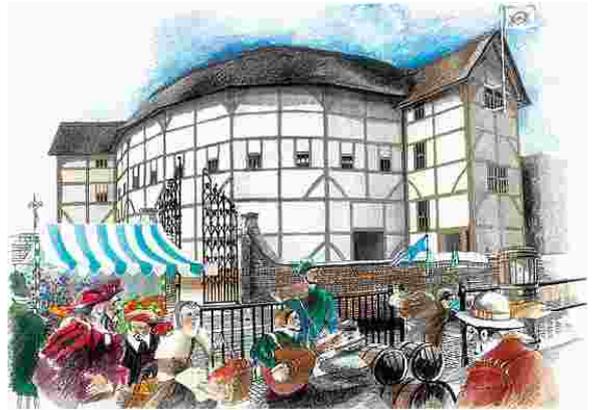




Out and About with the Vic-Wells

Discover the secrets of Elizabethan special effects, from blood and gore to magic tricks and flying on stage. How were characters hanged on stage and what created Macbeth's thunder?

You can find out by joining us on a visit to Shakespeare's Globe Theatre on Thursday, 17 November 2011 at 12.30pm.



Elizabethan Dressing Demonstration



Is this a dagger which I see before me...?

The itinerary will be as follows:

12.30pm Arrive (for tea or coffee and biscuits) at *The Swan at the Globe*,

1.15pm Guided Tour of the *Rose Theatre*,

1.45pm Guided Tour of the *Globe Theatre*,

2.15pm Elizabethan Dressing Demonstration,

2.45pm Self-guided tour of the Exhibition, with the outing ending at 3.45pm.

Quite a package at only £17 per ticket! Cheques with SAE to Tim Rooke, at the address below.

We have also arranged a trip to Wilton's, the UK's oldest surviving Music Hall, on Monday, 17 October 2011 at 3pm. Price £6. To join us please send a cheque plus SAE to Mr Tim Rooke, 302b Park Road, London N8 8LA

REHEARSALS AT SADLER'S WELLS AUTUMN 2011

The next opportunities are:

Grupo Corpo Monday 12th September at 7.00pm **Ea Solar** Sunday 18th September at 8.00pm

Likely but not yet confirmed are:

Birmingham Royal Ballet Tuesday 18th October

Scottish Ballet Thursday 3rd November **Rambert Dance Company** Friday 18th November

Please confirm rehearsal times nearer the date with Richard Reavill on 0149187 2574. He will inform automatically all those Members who are on the email list. If you have an email address and are not on Richard's list please register with him at vic-wells@tiscali.co.uk

Please arrive no later than 15mins before the rehearsal is due to start and pay £5 to the Committee member who will be present in the foyer before the rehearsal starts.

What the papers say about Kevin Spacey's *Richard III*

The Evening Standard

"This is one of the year's hottest tickets. It reunites Kevin Spacey with Sam Mendes, who directed him in *American Beauty* – for which both won Oscars. It also represents the final instalment of the Bridge Project which has fostered collaboration between British and American performers".

The Observer

"Rarely have Richard III's disabilities looked so much like brutal assets, weapons in waiting, as they do in Kevin Spacey's powerful, physically intimidating performance".

The Daily Mail

"Mr Spacey, normally so good, does not quite nail the part. He goes close but is ultimately undone by a surfeit of sarcasm and campness".

The Independent

"There have, it's true, been more creepily charismatic and more unnerving portrayals of Shakespeare's Machiavellian villain. But Spacey's performance combines instinctive, stage-commanding authority with lovely, droll touches of dead-drop understatement".

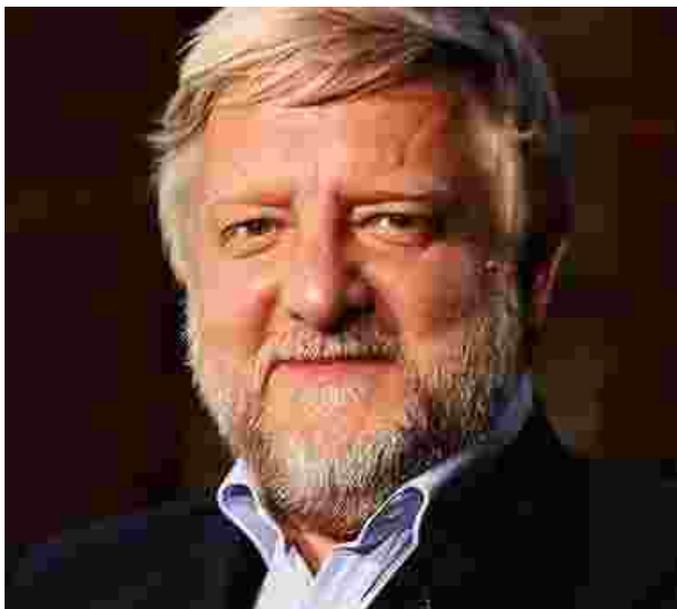
Mail on Sunday

What's so special about Spacey's performance is that you never forget for one second how hateful, scheming, dishonest and ruthless Richard is, and yet you can't help but admire his jaw-dropping audacity. He's not just a brute but also a brilliant brain-washer: he makes us shriek with horror, but also with laughter".

The Guardian

"Spacey's Richard will be remembered less for its political insight into the world of Gaddafi and Mubarak than for its psychological understanding of solitude. In the excellently staged eve-of-RBoswell scene, where Richard's victims sit behind a long table like a committee of the dead, Spacey cries, "there is no creature loves me". That is the keystone of a superb performance. What's more, when the history of Spacey's Old Vic regime is written, I suspect it will be his Richard, left dangling upside down like the slaughtered Mussolini, that will be most vividly remembered. And even if Olivier used the same trick in *Coriolanus*, that simply shows Spacey is part of a great tradition".

Where does he find the time?



Vic-Wells President Simon Russell Beale has been interviewing people for a BBC programme that he will be presenting called *Symphony*. The programme will look at various composers and explore how their symphonies came about. In December 2011 he will be at the National in a new play – *Collaborators* – by John Hodge (screenwriter of *Trainspotting* and *The Beach*). The play centres on a meeting between Joseph Stalin (Beale) and writer Mikail Bulgakov.

He is also to play Falstaff for Richard Eyre's production of *Henry V* for the BBC.

In November 2011 Simon will star with Rachel Weisz and Tom Hiddleston in Terence Davies' film of Terence Rattigan's *The Deep Blue Sea*. And as if that wasn't enough – look out for him in the next (2012) Bond movie!

News from the Old Vic

Ellie Sigman tells us about the Old Vic's next major production

Following on from *Richard III* the Old Vic has announced that J M Synge's comic masterpiece and one of Ireland's greatest plays, *The Playboy of the Western World* will preview at The Old Vic from 17th September 2011. Directed by John Crowley, this major new production will star Robert Sheehan as Christy Mahon, Ruth Negga as Pegeen Mike and Niamh Cusack as Widow Quinn.



Robert Sheehan

"I'm absolutely thrilled to be directing *The Playboy of The Western World*" said John Crowley, "It's been my most favourite play for the longest time, and we're gathering such an exciting cast to bring it to life".

Set in a small village on the west coast of County Mayo, *The Playboy of the Western World* tells the story of lonely dreamer Christy Mahon who takes refuge in Michael Flaherty's pub, claiming that he has killed his oppressive father. Christy beguiles the locals with his tall and dramatic tale of bravery in the face of danger and becomes an instant hero. He both charms the village women including Widow Quinn and captures the heart of the landlord's fiery daughter Pegeen. However, when his tale turns out to be less straightforward than they first thought, the simmering violence of the villagers comes to light.

Sadler's Wells News

ZooNation return to the Peacock in the autumn with the full length version of a brand new show *Some Like It Hip Hop*. With a nod to Billy Wilder's much loved film and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, the production is a comical tale of love, mistaken identity, cross-dressing, and revolution; all played out in ZooNation's innovative trademark style. *Some Like It Hip Hop* WORLD PREMIERE, Thursday 20 October - Saturday 19 November 2011

This autumn, Sadler's Wells' marks the first of its *Composer Series* of new works, with collaboration between acclaimed composer Mark-Anthony Turnage and Olivier Award-winning choreographer Wayne McGregor. *UNDANCE* is a brand new choreographic work performed by the dancers of Wayne McGregor*Random Dance with a visual world created by Turner Prize-winning visual artist Mark Wallinger and set to a new score by Turnage. The second part of the evening features a new staging of Turnage's chamber opera *Twice Through The Heart* (1997), featuring Sarah Connolly in the role of a woman who is jailed for killing her abusive husband. *UNDANCE / Twice Through the Heart* WORLD PREMIERE, Thursday 1 - Saturday 3 December 2011



3Abschied Photo: Herman Sorgeloos

Other highlights of the autumn season include the UK Premiere of *Rian* a new production born out of the collaboration between Fabulous Beast Artistic Director, Michael Keegan-Dolan and Liam Ó Maonlaí, founding member of Hothouse Flowers. In October, as part of Dance Umbrella 2011, Emanuel Gat Dance perform *Brilliant Corners* set to an original score composed by Gat himself and premiering in the UK. Beijing Dance Theater make their first appearance at Sadler's Wells in October with *Haze* and in November, Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker and Jérôme Bel premiere *3Abschied*, inspired by the last movement, *Der Abschied*, of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* and accompanied by contemporary music ensemble, Ictus.

Should you feel like staying in, then immerse yourself in all things dance and visit <http://www.sadlerswells.com/page/screen>. Here you will find videos of past and future performances, interviews and behind the scenes footage plus Dance on Film featuring the often quirky, moving and inspirational work of dance film makers.

And then there was light.....

Richard Reavill investigates a potential “conspiracy theory”

The human being is generally equipped with five senses: sight; hearing; taste; smell; and touch. Of these, sight and hearing are by far the most important, being used in over 90% of human communications. Dance is primarily a visual art-form, with sound a secondary element. It is difficult, but not impossible, to find examples of the use of the other three senses. One writer described a recent piece by Javier de Fruitos as “tasteless”, but it is unlikely that he actually put chunks of the work to his lips. Similarly, a critic of one of the Sunday broadsheets described some recent dance performances as “a run of absolute stinkers”, though I doubt that she used her nostrils to make this assessment. The use of touch was reported as not highly regarded by most of the audience for *Un Peu de Tendress, Bordel de Merde!* (please don't translate) who were assaulted by naked members of the cast, though this certainly used touch as a component of the performance.

Thus, we are left with sight and sound as the key components of a dance performance, with sight as the major element. So why are so many dance performances so inadequately lit, indeed sometimes performed almost in darkness? Why are some given lighting so flat that the performance appears reduced to two dimensions? Could those well-known theories, “the conspiracy theory” and “the cock-up theory”, help us find an explanation?

Let us first consider the cock-up theory. This is based on the assumption that any continuing problem or inadequacy is due to the ignorance and stupidity of those in charge, and their special ability to wreck any enterprise. Possibly an inexperienced individual was chosen to arrange the lighting. Maybe the director failed to include for lighting equipment in the budget. Perhaps, following “The Cuts”, they can only afford to operate a forty watt bulb. All are possible, but unlikely, as there are many fine lighting artists, and funds are not (yet) quite so low as to limit us to the forty watt bulb.

Perhaps it is a conspiracy. Could the director be so unconvinced of the quality of the choreography that he wishes to ensure that the audience cannot see its inadequacies? Are the dancers so inept that their incompetence must be shielded in gloom? Is this an attempt to force the audience to use a vivid imagination to supplement dull content? All are unlikely, as there are many interesting and innovative choreographers working in the UK, and the standards of dancing continue to rise.

“Are lighting artists limited to the 40 watt bulb?”

I have a possible explanation, and with it a potential solution, but one which might be difficult to implement. It is noticeable at rehearsals that choreographers and artistic directors tend to view the performance from seats in the middle of the front stalls. My remedy would be to sponsor a Private Member's Bill in Parliament. The Bill would require that during Dress Rehearsals and also First Nights, the choreographer, the artistic director and everybody else with artistic responsibility for the performance should be chained to the seats at the very back of the furthest and highest part of the auditorium. They might then understand the frustration experienced by the rest of us at our inability to see what is happening on stage. Punishment for failure to comply would again involve being chained to seats, but at a performance of *Un Peu de Tendress...*, and this time it would be in the front row of the stalls where they could more conveniently be molested by naked dancers.

Book Now for Dick Wittington 2012

Every year for the past 10 years, a small party of Vic-Wells members attend the pantomime presented at the Theatre Royal, Bath. Tickets are being booked for the 2pm matinee on Wednesday 18 January 2012. We are generally given seats in the stalls which cost £15 per person. For those who might wish to join us, but do not have a car, there is a half hourly train service from Paddington to Bath Spa which takes about 2 hours. We usually have lunch before the matinee and, after the show, Chris Harris (Sarah the Cook in the pantomime!) entertains us to tea in the theatre bar before we depart for the journey home. This is always a very popular day out so book your tickets now!

Send a £15 cheque (payable to Mary-Jane Burcher) enclosing a SAE to Mary-Jane Burcher, Flat 6, Oak House, 6 Carlton Drive, Putney, London SW15 2BZ

“Subsidised coarseness” at Sadler’s Wells?

Quentin Letts argues that 21st century Western civilisation is in the final twitches of decadent collapse

Luke Jennings, dance critic of *The Observer*, should sue Sadler’s Well’s Theatre for assault. He was watching an avant-garde show called *Un Peu De Tendresse Bordel De Merde*. Naked male dancers ran into the stalls, rubbed their crotches in people’s faces, parted their buttocks within inches of women’s noses and generally behaved like apes.

There is a line between artistic shock and shocking art. The thuggishly nude show at Sadler’s Wells proceeded to cross it. One of the dancers, spotting Mr Jennings, tried to steal his pen and notepad. Mr Jennings gripped tight to them. The dancer, outraged that someone was declining to kowtow to all this nudist japery, retaliated by pulling off *The Observer* man’s glasses and spitting on them gobbily. He handed them back ‘with a sneer’ (and a slimy smear) before returning to the stage, his pleased-with-itself sausage and veg flapping around for all to see.

Groan! It’s naked-art-scandal time again. Trivial? In some ways, but not for the first time, communal respectability is being challenged by insistent, egomaniacal coarseness. That is worth our attention. Once again a stage-subsidised theatre – Sadler’s Wells receives £2.5 million of our tax money a year – is securing itself some attention by flashing the flesh.

Dumb down, dirty up, crassify, despoil the bourgeois aesthetic: it is the same thinking that shortly before the Bolshevik revolution saw the Russian futurists shout the anti-traditional slogan: “Throw Pushkin and Tolstoy overboard from the steamship of modernity! Sometimes stage nudity is nothing more than ‘celebrity gets kit off’, as happened when Anna Friel briefly disrobed in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* in 2009, and Daniel Radcliffe flashed his Harry Potters in *Equus* in 2007.

Greater eroticism can be obtained by a performer retaining a strand or two of clothing. Ask the poor punters at Sadler’s Wells if they were aroused by those clowns holding up their nether regions like squaddies submitting their rifle barrels for inspection by the sergeant-major. It’s enough to put one right off one’s bag of Revels. “Chocolate drop, dear?” Complaining about it just gives them more publicity but there is a serious side to this. Anger is justified because this sort of trashing of manners represents an assault on our shared values. Only when we cease to care will the barbarians have won.

“There is a line between artistic shock and shocking art”

You can tell a lot about a society from what it holds dearest in art. What are its ideals of line, word, movement and sound? These inform you about that society’s esteem for order, its approach to love, its notions of beauty. On this basis, 21st-century Western civilisation is in the final twitches of decadent collapse.

The Sadler’s Wells show, choreographed by Dave St-Pierre, a Canadian, had more nudity than the beaches of Mykonos. The artistic theme of *Un Peu de Tendresse*, apparently, is that human sexuality is less important than emotion. Sadler’s Wells’ website lets the side down, however, by spelling it ‘*Un Pea de tendresse*.’

Luke Jennings was not the only critic who was unimpressed. *The Independent on Sunday*, watching “the bearded bimbos gleefully rubbing their bottoms against any thing that doesn’t resist”, and a scene in which a knickerless woman straddles a chocolate cake, found it “an often tediously barbaric show”. *The Telegraph* spoke of “a gimmicky barrage of genitals”.

For me, the nudity was of secondary concern to the violence meted out to Mr Jennings. Male dancers are often scantily clad – although when they wear tights their crown jewels don’t jiggle like the Titanic’s chandeliers. While you could argue that the stage scenes of massed nudity at Sadler’s Wells had a certain artistic ambition, all that changed when the dancers crossed into the auditorium and became carried away in their aggressive fervour. This is what can happen when the disciplines of artistic comportment are smashed.

We subsidise places such as Sadler’s Wells to be citadels of art. ‘*Un peu*’ might have been OK on the fringe, but it was ‘*de trop*’ at such a prized venue.

No one wants to return to the pre-1968 days when the Lord Chamberlain could censor what appeared. Nudity has its time and place on stage, although generally art is far more affecting when an actor bares himself emotionally. But are we not, as a Big Society, entitled to ask theatres that receive taxpayer’s money to recognise the part they play in moulding public morality?

The very phrase ‘public morality’ may be one that the Left dislikes. It may be something our defamation judges want to destroy with their injunctions. But without a code or recognised manners and, yes, morals without discretion and respect and a sense of beauty, we might as well chuck in the whole thing and hand the keys of the Tower of London to Al Qaeda.

This article was first published in The Daily Mail.



Quentin Letts

Far from Islington?

Richard Reavill visits the Theatre du Chatelet

Well, not that far if you consider the ten minutes required to get from the Angel to St. Pancras, the two and a quarter hours by Eurostar to Paris (Gare du Nord), and the ten minutes by Metro which it takes to get to the Theatre du Chatelet. During the closure of the Royal Opera House, a friend took the Eurostar one Saturday morning, attended the matinee at the Opera in the afternoon, and returned to London in the evening. He maintained that it cost in total no more than a top price seat at Covent Garden.

The Chatelet Theatre is directed by Jean-Luc Choplin, who was once the Director at the Wells and I wanted to look at a couple of performances by the Miami City Ballet. Regional ballet companies in the USA can be of variable standard. I recall on a visit to Tucson many years ago enquiring the standard of a small company performing there. "On what basis?" asked my informant. "How about a 0 – 10 scale", I suggested. "Minus 1" she replied.

Not so the Miami company, who performed to a high standard, and filled the Chatelet Theatre for 17 shows in three weeks. True, there was no competition in late July from the Ballet de l'Opera. The Chatelet Theatre, built in 1862, is an opera house type of theatre with the horseshoe shape of Covent Garden. It has the capacity of the Coliseum in London, but seriously lacks that theatre's good sight-lines. Indeed, some customers deserted their seats and relocated on the gangway steps, showing a splendid and typically French disregard of inconvenient safety regulations.

The Miami company is directed by Edward Villella, one-time principal dancer with New York City Ballet, and now a youthful 75. In many respects the Miami City Ballet is a smaller replica of the New York company. The repertory is heavy in works by George Balanchine, and eight were given in Paris, with two by Jerome Robbins, two by Twyla Tharp, and one each by Paul Taylor and Christopher Wheeldon. Thus, the work presented in Paris was all 'made in America', and all by American choreographers with the exception of Wheeldon. The triple and quadruple bills were made up in the way of NYCB, with different combinations for each performance.

I felt the dancers fared better in the lighter Balanchine works, for example *Square Dance*, than in *Theme and Variations* and *Ballet Imperial*. The two latter works are Balanchine's tribute to his Russian heritage, and getting the style right is quite difficult. Also, both works need a real ballerina and a genuine premier danseur, a dancer with high technical standards is not enough. *Ballet Imperial* perhaps should have been presented as *Tchaikovsky Second Piano Concerto*, since this was the title used by NYCB, and the version presented was the NYCB version, rather than the Royal Ballet version. My feeling is that these two ballets are best done by the Royal Ballet or the Maryinsky, who have assimilated the style from hundreds of performances of *Sleeping Beauty*.

Style was spot-on *In the Upper Room*, looseness balanced with good control in Tharp's very smoke-filled room. The company also showed to advantage in both the Robbins works given at the performances which I attended: *Afternoon of a Faun* and *In the Night*. The latter received a quite excellent performance, the last pas-de-deux in particular being superbly danced. The Wheeldon piece started in darkness, ended in darkness, and most of the middle was shrouded in murk. What little I could see of the dance was quite interesting!

So why tell Vic-Wells members about the Miami City Ballet? They did well in Paris, and I felt that they would do well in London. It was a pity that the company could not have dropped in at the Wells on the way to or from Paris. Perhaps if they decide to tour to Europe again around this time next year, a slot could be found for them in the Sadler's Wells schedule.

On returning to London, I attended the ENB programme of ballets by Roland Petit at the Coliseum. So, from American ballets in Paris to French ballets in London, who says dance is not an international art-form?



Miami City Ballet -

Photo: Vic Wells
In the Upper Room

Theatre Reviews

by Tim Rooke

Singing in the Rain – Chichester Festival Theatre

This is possibly the greatest Hollywood musical of them all and it translated into a great stage show. Having seen two other extremely good productions I settled back to be entertained and onto the stage burst the great Adam Cooper who knocked the other two exponents of Don Lockwood into a cocked hat. Adam dances and sings to perfection, evincing memories of Gene Kelly and ably abetted by Scarlett Strallen as his love interest Kathy. Not quite as convincing as Debbie Reynolds but still good. Katherine Kingsley was a pure delight as 'the baddie' Lina Lemont with just the right amount of bitchiness and terrible accent as the silent screen vamp who cannot make the transition to talking pictures. For me the weakest link was Damen Crossley who plays Cosmo. The big title number as expected brought the house down - as well as giving some of the front house patrons a unexpected shower.



Adam Cooper

The production cannot rival the film, and did not try to, but it was a great performance which really deserves a West End run.

Richard III – Old Vic

As the play opened I thought, "Oh no, not another ghastly production that should have been on the ENO Stage at the Coliseum. Richard is wearing a cheap paper hat – as in out of a Christmas cracker – should I go home now or suffer to the interval?"

Oh me of little faith! I should have had more faith in Sam Mendes. After the first blackout the production moved up to second gear and, occasionally, reached top gear. Kevin Spacey surpassed his Richard II. For me, this was one of the great Richard IIIs. How Mr Spacey will fair over the next six month tour, wearing what looked like a very painful contraption, only time will tell.

What a pity that not all of the cast were of his calibre. The Queens Margaret and Elizabeth (Gemma Jones and Haydn Gwynne) were Mr Spacey's equal. The rest offered various degrees of competence with a very, I thought, poor Richmond.



Tristan Sturrock

Treasure Island – Bristol Old Vic (outdoors)

Fortunately it was a glorious day and I saw this perennial favourite staged outside Bristol Old Vic complete with the good ship Hispaniola and in the background the Llandogan Trew which was one of Robert Louis Stevenson's favourite watering holes (and I have to admit to sinking the odd noggin or three there myself).

The cast acquitted themselves in great form with a mixture of new talent (Jonny Weldon making a memorable Jim Hawkins) and old hand Tristan Sturrock as an energetic and evil looking Long John Silver.

Adding further colour to this production were local seagulls flying overhead making their raucous calls. The small cast doubled and tripled up in various roles. This show will open at the Vaudeville in mid December. I urge you to see it.

Please note that in our last issue, Mary-Jane Burcher reviewed *End Of the Rainbow*. The tour of this musical will be at the Richmond Theatre from Mon 21st to Sat 26th November 2011.

WHAT'S ON

Sadler's Wells

Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4TN

0844 871 0090

www.sadlerswells.com

Main Theatre

- 4 - 8 October Akram Khan Company - *DESH*
10 - 11 October Emanuel Gat Dance - *Brilliant Corners*
13 - 15 October Beijing Dance Theater - *Haze*
18 - 22 October Birmingham Royal Ballet - *La Fille mal Gardée & Autumn Glory*
24 - 25 October Fabulous Beast & Liam Ó Maonlaí - *Rian*
28 - 30 October Clod Ensemble - *An Anatomie in Four Quarters*
3 - 4 Nov. Scottish Ballet - *Double Bill*
9 - 12 Nov. Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan - *White*
15 - 19 Nov. Rambert Dance Company - *Seven for a secret, never to be told*
21 - 22 Nov. Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Jérôme Bel & Ictus - *3Abschied*
1 - 3 December Turnage | McGregor | Wallinger - *UNDANCE*
6 Dec. - 22 Jan. New Adventures - *Matthew Bourne's Nutcracker*



BRB -
Autumn Glory

Lilian Baylis Studio

- 27 Sept. - 1 Oct. Quarantine - *Entitled*
21 - 23 Oct. Champloo Dance Company - *White Caps*
15 - 16 Nov. TAO Dance Theatre - *2 & Weight x 3*
13 - 31 Dec. Travelling Light & Bristol Old Vic - *BOING!*

Peacock Theatre

Portugal Street, Kingsway, London WC2A 2HT

- 14 - 15 October Shaun Parker & Company - *Happy as Larry*
20 Oct. - 19 Nov. ZooNation Dance Company - *Some Like It Hip Hop*
30 Nov. - 8 Jan. Birmingham Repertory Theatre - *The Snowman*



Matthew Bourne's Nutcracker

Old Vic Theatre

0870 060 6628

Waterloo Road, London SE1 8NB

www.oldvictheatre.com

17 Sep. - 26 Nov. *The Playboy Of The Western World*

Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Vic-Wells Association will take place on **Monday, November 28th 2011 promptly at 7pm** in the Kahn Lecture Theatre at Sadler's Wells (ask at the stage door for directions).
As usual, it is hoped that a guest speaker will complete the evening's proceedings.

The Vic-Wells Association

Founded in 1923 by Lilian Baylis CH

Chairman:

Mr. James Ranger
Cromer Cottage
Cromer, Stevenage
Herts SG2 7QA
0143 886 1318
jim@jranger.com

Secretary:

Dr. Richard Reavill
7 Nuns Acre
Goring, Reading
Berkshire RG8 9BE
0149 187 2574
vicwells@tiscali.co.uk

Treasurer:

Mr. Neville C Taylor
Flat 1
128 Gloucester Terrace
London W2 6HP
0207 262 5898
neville.taylor@homecall.co.uk

Social Secretary:

Ms Kirsten A Sheridan
626 London Road
Ditton, Aylesford
Kent ME20 6BX
01732 842433
isishestia@yahoo.com

Membership Secretary:

Professor Liz Schafer
372 Stroude Road
Virginia Water
Surrey GU25 4DB
0134 484 2836
e.schafer@rhul.ac.uk

Broadsheet Editor:

Mrs Marjory Agha
18 Pembroke Road
Kensington
London W8 6NT
0774 684 7126
marjory_gha@hotmail.co.uk

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