

New Talent rewarded at the Old Vic

The talented winners of the *Lilian Baylis Theatrical Excellence Awards* received their certificates and cheques at a recent ceremony at the Old Vic. **Ella Hickman** won an award for writing the play *This is Not The End*.

This Is Not The End also produced the winning director, **Natalie Ibu** and the winning male actor, **James Baldwin**. Natalie said that she was thrilled to receive the Lilian Baylis award and will be using the money to see plays on her upcoming visit to New York (to study Musical Theatre).



Rebecca Whitehead, best female actor, sharing a joke with James Ranger

James Baldwin is a graduate of the Royal Scottish Academy and has been working in London for the last eight months. As well as acting, James is developing his writing and recently premiered a new piece at the National Theatre Studio. He intends to use his award money to pay for an actor or two to perform his writing.



A happy James Baldwin, best male actor

Rebecca Whitehead won for her acting in 'Mothers' Ruin'. Rebecca is at the start of her career in London, following stints at the Yorkshire Playhouse and the National Youth Theatre. Surprised and delighted to win, she will be spending her cheque on play tickets.



Natalie Ibu, best director

Morwenna Johnson was a producer of the *24 Hour Plays*. Previously an intern at the Old Vic, she has now started an internship at the Royal Court.

This was a happy occasion with champagne, cake and nibbles provided by the Old Vic. It was a pleasure to meet such intelligent and passionate young people. They were all delighted and honoured to receive their awards and fascinated by the history of the Vic-Wells Association. They have promised to keep us informed of their progress in the future. I am sure that all members of the association will join me in wishing them well.

Report by Kirsten Sheridan

All photographs by Nick Panagakis



Antony Page presenting the award to Morwenna Johnson, best producer

A history of *Twelfth Night* and the Vic-Wells

The first production of *Twelfth Night* at the Old Vic that I located was 11 May 1914 when William Poel played Malvolio in a production staged by Shakespeare Stewart. Poel had staged the play many times himself and he favoured the so-called Elizabethan staging. Poel's Elizabethanism would have been entirely at home at the Vic as one feature of Elizabethanism was the bare boards aesthetic; and because Lilian Baylis would never allow much money for set and costume the Vic stage was often 'bare boards'.

Twelfth Night was performed fairly frequently at the Vic during the First World War, directed first by Andrew Leigh and then by Philip Ben Greet: Violas included Sybil Thorndike and Viola Tree. George Foss did a production in 1918, just before the war ended, but through much of the 1920s it was Robert Atkins who dominated the history of *Twelfth Night* at the Vic, in a whole series of productions usually featuring himself as Toby. Atkins returned to *Twelfth Night* over and over during his long career and was still directing it, and playing Toby, in the 1950s.

In 1931 Sadler's Wells saw a really pioneering production of the play when Harcourt Williams



Malvolio costume design by Owen Smythe for Harcourt Williams' 1931 *Twelfth Night* (Bristol Theatre Collection)



Simon Russell Beale as *Malvolio* (Donmar Warehouse 2002)

directed a *Twelfth Night* which opened the newly renovated Sadler's Wells on *Twelfth Night* itself, 6 January. The cast included John Gielgud as Malvolio and Dorothy Green as Viola; however, this was also the first 'Cavaliers and Roundheads' production I found of the play, a concept that placed Malvolio as a puritan who would vote with the regicides in the English Civil War. Williams revived his production the following year with Edith Evans as Viola and Robert Speaight as Malvolio. The Sir Toby in both of these productions was Ralph Richardson. The Vic-Wells audiences were able to see quite a few *Twelfth Nights* around this time and in 1933 there was another production, this time directed by Tyrone Guthrie. This, Guthrie's very first production at the Vic-Wells, was controversial not least because it featured the Olivia of Lydia Lopokova who was far too lively for most reviewers (they preferred Olivia to be a sober, respectable matron). Guthrie directed the play again, for the Vic-Wells in 1937, in a production that featured Laurence Olivier as Toby. However in 1937 our Emeritus Life President, Wendy Toye, then aged 19, choreographed a *Twelfth Night* ballet. Wendy Toye's ballet was entitled *Cross Gartered* and was based on the action of *Twelfth Night* 3.4. Wendy Toye herself danced Olivia, while Walter Gore danced the role of Malvolio. When a ballet of *Twelfth Night* was televised that year one of the dancers was Leo Kersey.

The 1950s and early 1960s saw Celia Johnson, Peggy Ashcroft, Claire Bloom and Barbara Jefford as Old Vic Violas with Ernest Milton, Michael Hordern and Alec McCowen among the Malvolios, and a soubrette Maria from Judi Dench. Vivien Leigh played Viola in Robert Helpmann's production that toured Australia but did not appear in London. More recently our new President, Simon Russell Beale was a notable and moving Malvolio in Sam Mendes' 2002 *Twelfth Night* at the Donmar Warehouse.

Elizabeth Schafer

NEWS from Sadler's Wells

Svapnagata

Festival of Indian Dance and Music

16 – 28 November 2009

Svapnagata means 'dreaming' in Sanskrit. It is the inspiration and starting point for a two-week festival of Indian music and dance at **Sadler's Wells** this November. The festival is curated by two exceptional artists with a shared British-Asian background and creative vision: Dancer and choreographer **Akram Khan** and composer **Nitin Sawhney** are long-time collaborators whose previous productions for Sadler's Wells include the critically acclaimed *bahok* and the universally celebrated *zero degrees*.

Nitin Sawhney and **Akram Khan** have invited artists whom they admire and who have influenced them. All are classical artists at the highest level whose work shows a sensibility for the tensions between classical training and the quest for a new, contemporary language. They all come from different places, yet have a common denominator in that they all work from a base within the Indian art forms, and are able to transcend boundaries of tradition, genre, or culture. Akram Khan says: "*To bring these artists under one umbrella gives me a sense of 'intoxication', and it is this intoxication that sometimes leads to dreams. And to me, dreams are a place that always carries the memories of the past and the discoveries of the new.*"

Shantala Shivalingappa will present a classical Kuchipudi evening on the main stage, and a contemporary duet with the choreographer **Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui** in the Lilian Baylis Studio. The renowned Indian composer and virtuoso percussionist **Trilok Gurtu** will perform pieces by Bach and Bartok together with a group of Western classical musicians who in turn will play his own compositions. **Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry's** beautiful production of the play *Nagamandala* combines physical theatre with music and the ancient art of storytelling. Two musicians who both take their classical training to new levels each present a solo evening: **U. Shrinivas** plays South Indian Carnatic music on an electric Mandolin, and **Anoushka Shankar** fuses classical Sitar ragas with Western music. A pure dance evening will juxtapose the two great Indian classical dance forms of the North and the South, featuring solo performances by acclaimed **Kathak** dancer **Aditi Mangaldas** and by **Priyadarshini Govind**, a celebrated

performer in the South Indian dance form **Bharathanatyam**. Additional events in the Lilian Baylis Studio include performances by rising stars **Yuko Inoue** and **Akash Odedra**, two young **Kathak** dancers performing choreography by **Kumudini Lakhia**. **Gregory Maqoma** and **Shanell Winlock** reprise their duet *Southern Comfort* in a double bill with **Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui** and **Shantala Shivalingappa's** new piece. The Lilian Baylis Studio concludes with an evening by rap artist **Riz MC**, and an afternoon Panel Debate chaired by **Maya Jaggi**.

The Svapnagata India Festival culminates in a new collaborative production by Akram Khan

**"A celebration of
Indian dance
in all its classical splendour
and contemporary
relevance."**



Priyadarsini Govind

and Nitin Sawhney. **Confluence** fuses **Sawhney's** music with **Khan's** unique blend of classical kathak and contemporary technique. It takes the form of a conversation between two

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“In the Spirit of Diaghilev”

Many dance companies are mounting programmes this year to celebrate the centenary of Sergei Diaghilev’s creation of ‘Les Ballets Russes’ in 1909, but the majority of offerings are of revivals or new productions of works created for ‘Les Ballets Russes’. Conspicuously missing has been the creation of new works, for which Diaghilev’s company achieved a standard in its twenty year existence which has never been equalled. Diaghilev commissioned new choreography, identified and developed new choreographers, persuaded major artists, designers and composers to contribute, and welded disparate and often fractious elements into a successful creative enterprise.

Sadler’s Wells has sought to honour the creative element of Diaghilev by commissioning four new works by established choreographers - very commendable - but the outcome was less satisfactory than the initiative deserved.

First up was Wayne McGregor, of Random Dance and the Royal Ballet, with *Dyad 1909*, based on Shackleton’s 1909 expedition to the South Pole. Apart from a snow dusted and fur clad figure at the start, not much concerning the expedition was evident, and the relevance of the picture projections on the ice-like shapes on stage was unclear. The choreography was in MacGregor’s usual style, and danced with great attack by his dancers, but did not leave a strong impression.

Two shorter works followed. *AfterLight* by Russell Maliphant, an extended solo to music by Erik Satie, was the hit of the evening. The Satie music, some of which was used by Ashton in *Monotones*, and the lighting effects by Michael Hulls combined almost hypnotically with the slow rotations of the dancer in the first sequence. As the piece developed, so the dancer’s space and movements expanded with the lighting. A quite beautiful piece, and superbly danced by Daniel Proietto.

I had not previously encountered the work of Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, but warmed to *Faun*, his new take on the Nijinski/Debussy *L’après midi d’un Faun*. This featured the tow-haired James O’Hara as the Faun, and Daisy Philips as the single robust nymph, hampered by over-complex costumes which really did not work. The movement was highly athletic, and represented the Faun very much as a feral creature. There were elements of the primeval, which brought echoes of Rite of Spring, but the most notable feature was the extraordinary flexibility of movement and control delivered by O’Hara.



**“The final work was not
‘In the spirit of Diaghilev’;
his artistic sensitivity would
have vetoed it”**

And so to *Eternal Damnation to Sancho and Sanchez* by Javier de Frutos, part of it to Ravel’s *La Valse*. I wonder what was De Frutos’ objective in creating this work? Was it to indicate his violent dislike of the Roman Catholic Church, or did he seek to replicate the scandal of Nijinsky’s *Faun*, or the riots generated by the first *Sacre du Printemps*? If so, he had some success on all counts, as testified by people walking out, boos at the end of some performances, and extended disapproving newspaper coverage. Doyen dance critic Clement Crisp was outraged, but it must be admitted that in some modern dance circles, this would be regarded as a plus point. The first sequence (without music) in which a “Pope” figure indulged in all sorts of violent simulated sexual activity with both men and pregnant women was so unpleasant, tedious and interminably long that I tried to relieve my boredom by studying the Beardesley-esk backcloth. Dancers displayed placards with names on, but their significance was obscure. The mayhem continued accompanied by *La Valse* but interrupted by grunts and screams and culminated with a woman being strangled. The dancing, such as it was, contained little that was interesting or original. There was some applause, perhaps showing sympathy for the dancers.

Clement, all is forgiven. You were right; it was garbage! This final work was not “in the spirit of Diaghilev”; his artistic sensitivity would surely have vetoed it. Even so, the theatre was packed for the final performances. Were the late bookers there to see the beauty of *AfterLight* or the athleticism of *Faun*, or were they there to see what the fuss was about? I fear it was a “un succes de scandale”. Nothing succeeds like excess!

Richard Reavill

NEWS from The Old Vic

What an exciting month we've had here at The Old Vic. *Inherit the Wind* starring Kevin Spacey and David Troughton has proved a huge success with audiences and critics alike and **The 24 Hour Plays Celebrity Gala** returned for its sixth year and once again, it didn't disappoint! A huge thank you to everyone who took part and supported this event. The Gala is the principal annual fundraising event in support of *Old Vic New Voices*. This department is dedicated to working with young people, developing emerging talent and building new audiences. The Old Vic receives no government subsidy so this event is vital to enable this ongoing work.

2010 sees **David Grindley** directs **John Guare's** adrenalin-fuelled, Olivier Award-winning play *Six Degrees of Separation* - a sharp, vivacious take on two worlds colliding. The cast includes **Obi Abili** (*Brothers Size*, The Young Vic and *Angels in America*, Headlong Theatre), **Anthony Head** (*Otherwise Engaged* with Richard E. Grant, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Manchild* and *Merlin*) and **Lesley Manville** (*Secrets and Lies*, *Vera Drake* and *All About My Mother*, The Old Vic). *Six Degrees of Separation* runs from 7 January – 3 April 2010.

Following a critically acclaimed inaugural year, theatre and Academy Award-winning film director **Sam Mendes** will again direct a transatlantic company of actors for the second season of **The Bridge Project**, a unique three-year series of co-productions by The Old Vic, BAM and Neal Street Productions devoted to producing large-scale, classical theatre for international audiences.

The Bridge Project again begins its international journey in New York, with *As You Like It* opening at the BAM Harvey Theater in January 2010, followed by *The Tempest* in February 2010. It will then embark on an international tour visiting Asia and Europe before opening in London at The Old Vic in June 2010.

The British/American cast includes **Christian Camargo** as Orlando and Ariel in *As You Like It* and *The Tempest*; **Stephen Dillane** as Jaques and Prospero; **Ron Cephas Jones** as Charles the Wrestler and Caliban; **Juliet Rylance** as

Rosalind and Miranda; and **Thomas Sadoski** as Touchstone and Stephano; and **Michelle Beck** as Celia and Ceres.

To keep up-to-date with news and information for all productions at The Old Vic you can join our e-subscribers list by visiting www.oldvictheatre.com or become a fan on our new **facebook page** by searching 'The Old Vic Theatre'.

Rebecca Pepper



Theatre Review

Inherit the Wind

Anyone who has read the play will know it begins in the town of Hillsboro, with the townsfolk discussing the 'crime' of evolution and awaiting the arrival of the prosecution lawyer, Matthew Harrison Brady. When he does show he is greeted with much ceremony and made an honorary colonel in the militia. David Troughton portrays Brady as a charming and cultured man, who believes utterly in the truth of the Bible, but there is also something of a bully about him. Kevin Spacey plays Henry



Drummond, the lawyer for the defence. He wears a white wig and shambles on stage, almost bent over, reminiscent of Walter Matthau.

There are sterling performances from Spacey and David Troughton. Their choosing of the jury is very funny, with both trying to score points off each other. During the actual trial Drummond's frustration grows with Brady and the Judge, who refuses to let Drummond call any of his witnesses. Drummond then decides

to call Brady as a witness and these two powerful men go head to head. Kevin Spacey has the best lines in the play and he makes the most of them; he is funny, angry and passionate. At one point he turns to the audience, picking out people to address his lines to; as the jury members are sitting in the front row, this is very effective. But because of his energy and the strength of his voice, he doesn't come across as a man meant to be in his seventies. However, that's a minor quibble and it shouldn't take away from the power of his performance.

“Does this play have relevance for a 21st century audience?”

The set design is excellent and makes full use of the Old Vic stage. Music and snippets of radio shows are used to good effect. Towards the end of the interval, as the audience are returning to their seats, the cast come on stage, which is now the courtroom and take their places. This worked very well; Drummond consults his papers and his client, who looks suitably terrified, and Brady showboats and flatters the town's women.

A special mention has to go to Mark Dexter, who plays the cynical journalist, E.K Hornbeck. He is terrific.

Does this play have relevance for a twenty first century audience? Yes. Arguments between creationists and evolutionists are still going on, with some British schools choosing to include creationism in their science classes. Is it right? Is it wrong? As Henry Drummond says every man - or woman! - has the right to THINK!

Kirsten Sheridan

Inherit the Wind is at the Old Vic until December 20th.

More Dance at Sadler's Wells

Hot on the heels of the Diaghilev programme came two more short seasons of dance. I saw only the second programme of Christopher Wheeldon's *Morphoses* group. One item, *Softly as I Leave You* by Paul Lightfoot and Sol Leon, was repeated from the earlier programme. The duet, intensely danced by Rubinald Pronk and Drew Jacoby featured a vertical box (sentry-

box? 'phone-box? broom-cupboard? coffin?), but its significance was opaque. Wheeldon contributed *Continuum* from 2002 to piano pieces by his favoured composer Gyorgy Ligeti, and demonstrated his ability to match in movement the wide range and brittle quirkiness of the music. The last item was the premier of a new work by Wheeldon called *Rhapsody Fantasie* to music from Rachmaninov piano suites. This music seems to inspire Wheeldon in a rather different way to the Ligeti. Six women wore bright red cocktail dresses and were accompanied by six men, bare-chested but with matching but rather strangely flared harem pants. There was a stand-out performance by the NYCB principal Wendy Wheeldon.

Mark Morris presented two programmes the following week, each containing four items and no duplication. There was even an extra item in the Friday programme; a solo for Bradon McDonald titled *Three Preludes*, to music by George Gershwin. Two new works: *Visitation*, to a Beethoven cello sonata, and *Empire Garden*, to music by Charles Ives, were from August this year. The latter had highly colourful costumes, the men in jackets of a rather military style, some in the pastel shades favoured by generals in banana republics. The cast had a lot of fun with *Going Away Party* to songs by Bob Willis and his Texas Playboys. *Bedtime*, to Schubert songs was a quiet work much helped by the accompaniment of the group of young singers. The programmes ended with either *Grand Duo* to the Lou Harrison work for violin and piano, performed with verve by all concerned, or *V* to a Schumann piano quintet. These two works perhaps exemplify Morris's ability to translate music to movement; the pulsating polka at the end of *Grand Duo* such a contrast to the mesmerising procession of dancers in the slow movement of *V*. The latter was perhaps the most rewarding item of the first programme, primarily because I had a highly elevated seat, and was able to see new aspects of the plan of the choreography not so evident from a more horizontal view-point.

Richard Reavill

Do YOU have an opinion on a production you have seen recently? Please send your review to: marjory_gha@hotmail.co.uk

WHAT'S ON

Sadler's Wells 0870 737 7737
Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4TN

www.sadlerswells.com

16 - 28 Nov Svapnagata - Indian Music & Dance
1 - 5 Dec Carlos Acosta: *Apollo* & other works



photo: Johan Persson

10 Dec 2009 -
24 Jan 2010 Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*



photo: Bill Cooper

Peacock Theatre 0870 737 0337
Portugal Street, Kingsway, London WC2A 2HT
2 Dec - 10 Jan 2010 *The Snowman*



photo: Alistair Muir

Old Vic Theatre 0870 060 6628
Waterloo Road, London SE1 8NB

www.oldvictheatre.com

18 Sept - 20 Dec *Inherit the Wind*



Inherit the Wind

The Old Vic

7 Jan - 3 Apr 2010 *Six Degrees of Separation*

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

REHEARSALS at SADLER'S WELLS

We have enjoyed a good run of rehearsals including Scottish Ballet and *In the Spirit of Diaghilev* but we are now running into a quiet period with Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* followed by the *Flamenco* season so it may be in March next year that further rehearsal opportunities will arrive. Richard Reavill will let the email list know if there is a rehearsal opportunity before then.

TWELFTH NIGHT PARTY

Our annual *Twelfth Night Party* will take place on **Friday 8th January 2010** in the second circle bar area at the Old Vic from 3pm to 5pm. Monica Mason has kindly agreed to cut the cake at this historic ceremony. Not to be missed! 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.

IMPORTANT: NOTE CHANGED DATE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please note that the date of our AGM has changed and will now take place on Monday 30th November at 7pm in the Kahn Theatre at Sadler's Wells. Gillian Lyne CBE has agreed to talk at the AGM. We hope to see as many members there as possible.

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Svapnagata: Festival of Indian Dance and Music

Sadler's Wells : 16th - 28th November 2009



Shantala Shivalingappa

photo: Rodrigo Cesar

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friends and artistic collaborators, looking back on personal experiences, respective influences and a productive creative partnership.

Exploring how the independent stories of these two kindred spirits converged, **Confluence** offers the opportunity to not only re-visit their collaborative work together (**Kaash**, **zero degrees** and **bahok**) but also to understand the psychological, emotional and spiritual processes involved in their work. **Confluence** will also include a new piece of choreography by **Akram Khan** to a specially created composition by **Nitin Sawhney**.

Svapnagata offers a dazzling array of performances and events, celebrating Indian dance and music in all its splendour and contemporary relevance. For further information and inspiration please visit the **Sadler's Wells** website on www.sadlerswells.com/show/Svapnagata. The recently launched **Sadler's Wells Player** features film clips of interviews with Akram Khan and Nitin Sawhney in which they talk about how they approach new creations like **Gnosis** and **Confluence**.

Lisa Bowler

The Vic-Wells Association

Founded in 1923 by LILIAN BAYLIS CH.

Incorporating The Old Vic Association, The Old Vic Circle, The Old Vic Club,
Sadler's Wells Society, Sadler's Wells Circle

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Saturday, 30th January 2010.

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