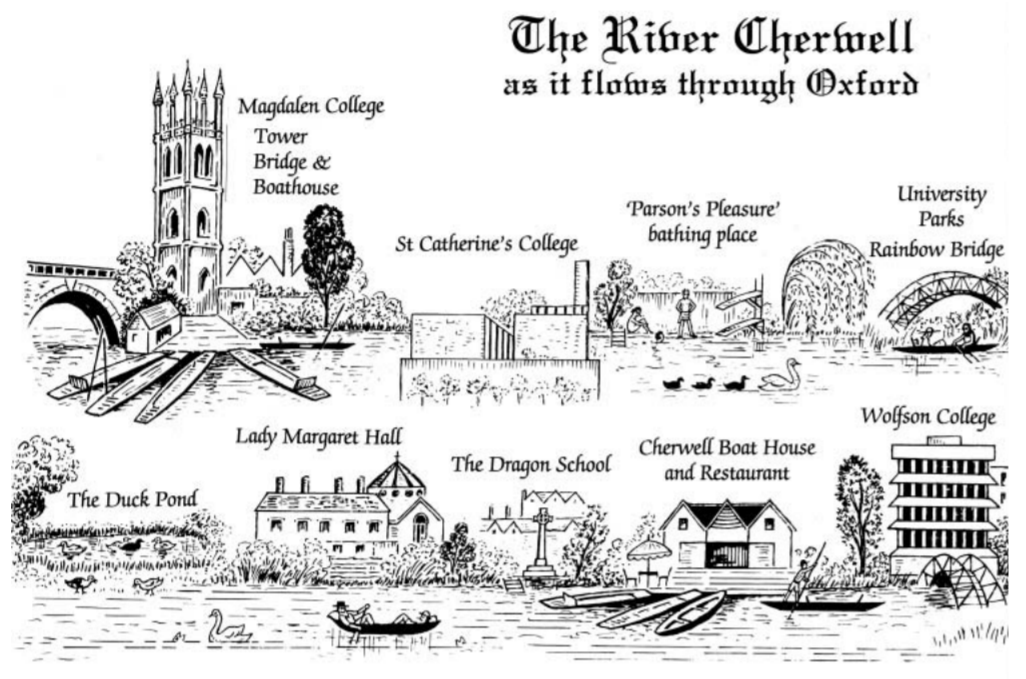
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FEEDING THE DUCKS WHILE IT'S SUNNY



The River Chertwell as it flows through Oxford

EDUCATING RITA, BY WILLY RUSSELL

OLD FIRE STATION TO 6TH APRIL
This is a wonderful play and a compelling production by StageGraft, the resident theatre company of the Old Fire Station.
Rita (Anjella Mackintosh), a working class Liverpool hairdresser, decides to get herself an education and enrolls on an Open University English Literature course. She enters the study and the world of Frank (Robert Booth), an alcoholic, disillusioned professor and poet. Rita is on a quest for knowledge and culture. Frank is on a quest for love and unpretentious human companionship. Rita announces she wants to see and understand, learn about herself, discover meaning and talk about what matters. Frank is loath to teach her - the conventional game of learning and criticism has left him a lifeless, lonely academic and an alcoholic geriatric hippy. Literature - his life, has also ruined it. His wife left him in the absurd belief it would further his poetry. The comedy lies in the clash of assumptions and social class. Beneath the surface, the substance of the play is in a darker examination of all that is wrong with education and, individually, our society, and also, of what is essential and important about learning and culture.
The play is a searing assault on our rigid class distinctions, and our culture of ignorance and misunderstanding, aggravated by inequalities in wealth and education. Rita is soon alienated from her social milieu and her partner, who burns her books and leaves her because she refuses to come off the pill. Why didn't she go to college, Frank asks. 'What from my school?' she jibes. At one stage she tries to alter her speech and it is uncomfortably believable that Rita will not be able to talk authoritatively if she trades in her Liverpoolian drawl for received pronunciation. Frank cannot stand this. He feels education is a hoax, and is spoiling Rita's innate interest and vitality. But Rita, and the play, are entirely dismissive of this patronising, self-indulgent view that the working classes are happy with the status quo, and better off with their lot. As Rita points out, the unions may tell them to demand more money, but the ads on ITV just spend it for them - hardly a comfort or answer to some of the more difficult questions. Their raucous drunken behaviour is no measure of quality of life, but veils a deeper dissatisfaction. How dare the establishment want to keep the natives thick, she challenges? For Rita, the only thing that keeps her going is her reading and her weekly tutorial with Frank. If he can't reconcile life and literature, that's his problem. Frank may decide to flee ever-rything for Australia, but Rita will continue to negotiate her changed life, which though undeniably difficult, is at least controlled and driven by her, and her choices.
The two actors achieve sustained hilarity and moments of touching emotion. One message of the play may be that there is a lot wrong with education. But their performance asserts that there is little to be cynical about regarding the power of literature and drama itself. Rita is bowled over by her first Shakespeare play, Romeo and Juliet, and her engagement in her study is refreshing and real. 'Why on earth would you want to bother giving up an evening in a pub to watch amateur dramatics?' Frank asks Rita. You find yourself answering for her - to watch exactly this kind of play.

Stephanie Kitchen 26/02/02

CINEMA

Phoenix Picture House 512526
TOGETHER (15) Fri: 11.50pm, Sun 12.00 noon
Sweden. The 70s. Alternative commune. Free love and vegetable growing.
ATANARJUAT (15) Daily: 2.45, 8.30
Rivality and evil spirits among the Inuits
THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS (15) Daily: 4.15, 9.00, also Sun: 2.00
Director of 'Rushmore' follows up with wry comedy of dysfunctional family
MYSTIC MASSEUR(PG) Daily: 12.30 (Not Sun), 6.10
Complex social politics of 1950s Trinidad.
IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE (PG) Fri: 11.50pm
Exquisitely filmed piece set in 60s Hong Kong
KIDS CLUB: THE PRINCESS DIARIES (U) Sat: 2.00pm
American teen into European royalty. No unaccompanied adults!
DEAD RINGERS (18) Sat: 11.30 pm
David Cronenberg's intense study of separation and loss
MOULIN ROUGE (12) Fri & Sat: 11.30pm Sun: 12 noon
Sumptuous musical hedonism
FRENCH CINEMA: THE CLOSET (15) Mon: 6.30pm
Comedy. A man must pretend to be gay to save his job
SHIVERS(18) Thurs: 11.50 pm
Cronenberg's orgiastic horror classic.
METROPOLIS (PG) Thurs: 11.30 pm
Animated visual feast, based on Lang's dystopia.
Ultimate Picture Palace 245288
AMELIE(15) Fri - Mon : 6.15, Tues - Thu: 9.00
Making the world a better place.
LITTLE OTIK(15) Fri - Mon : 3.30
A tree-stump comes alive and eats the postman.
THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE (15) Fri - Mon : 8.45
Coen Brothers' latest gem See review at www.dailyinfo.co.uk
THE LAST METRO (LE DERNIER METRO) (PG) Tue - Thu : 6.30
Theatrical resistance to Nazi occupation.
Odeon George Street 0870 5050007
ET (U) Daily: 11.30, 2.30, 5.30, 8.30
Saccharine from outer space.
CROSSROADS (PG) Fri & Sat: 11.00, 1.30, 4.15, 7.00, 9.30
Sun-Thurs: 10.30, 1.00, 3.30, 6.00, 8.30
3 friends in heartwarming road movie
BLADE 2 (18) Fri & Sat: 3.45, 6.45, 9.45
Sun-Thurs: 2.45, 5.45, 8.45
Wesley's back!
OCEAN'S 11 (12) Fri & Sat: 6.20, 9.20 Sun-Thurs: 5.35, 8.45
Star-studded remake of 60's thriller
MONSTERS INC (U) Fri & Sat :1.00, 3.15
Sun-Thurs: 12.00 (not Weds), 2.45,
Incappable furry fright mongers
JIMMY NEUTRON BOY GENIUS (U)
Fri & Sat :11.15, 1.15, 3.30 Sun-Thurs: 10.30, 12.30, 3.00
Rescuing adults from aliens
A BEAUTIFUL MIND (12)
Fri & Sat: 6.00, 9.15. Sun-Thurs: 5.00, 8.15
Reality-based biopic of award-winning schizophrenic.
ALI G IN DA HOUSE (15) Fri & Sat: 12.00, 2.30, 5.15, 7.45, 10.15
Sun-Thurs: 11.00, 1.30, 4.00, 6.30, 9.00
He's him for a whole film
SENIOR SCREEN: PAY IT FORWARD (15)
WED: DOORS 10.15, Film 10.45
Improving the world.
Odeon Magdalen Street 0870 5050007
PETER PAN : NEVERLAND (U) Fri & Sat: 12.30
Sun-Thurs: 12.00
Peter Pan in WWW... animated
ICE AGE (U) Daily: 11.00, 1.30, 4.15, 6.45, 9.15
More digitally animated furry creatures.
THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS (15) Fri & Sat: 3.45, 6.15, 9.30
Sun-Thurs: 2.45, 5.15, 8.30
Director of 'Rushmore' with wry comedy of dysfunction

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

Oxford Apollo until March 30th
Based on the hugely successful Broadway revival in the 1980s this touring show of Pirates of Penzance has something to please most of the audience, but in trying to please everyone it does fail in certain areas.
One expects good value entertainment from a show whose leads are TV variety stalwarts Gary Wilmot and Su Pollard and they do not disappoint. Wilmot is a suitably swashbuckling Pirate King, and throughout he works with the audience to great effect, Su Pollard, as the nanny Ruth, took a while to find her feet, or more particularly the audience took some time to see beyond her television persona and accept her performing a different role. Both dealt well with the G&S lyrics and vocally were very effective. Equally strong was David Alder as the Major General, a very model Major General, one might say. The romantic leads fared less well with the songs as both Joshua Dallas, Frederic, and Karen Evans, Mabel, sounded at the limits of their vocal range. This was not helped by the sound quality though, and the over amplified band which drowned out the lyrics at too many stages throughout the evening.
The production was somewhat mixed in style, and the combination of D'Oyly Carte, Broadway and, unfortunately, pantomime sat a little uneasily. An attempt to introduce audience participation served only to slow down proceedings, and the panto style in which much of the dialogue was projected seemed out of place. However, the big production numbers were excellent, especially 'With Cat-Like Tread' and 'A Policeman's Lot', and the choreography, under Gillian Gregory, was top notch.
Overall this is a good night out at the theatre, whether it is a great Gilbert and Sullivan and, open to debate but it certainly entertains from beginning to end and maintains a huge feel good factor throughout. So splice the mainbrace, swash your buckles and get along to the Apollo this week.
David Wootten 26/03/02

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MEETINGS

Mon 1st April
THE EGGSTRAORDINARY, EGGCITING EASTER EGG HUNT / Have fun exploring the Pitt Rivers & University Museum of Nat Hist & finding EGGSI! / 12-4.30pm / Pitt Rivers Museum, Parks Road. Open Mon-Sat 12pm-4.30pm, Sun 2pm-4.30pm. ; Tel: 270927 (info 270949)
OBSERVING AT COMPTON / First Clear Night between the 1st and 5th. Contact Bob Dryden for details on how to get there / 8.00pm / Compton; Tel: Bob Dryden - (01491) 201620, Sebastian Linfoot - (01865) 725094
Tue 2nd April
THE EGGSTRAORDINARY, EGGCITING EASTER EGG HUNT / See Monday, above.
EMOTIONAL HEALTH ANONYMOUS / For details phone John (243553), or Mary (863340) / 8pm every Tuesday / St Margaret's Institute, St Margaret's Institute, Polstead Road
Wed 3rd April
OXFORD STOP THE WAR COALITION / Public Meeting, the Panel Room. / 7.30pm / Oxford Town Hall, 109-113 St Aldate's; Tel: 252195
THE EGGSTRAORDINARY, EGGCITING EASTER EGG HUNT / See Monday, above.
Thu 4th April
THE EGGSTRAORDINARY, EGGCITING EASTER EGG HUNT / See Monday, above.

GIGS

Fri 29th March
CACTUS / indie/rock/electronic / Playing this bank holiday good friday / Wheatsheaf, 129, High St
ZABADOO / 11pm-2am / Freud's, Walton Street; Tel: 311171
THE CORSAIRS / Rockabilly / The Red Lion, Witney / 9pm / Email: nezzlegreenaway@hotmail.com
ARCHIE AND SPACEHOPPER / £5 / doors: 7pm / The Zodiac, 190 Cowley Road; Tel: 420042
Sat 30th March
TRANSFORMATION / Indie. £5 (inc. Beartooth) / 10.30pm / The Zodiac, 190 Cowley Road; Tel: 420042
DJ MANFREEE / Music & dancing / 11pm-2am / Freud's, Walton Street; Tel: 311171
MAKATING PLUS REGGAE & SKA DJS CORNERSTONE / Local reggae giants / 10-2am / Backroom @ The Bully, 162 Cowley Road; Tel: 244516,
CACTUS supported by sionne / Indie/Rock/Electronic / The PIT (Holybush) / 8pm
LIBERTY 37 / Lyrical Welsh grungecore maestros. / 8.00pm / The Zodiac, 190 Cowley Road; Tel: 420042
Sun 31st March
ROBB JOHNSON & RICHARD WALTERS / Give it Sun'stic Acoustic Club £2 members / 8pm-12.30 / Backroom @ The Bully, 162 Cowley Road; Tel: 244516,
PIANIST / VIVA SALSAL / Pianist tbc / Latin dance / 2-4pm / 6pm / Freud's, Walton Street; Tel: 311171,

FOR SALE

TRAIN TICKETS, WATERLOO to Strasbourg, 1 adult, 1 child. TICKETS SEPARATELY, OR SEPARATE LEGS OF JOURNEY, NEGOTIABLE! Tues 2nd April dep. Waterloo 19:23; ar: Paris 23:23, dep. 00:21; ar: Strasbourg 05:57 Mon 8th April dep. Strasbourg 13:09; ar: Paris 17:50, dep. 19:19; ar: Waterloo 21:13. Tel. 469911 or tury93@hotmail.com
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THEATRE

Apollo Theatre 0870 6063500
PIRATES OF PENZANCE Fri 29th & Sat 30th: 7.30
Sat mat: 2.30
Starring Su Pollard & Gary Wilmot. £8.00 - £24.00
Old Fire Station 297170
EDUCATING RITA Fri 29th - Sat 6th April
Daily: 7.30 pm. Sat mat 2.30pm. No shows Sun/Mon
Willy Russell's Liverpoolian comedy £8/£6
Pegasus Theatre 722851
PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD Fri 29th & Sat 30th. 8.00
Oxford School of Drama. £5.50 (£3.50)
Playhouse 305305
FLATSPIN, ROLE PLAY AND GAMEPLAN Fri 29th & Sat 30th
Gameplan: Fri 29th, 8pm, Sat 30th 12pm
Role Play: Sat 30th 4pm. Flatspin: Sat 30th 8pm
The new Alan Ayckbourn comedies produced by the Stephen Joseph Theatre. £8.50/£4.14/£17
THE WIZARD OF OZ Wed 3rd - Sat 6th April: 7.30pm
Sat mat: 2.30
Musical Youth Company of Oxford present the yellow brick road musical / £7-£12

GET OUT AND MEET PEOPLE!

Stand for Oxford City Councillor on Thursday 2nd MAY
Put forward your view.
Some of it may rub off on our rulers.
No deposit required.
Nomination papers from electoral officer, Oxford City Council (249811), to be returned by noon, 5th April
Enough leaflets for your constituency - £120 (553377)
Apart from your labour, that's it!
GOOD LUCK !!

A CHASTE MAID IN CHEAPSIDE

Almeida on Tour @ The Oxford Playhouse, 20th - 23rd March
Ben Harrison's production of A Chaste Maid in Cheapside takes us on a raucous tour through the lusts and lives of a diverse collection of city dwellers during their best to survive the privations of Lent in 17th Century London. Thomas Middleton's words are given bawdy life by an excellent cast who draw every ounce of innuendo from a script that overflows with lewd suggestion.
The tale is that of a daughter given in marriage to an older, nobler man who sees her as no more than a "forty-pound virgin" and the key to his inheritance. We also meet her lover, set in competition against this libidinous lord, and the younger brother of an early 'sperm donor' who discovers that his talent for fertilisation may hold the key to his fortune.
Impressive use is made of a striking set, artfully lit by Natasha Chivers, fashioned to provide our scene with a timeless quality through which the central themes of the story play well. Lust, avarice and self-indulgence fuel the antics of the MAFF-apparelled 'promoters', as much as the lewd conduct of the machiavellian Sir Walter Whorehound.
The performance suffers only from a lack of pace in the first half, but accelerates superbly in the latter to bring us to a resurgent conclusion. This is solid, sparkling theatre, with a story that may not appeal to all, but whose dramatic qualities are sure to delight. You would go far to find a better staging of Middleton than this. Go sate yourself.
James Dare

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