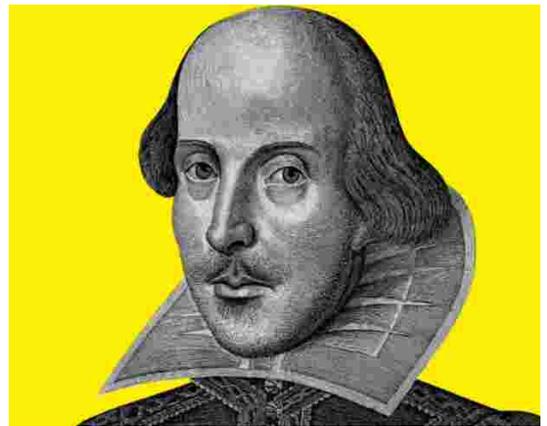


Out and About with the Vic-Wells Shakespeare at the British Museum



There will be a Vic-Wells visit to the British Museum's current exhibition *Shakespeare: staging the world* on Monday, 1st October 2012.

The exhibition provides a new insight into the emerging role of London as a world city four hundred years ago, interpreted through the innovative perspective of Shakespeare's plays - and features over 190 objects. The exhibition creates a unique dialogue between these objects drawn from the museum's collection. Great paintings, rare manuscripts, maps, drawings, armour, coins and other intriguing objects are all examined through the lens of Shakespeare's plays.



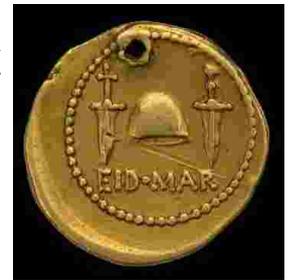
Shakespeare: staging the world also explores the theatre-going experience at the time. The newly built playhouses were situated in the suburbs:

Bankside was an area with a dangerous and notorious reputation. The theatres needed to attract large numbers of playgoers and so performances had to appeal to a wide spectrum of society, from groundlings to courtiers. Objects excavated from the sites of the Globe and Rose theatres, such as a sucket fork for sweetmeats and the skull of a bear, illustrate the Southwark of Shakespeare's day, the cultural world inhabited by the playhouse, which rubbed shoulders with bear-baiting arenas as well as brothels and pubs.



The Lyte Jewel

The British Museum has produced, working with the Royal Shakespeare Company, a series of new digital interventions which appear throughout the exhibition, allowing visitors to encounter Shakespeare's words and characters alongside the objects on display. These digital interventions include Harriet Walter as Cleopatra, Sir Antony Sher as Shylock, Sir Ian McKellan as Prospero and Paterson Joseph as Brutus holding the Ides of March coin on display in the exhibition nearby. This gold aureus was commissioned by Brutus shortly after the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC; a plot in which he was a key figure and the subject of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.



Ides of March coin, 43-42 BC

If you wish to attend please contact Elizabeth Schafer - contact details on the back page.

Members will need to book their own tickets and the admission charge is £14. Details of the exhibition and tickets can be booked online at www.britishmuseum.org or 0207323 8181. Vic-Wells members will meet at 2pm at 11 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3RF (nearest tube stations - Tottenham Court Road or Russell Square). Please report to reception and you will be directed to the ground floor meeting room where a discussion of the exhibition will be led by Professor Elizabeth Schafer of the Drama Department, Royal Holloway, University of London. If you cannot join our visit, the exhibition is open until 25th November 2012.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Vic-Wells Association will take place on **Monday, November 19th 2012 promptly at 7pm** at Sadler's Wells (ask at the stage door for directions to the venue).

As usual, it is hoped that a guest speaker will complete the evening's proceedings.

Who are the Guardians?

Report by Richard Reavill

Readers will recall, (I hope), my piece called “*Who Guards the Guardians?*” in the previous *Broadsheet*. This examined the acrimonious departure of Ashley Page from the Artistic Directorship of Scottish Ballet, and the sudden and unexplained resignation of Wayne Eagling as Artistic Director of English National Ballet (ENB). It also noted some of the less successful decisions of the boards of dance companies, the “Guardians” of dance in the UK, over the past decade. It then asked, and promised to attempt to answer, “Who are the Guardians?” Also, how are they chosen, who chooses them, and are the right people chosen?

I did not, at the initial stages of this investigation, know the answer to these questions, but “I know a man who does”. That man is our Chairman, James Ranger, who for many years was on the Boards of the Sadler’s Wells Theatre, as Vice Chairman and later Chairman for much of that time. There are two Boards: The Governors of the Sadler’s Wells Foundation, whose function is to look after the long-term welfare of the theatre and to see that the policies implicit in its constitution are followed; and the Board of Directors of the Sadler’s Wells Trust Ltd, who are responsible for the operation of the theatre. In particular, this includes the appointment of the Chief Executive and the Artistic Director, and the monitoring of the performance of those individuals and the financial and artistic performance of the theatre. The Royal Opera House has a similar binary system, with a Board of Trustees for the theatre, and a Board of Governors for the Royal Ballet, though the functions are not quite the same, as the theatre is shared with the Royal Opera.



James Ranger

Head-hunting

James attends a wide variety of dance performances, both at the Wells and elsewhere. This extends even beyond the call of duty, for example to Peter Schaufuss’ dreadful recent London production of *Swan Lake*, regarded by many as the global worst ever! Jim has in the past been much involved with the presentation of dance performances of various kinds. However, his most important skill, and probably the one that made him sought-after by Sadler’s Wells, was his experience as a “head-hunter”, a consultant who seeks out and selects recruits for high-level posts in commercial companies and other major organizations. He was thus singularly well equipped for duties as a director, and particularly as Chairman, as new directors are recruited by word of mouth. When a vacancy occurs for a Director, Board members might suggest a suitable individual, or the Chairman might seek someone with particular skills. If, for example, the theatre administration was weak on marketing, a director expert in that field could give specialist advice at no cost. Currently, with so much emphasis on raising financial support, directors able to raise funds are welcome. This is a step towards the system in the USA, where directors of Arts organizations are selected primarily for their ability to generate sponsorship, much of it from their own pockets.



A scene from Peter Schaufuss’ “dreadful” recent production of *Swan Lake*

The advantage of this method of recruitment is that it is simple, and can generate compatible board members. Its disadvantage is that it will operate using the “old boy net”, and boards will tend to replicate their own style, which is perhaps unhelpful when a change of direction is needed. It is vulnerable to the criticism of being a “self-perpetuating oligarchy” as deplored by student debating societies. Let us identify the current directors of some dance organizations in the UK.

The great and the good?

The Royal Opera House Board of Trustees lists thirteen members, and includes one countess, one baroness, 3 knights, and 2 dames. Thus the majority of the board are titled, so the great are well represented. The good may also be present on the Board, but is there any representation with knowledge of opera or ballet? One board member is Sir Nicholas Hytner, director of the National Theatre, who will certainly bring useful experience of operating a major subsidised theatre complex.

*“Who chooses the Guardians
and are the right people chosen?”*

For the Royal Ballet Board, the dame count is well above average (three of the fourteen members), but relevant representation is more apparent. Four board members are ex-principal dancers of the Royal Ballet (RB) companies. Two others are ex-RB dancers, and another is a one-time manager of the company. Director Dame Vivien Duffield is a major patron of the ROH who was responsible for finding over £100 million for the ROH redevelopment in the late 1990s, and so could be said to be a most appropriate representative of the philanthropists.

Birmingham Royal Ballet Board includes two councillors, presumably there to look after the substantial financial contribution of the Birmingham City Council, (about £1 million in 2011), and the current Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund. Three directors have a dance background, and two are also members of the RB board. The Chairman is an ex vice-Principal of Birmingham University, other directors include the CEO of a pub chain, who is also a sponsor; an ex-police officer; a book company MD; the BBC News arts correspondent; a music publisher; and a culture and energy management consultant.

The eleven members of the English National Ballet Board (ENB) include one lawyer; one titled Italian lady; a theatre chain director; the chairman of ENB School; two chairwomen of trusts/foundations; and five businessmen/ women and investment bankers. Many are also sponsors of ENB in various ways. There is no information on the ENB website about the background of their directors.

Scottish Ballet

The members of the Board of Scottish Ballet are given great prominence on the web-site of that company. Their names and their backgrounds precede all other information on the site, even the details of the performances and of the dancers. Much is made of the breadth of experience which they bring to the party, though its relevance is less clear. The directors are: an ex-NHS senior executive; a whiskey distiller; a banker; a co-founder of Radio/TV production company; an ex-arts administrator; an ex-CEO of the Scottish Prison Service; an accountant; a lawyer; a designer of fabrics and wallpapers; the head of School of Architecture and Design at the University of Belfast; a retired naval officer; and the CEO of Scottish Ballet. It is notable that the Chief Executive of Scottish Ballet is on the Board, but the Artistic Director is not. Scottish Ballet is the only dance company to have its CEO on the Board.

So perhaps the only conclusion that can be made about the directors of dance companies is that they have a very wide background of experience. The information presented by the companies does not indicate what connection they might have with the dance world, or what particular expertise they bring to help its activities. They no doubt make a valuable contribution, and this might be in areas quite divorced from dance, but critical to it, for example, fund raising. As a research project, I will be looking further into the contribution which the current directors make. But before that, there is another question: are the right people chosen, and is the method of choice valid? For that, see part three of this serial in the next *Broadsheet*.

Lilian Baylis and Vernon Cooper

by Elizabeth Schafer

Last year Patrick Baylis, who is related to Lilian Baylis, gave me a collection of letters written by Baylis to the Old Vic Opera singer Vernon Cooper. The letters offer a glimpse of what life was like for opera singers at the Old Vic in the 1920s.

Vernon Cooper joined the opera chorus in July 1923 and received an introductory letter spelling out terms and conditions. He is offered expenses of one guinea a week for two opera performances while *'Two shillings and sixpence will be deducted if you are absent from a rehearsal and five shillings if absent from a performance through illness or any other cause.'* To get a sense of what this meant financially I consulted the National Archives currency converter which revealed the equivalent of one guinea then was around £30.

Cooper had a day job around which he fitted his engagements at the Old Vic and in one letter Baylis asks him to take his holiday at a specific time so that he can sing for her company when they visit Oxford for a week. Cooper quickly moved on from chorus work; in November 1923 Baylis is asking Cooper to play *"the Count in Figaro, and Commendatore in Don Giovanni."* By April 1924 Cooper has been roped into taking the beginners' rehearsals for pay of £3 a week as well as understudying several major roles.



"The letters have calculations sketched out on the back as if Cooper is trying to work out how much money Lilian Baylis is offering"

A year later Cooper felt he was being asked to do too much; in July 1925 Baylis apologises for making him *"entirely responsible"* for *"the coaching of the opera chorus"* when his own training was limited, but she feels the rates she is offering are good *"when, with the exception of the orchestral rehearsals on Tuesday mornings, your ordinary business hours are not interrupted."* I am left wondering when Cooper ever saw his wife and daughter (whom Baylis calls *"the wee girl"*). At this point Baylis agrees to Cooper concentrating on principal parts; her rates for these are *"£3 for two performances, and £1 for a matinee."* By June 1926 Baylis is wishing Cooper would come back to the Old Vic: *"I suppose you are too busy for the idea of working here regularly again to appeal to you? I would like it if it could be arranged."* She is also asking him to let her know if he discovers a *"clever light tenor comedian"* or *"a real bass"* or a *"tenor chorister."* Cooper was connected with the Croydon Operatic Society at this time.

There is only one letter in the collection from Vernon Cooper to Baylis. He writes from his home in Upper Norwood and asks for £2 a performance for principal parts and *"half that sum for the smaller roles"* and *"if it would be of any assistance to you I should be quite prepared to give a hand with my piano playing."* Many of the letters have several calculations sketched out on the back as if Cooper is trying to work out how much money Baylis is actually offering.

Cooper carried on singing at the Old Vic until 1931 even though *"rehearsals have to be dovetailed with your business."* He responds to some dramatic appeals: can Cooper do the King in *Lohengrin* as *"Franklyn Kelsey has been poisoned by his anthracite stove, and must cancel all work for two weeks?"* But by June 1930 Baylis is hoping to establish *"the nucleus of a permanent company"* for the opening of Sadler's Wells and so she can no longer afford – she says – to carry on relying on valiant part timers like Cooper.

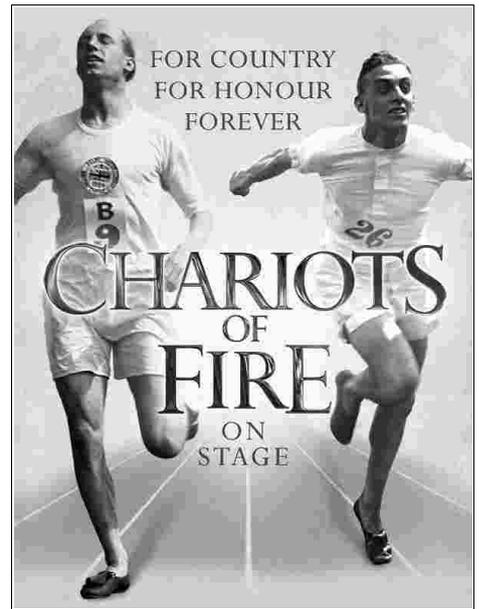
Chariots of Fire

Reviewed by Joyce Parsons

The play *Chariots of Fire* was an original film production of 1981 directed by Hugh Hudson who co-produced the adaptation written by the playwright Mike Bartlett. It was first performed at the Hampstead Theatre directed by Edward Hall, the son of Sir Peter Hall, who now runs the Rose Theatre in Kingston.

Adapting it for the theatre was partly inspired by the 2012 summer Olympics and tells the true story of two British runners competing at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris. Eric Liddell is a devout Scottish Christian, the son of missionaries to China, who runs for the glory of God. He is played by Jack Lowden. Harold Abrahams is the son of an immigrant Lithuanian Jew studying at Cambridge University, who runs to overcome prejudice, and is admirably played by James McArdle. Both live for the purity and honour of running and prevail in the face of enormous odds.

The event was originally planned to take place on a Sunday, a day on which Eric Liddell refused to run on principle, despite the request of no less personage than the Prince of Wales himself. Jack Lowden gives a memorable performance as Liddell and Vic-Wells Vice-President Nicholas Grace plays the Duke of Sutherland.



“The theatre was transformed into a stadium-like space with the audience sitting around a running track”

The interesting staging transformed the theatre into a stadium-like space, so that we the audience experienced sitting around a running track. It included a double-revolving stage on which the actors appeared to run in slow motion in white singlets and shorts. It was an impressive sight. One of the most moving impressions came from the haunting music from the original film score written by

Vangelis who also created several pieces of music for the production. It was an exceptional piece of staging, full of drama and action, thoroughly enjoyed by all who were present.

Chariots of Fire is now on at the Gielgud Theatre until 10th November 2012

Democracy

Reviewed by Tim Rooke



Patrick Drury with Aiden McArdle in *Democracy*

A depressingly small audience was in the Old Vic for this less than first class piece by Michael Frayn.

Paul Miller's production took this play to about as far as it could go but, coming after the same author's *Noises Off*, it was small beer. Patrick Drury in the role of Willy Brandt struggling (like a certain British PM today) to keep his coalition government together, gave a first rate performance. So too did Aiden McArdle as the spy Gunter Guillaume.

I have previously seen this play performed at the NT with the great Roger Allam playing Brandt. It didn't make a great impression on me then and I think this one will also fade from my memory very quickly. However the Old Vic cast, production and direction were of the high standard we expect.

Leo Kersley, dancer and teacher

born 30 May 1920 - died 3 July 2012



Leo Kersley, a long standing member of the Vic-Wells Association, died recently and several obituaries noted his significant achievements: he was a founder member of the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet; he established the Harlow Ballet School in Essex with his wife Janet Sinclair and together they wrote *A Dictionary of Ballet Terms*. But nobody said anything about the twinkle in Leo's eye. So I thought the Vic-Wells should produce its own obituary to salute a very special member.

Leo really believed in the Vic-Wells Association, which he supported in many different ways until ill health prevented him from attending meetings. For example, he gave a fascinating talk at an AGM a couple of years ago which was very typical of his style; full of information, and entertaining anecdotes spiced with a touch of gossip. But I first met Leo because I was researching the life of Lilian Baylis; Leo knew 'Miss Baylis' and credited her with starting his career. Baylis used to talk to Leo when he was queuing for a gallery seat at Sadler's Wells and she insisted he must become a dancer. Because at that time there were no boys at the Vic-Wells Ballet School, Leo went off to train with Rambert

and Leo claimed that it was then that Baylis decided she must stop missing out on good boy dancers and get them admitted to the Vic-Wells School as soon as possible.

Leo had a phenomenal memory particularly for dates and was always clear when we were talking about The Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet and The Sadler's Wells Opera Ballet, something which he had to guide me through fairly carefully. When he talked about the history of the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells, however, Leo still felt angry about the way that Joan Cross was treated at Covent Garden after the war, and he was still disgusted by the way cast members refused to perform in the premiere of *Peter Grimes* unless Cross resigned from running the company, which she did. He also thought that Joan Cross should have been made a Dame but that her unconventional domestic arrangements probably put a stop to that.

Vic-Wells Chairman James Ranger adds, 'My memory of Leo was when he choreographed a work for the Sunday Ballet Club, which I had founded to present new ballets in West End Theatres belonging to the Albery family on Sunday evenings. Leo's work was a splendid solo for himself to the music of 'The Lark Ascending'. It was performed in June 1960 in the Lyric Theatre as part of a varied programme and was very well received. Leo was a remarkable dancer, choreographer and teacher as well as being a delightful person. We shall all miss him'.

CBE for Alistair Spalding in Queen's Birthday Honours 2012

A number of people in the fields of dance, drama and music appeared in the Honours List. Michael Boyd, Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, and Kenneth Branagh, Actor, both received appointments as Knights Bachelor (Knighthoods) for services to drama. Alistair Spalding, Chief Executive and Artistic Director, Sadler's Wells was awarded a CBE for services to dance. For services to drama, a CBE also went to Vikki Heywood, Executive Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Michael Nunn and William Trevitt, co-founders of the Ballet Boyz, and Brenda May Last, dancer and teacher, both received an OBE for services to dance. For services to music, OBE's went to Edward Gardner, Music Director of ENO and to Elaine Padmore, lately Director of Opera at the ROH.

Ballet... and beyond... at Sadler's Wells

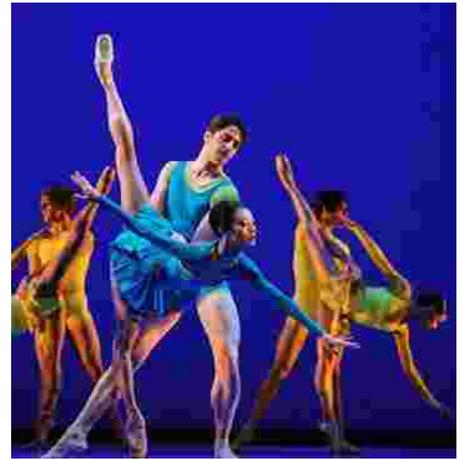
San Francisco Ballet are one of the oldest ballet companies in America. Nearly 80 years on from being founded in 1933, they kick off the Sadler's Wells autumn season in style with three stunning programmes featuring works by some of the world's top choreographers. A particular highlight of the visit will be Programme C which features Mark Morris' *Beaux* performed by nine male dancers, Yuri Possokhov's *Classical Symphony* set to Prokofiev's score of the same name, Possokhov's *RAkU* inspired by the burning of Kyoto's Golden Pavilion, and Christopher Wheeldon's *Within the Golden Hour* which is filled with luscious imagery.

Over at the Peacock Theatre, ZooNation's highly praised *Some Like It Hip Hop*, directed by Kate Prince gets ready to entertain London audiences before heading off on a UK tour.

Sasha Waltz has been creating spectacular cross-disciplined dance works for nearly two decades and is often considered heir apparent to Pina Bausch in world dance theatre. Now Waltz and guests return to Sadler's Wells for the first time since 2007 with their full length piece *Continu*, inspired by projects designed for two museum openings and developed for 24 dancers around Edgar Varese's dramatic symphony. And from New York the Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet will be showing off powerfully athletic dancers who were described by *The New York Times* as, "a team of wonderful performers, always impressive in their articulation and intensity".

Rambert Dance Company's autumn visit to Sadler's Wells features work from Irish choreographer Marguerite Donlon for the first time with *Labyrinth of Love*, a heartbreakingly beautiful piece accompanied by a live soprano.

In October there will be visits from the Birmingham Royal Ballet and the Russell Maliphant Company.



San Francisco Ballet
in Wheeldon's *Number Nine*

Ibsen's Hedda Gabler at the Old Vic

by Lizzie Tantom

Anna Mackmin returns to The Old Vic to direct Sheridan Smith in a major new production of Ibsen's masterpiece *Hedda Gabler*. Brian Friel's adaptation of this seminal work reveals a play as fresh and shocking as when it was originally written. Mackmin says of the production, "*Hedda Gabler* is my *do-before-I-die* piece. Ibsen's radical and explosive classic has been beautifully translated by Brian Friel. I'm delighted to be discovering how unexpectedly funny and potentially moving it can be."

Played out swiftly over 24 hours, Ibsen's startlingly resonant play is a thrilling portrayal of the free-spirited Hedda Gabler (Sheridan Smith). Railing against a life of crippling convention Hedda Gabler cuts through the lives of everyone in her orbit. Sheridan Smith has carved out a reputation for being one of Britain's finest young stage stars having won the Olivier and Evening Standard Best Actress awards for her performance in Trevor Nunn's production of *Flare Path* and the Olivier Best Actress award for *Legally Blonde*.



Sheridan Smith in *Legally Blonde*

Brian Friel is one of Ireland's most prolific and distinguished playwrights, his plays include *Translations*, *Aristocrats*, and *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* and his adaptations include Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* and *Three Sisters*.

Anna Mackmin is returning to The Old Vic after her recent production of Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* and Brian Friel's modern classic *Dancing At Lughnasa*. *Hedda Gabler* runs until 10th November 2012.

And coming soon to the Old Vic on 20th November 2012 is *Kiss Me, Kate*. Trevor Nunn returns to The Old Vic to direct this dazzling, Tony Award-winning, Broadway classic with music and lyrics by Cole Porter. The cast of *Kiss Me, Kate* includes Alex Bourne, David Burt, Adam Garcia, Clive Rowe and Hannah Waddingham, with choreography by Stephen Mear.

Dates and booking details for the above performances are in the *What's On* section on Page 8.

REHEARSALS AT SADLER'S WELLS - AUTUMN 2012

Happily there are two confirmed rehearsals in September but Sadler's Wells staff rarely know more than a few days in advance whether companies will be holding a dress rehearsal at all and whether they would welcome our Members to attend. Please check nearer the time with Richard Reavill (Phone: 01491 872574) who will confirm date and time if the rehearsal is going ahead. He will inform automatically all those Members who are on the email list but it would be helpful if you would reply if you are coming. If you have an email address but are not on Richard's list please register on vicwells@tiscali.co.uk. Please pay £5 to the Committee member present and arrive no later than 15 minutes before the rehearsal is due to start. Here are confirmed and possible rehearsals to be confirmed (tbc):

Wednesday 19th September, 1.15 - 4 pm : San Francisco Ballet

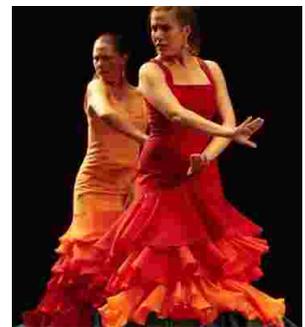
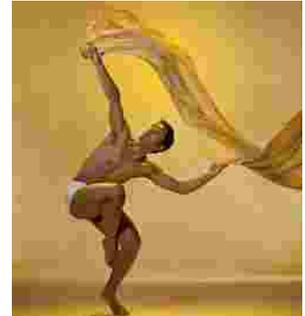


What's on

Sadler's Wells, Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4TN Phone: 0844 871 0090

Main Theatre ** UK Premieres

- 14 - 23 Sep. San Francisco Ballet (3 programmes)
28 - 30 Sep. Sasha Waltz & Guests - *Continu* **
02 - 09 Oct. Akram Khan Company - *DESH*
11 - 13 Oct. Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet - *Mixed Bill* **
16 - 20 Oct. Rambert Dance Company - *Featuring Labyrinth of Love* ➡
23 - 27 Oct. Birmingham Royal Ballet - (2 programmes)
29 - 31 Oct. Russell Maliphant Company - *The Rodin Project*
02 - 04 Nov. Philippe Decouflé Company DCA - *Panorama*
05 - 09 Nov. Rosas - *En Attendant / Cesena* **
12 - 13 Nov. Jasmin Vardimon Company - *FREEDOM*
15 - 16 Nov. Alias - *Sideways Rain* **
23 Nov - 1 Dec Paco Peña Flamenco Dance Company - *Quimeras* ➡
19 - 21 Nov. Batsheva Ensemble - *Deca Dance*
04 Dec - 26 Jan New Adventures - *Matthew Bourne's Sleeping Beauty*
Peacock Theatre, Portugal Street, Kingsway, London WC2A 2HT
20 Sep - 13 Oct Zoo Nation Dance Company - *Some Like It Hip Hop*
28 Nov - 6 Jan Birmingham Repertory Theatre - *The Snowman*



Old Vic Theatre

www.oldvictheatre.com

Waterloo Road, London SE1 8NB

0870 060 6628

➡ 5 September - 10 November Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*

20 November - 3 March 2013 Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate* ➡



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Founded in 1923 by Lilian Baylis CH

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