

## The Vic-Wells' 12<sup>th</sup> Night Party 2014

Report by Richard Reavill



Dame Beryl Grey

The 2014 *Twelfth Night* Party was held at the Old Vic Theatre in January. It coincided with an unprecedented event: the cancellation of both the matinee and evening performances of *Fortune's Fool*, due to the illness of both the leading actor and his understudy.

However, the actor John McAndrew came in specially to represent the cast. And our guest of honour was the legendary principal Ballerina, Dame Beryl Grey, who gave a fascinating account of her early experiences with the Sadler's Wells (now Royal) Ballet. Her achievements there were extraordinary, particularly dancing the roles of Odette and Odile in the full *Swan Lake* at the age of 15. Both before and after performing the historic ceremony of cutting the Twelfth Night cake, she chatted with many Vic-Wells members. Many senior members had vivid memories of her performances, and one member (me!) was able to thank her, (very belatedly), for her performance as Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty*. It was 60 years ago - I was about 13 - and it was my introduction to ballet, and an experience never to be forgotten.

Our Vice-President, Nickolas Grace, commented, "Dame Beryl Grey's beauty and serenity spread gently through the room as she shared a few memories with her spellbound audience. It was glorious to reflect that, through her, the first British ballerina to dance in Russia, we were within only two degrees of separation from the Kirov and Bolshoi Ballets of 1957! What a thrill to have her with the Vic-Wells Association at Old Vic!"

The superb cake was baked by Yvonne Hickman and our

## Shakespeare Birthday Party

Our annual Party will be held at the Old Vic on  
Saturday, 26th April 2014 from 5.00pm to 6.30pm  
in the second circle bar area.

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  
(0208 699 2376)



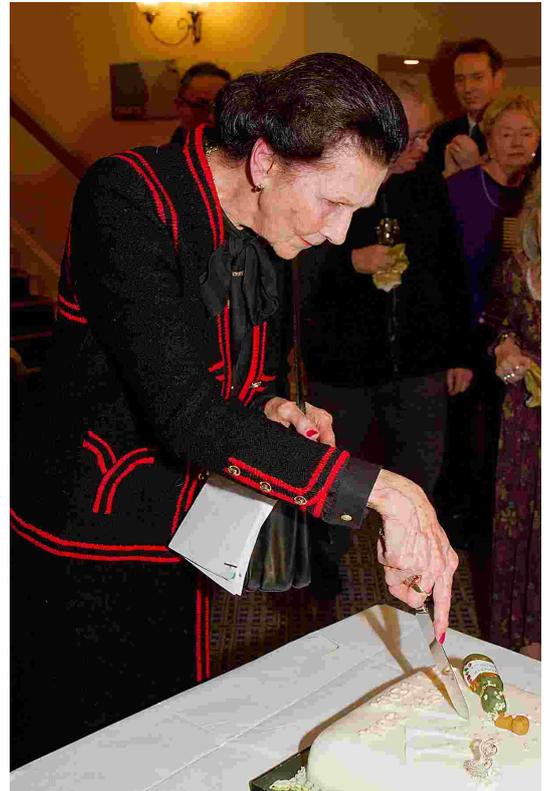


*Jim Ranger, Dame Beryl and Patricia Payne*

thanks must go Ruth Jeayes, who organised the party, and to the ever helpful staff of the Old Vic. Our oldest VW member, Patricia Payne, presented a bouquet of flowers to our honoured guest. There was a good attendance at the party and it will be remembered as one of our most enjoyable events, due to the radiant personality of Dame Beryl.



*Dame Beryl, John McAndrew and Nickolas Grace*



*Party guests listening to Dame Beryl's speech*

## *Out and About with the Vic-Wells*

### **Tour of the Theatre Royal Haymarket**

**Ruth Jeayes invites all Vic-Wells members to join in**

**We will be visiting the Theatre Royal Haymarket for a tour of the building on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014 at 11.00am (meet in the foyer). Tickets are £10. Please book in advance by sending your cheque, made out to *The Vic-Wells Association*, with a stamped addressed envelope, to: Ruth Jeayes, 185 Honor Oak Road, London SE23 3RP (Tel: 020 8699 2376)**

# The Sam Wanamaker Playhouse

by Elizabeth Schafer

It's great news when a new theatre space opens in London, but the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse (SWP), which opened recently with Dominic Dromgoole's production of *The Duchess of Malfi*, is also a dazzling jewel of a space. There is bewitching candlelight; there are painted ceilings and wooden panelling; and some members of the audience are so close to the action they are only inches away from the actors. It is completely different from any theatre I have ever been in before and it is so tiny – it seats 340 – that I wonder if it is possible to break even and pay a full cast with a play like *The Duchess* which needs around 12



*Brendan O'Hea and Gemma Arterton in The Duchess of Malfi*

actors (and could do with more). The playhouse's miniature dimensions ensure every sound can be heard but, unless you are sitting in the £60 a ticket seats, you are likely either to miss some of the action or end up with a bad back, cricked neck or both. The seats, as you would expect at the Globe, are not luxuriously upholstered and, at the performance I attended, several people around me in the gallery did not return after the interval.



*The Sam Wanamaker Playhouse - putting the final touches to the ceiling!*

The gallery also affords the proverbial bird's eye view which can get disconcerting when there are plunging necklines and heaving bosoms on stage. And when the tickets say 'restricted view' they mean it. From the gallery it is impossible to see about a quarter of the stage. Will modern audiences who are used to film and television performances – where closeups enable you to count actor's nasal hairs if the fancy takes you – be content to be able to hear but not see all that is going on? But the SWP is enchanting in many ways and the actual experience of seeing a play there is a real event,

simply because it is so different from the normal experience of going to a theatre even though those wooden benches are not for the faint-hearted or weak backed. I began to wonder if the ideal costume for a visit to the SWP would be a Jacobean farthingale and corset; at least they would keep your back in the right position. So three cheers for the new playhouse and does anyone have a whalebone corset that they can lend me?

# BalletBoyz - the TALENT

Report by Richard Reavill

Some three years ago, the “Ballet Boys”, William Trevitt and Michael Nunn, were reaching the end of their dancing careers, and a long way from their boyhood. Even so, the BalletBoyz registered brand still had mileage, so they came up with the idea of passing on their performing knowledge to a new group of young male dancers, to be called *BalletBoyz – the TALENT*, and commissioning new work for them to perform. The original “twist” to this plan was to recruit dancers from very wide sources, not just the products of the leading classical and modern dance academies. The broad range of recruiting would undoubtedly introduce variety, but might prove difficult to provide a uniform style. The training of the dancers includes ballet and modern dance classes, and also strength work, which must be helpful when the dancers have to lift one-another rather than sylph-like ballerinas.

The company, now with ten dancers aged 20-25, are “Associated Artists” of Sadler’s Wells. The current programme has played at the Wells, and toured extensively in the UK. I caught up with it in Oxford, in the vast New Theatre which has a good sized stage. The performance attracted a large and enthusiastic audience. Of the two works performed, *Serpent* was by Royal Ballet choreographer and Vic-Wells protege, Liam Scarlett, and *Fallen* by modern dance choreographer, Russell Maliphant.

Scarlett’s early work was plot-less classical ballet, but recently he has been broadening his range with two macabre story ballets for the Royal, (*Hansel and Gretel* and *Sweet Violets*) and a *Firebird* for the Norwegian Ballet. His *Serpent* is a return to abstract works, but in a new field as the group work, and particularly the pas-de-deux, is male on male. The choreography moves smoothly between ensembles and single and double work, and evokes memories of Greek friezes of youths at play. The work has a muscular lyricism, and the excellent lighting of Michael Hulls helps create some scenes of great beauty. Much appreciated by the many female teenagers in the audience were the muscular and toned young bodies on view, as the costuming for



Balletboyz in rehearsal for *the TALENT*

Photo: Panayotis Sinnos



Balletboyz in *Fallen*

Photo: Hugo Glendinning

at play. The work has a muscular lyricism, and the excellent lighting of Michael Hulls helps create some scenes of great beauty. Much appreciated by the many female teenagers in the audience were the muscular and toned young bodies on view, as the costuming for

*“The strength work training must be helpful when the dancers have to lift one another rather than sylph-like ballerinas”*

*Serpent* is bare top and flesh-coloured tights. Some decorative tattoos were also evident (Sergei Polunin, may you be forgiven!).

For *Fallen*, the dancers were in “street clothes”, but those familiar with Russell Maliphant’s work will realise that this was not an economy measure. Maliphant has been a stalwart of the BalletBoyz repertory since the creation of the company as George Piper Dances. He has created major works such as the pas-de-deux *Critical Mass*, for Trevitt and Nunn, and the pas-de-trois *Broken Fall* with Sylvie Guillem.

Again, the new piece *Fallen* is an extension of Maliphant's work as it has ten dancers, many more than he normally deploys. Single, double and small group material was included, and also some very interesting choreography for the full company, particularly the movements in concentric circles which start and finish the piece. The sequences where dancers climb up other dancers, only to fall and be caught by their colleagues, is a development of the earlier work, *Broken Fall*. The interaction between the dancers was less lyrical and much more combative.

The two pieces, subtly but significantly contrasted, made for an interesting and enjoyable evening of high quality original dance. The group, despite the eclectic origin of its members, achieved a remarkable cohesion of style.

## Derek Westlake 1929 - 2013 : An Appreciation

After a very successful career as a dancer and ballet master, while Derek was a soloist in *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Glyndebourne in the summer of 1962, he received a telephone call from Stephen Arlen who was administrator of the Sadler's Wells Opera. They had met in Brussels in 1961, when Derek was dancer and ballet master to Gillian Lynn, among others. Stephen asked him if he would like to become manager of Sadler's Wells Opera, a company of 150. After much thought and discussion with me, we decided he should accept as it was an astonishing offer.

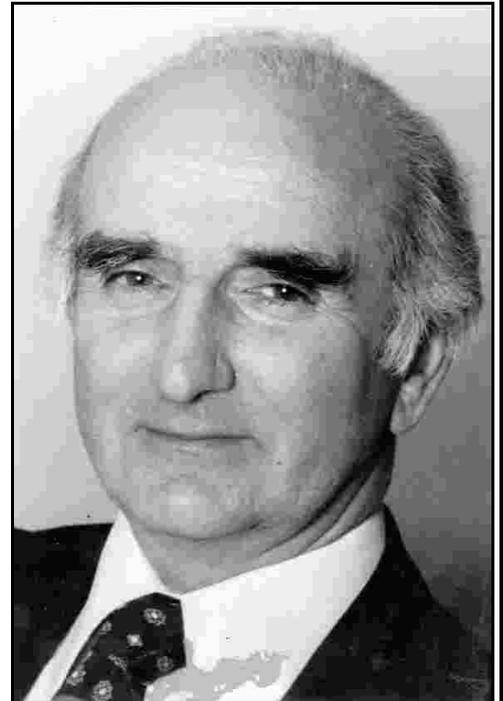
Derek loved the whole experience and discovered managerial skills he had never realised he possessed. There were two separate opera companies at Sadler's Wells, the one Derek managed being the former Carl Rosa. Each company did a London season and sixteen-week tours. It required massive organisation as the company mounted eight performances a week, travelling on Sundays to do another eight without a break. Apart from Derek's love of opera he had enormous respect for the singers with their talent, dedication and professionalism. In 1968 the whole Sadler's Wells Opera organisation moved to the Colosseum and Derek did his last tour with the company in 1970.

Sadler's Wells Theatre had always maintained its own in-house opera and ballet companies, and felt the loss of them very badly at this time. So when Douglas Craig joined the theatre as director, he and Stephen Arlen asked Derek to go back and see what could be done about it. He accepted, originally for three weeks as administration manager, but stayed on becoming general manager and assistant director..

It was agreed that Sadler's Wells should be an international venue for opera, ballet and dance, with an administrative staff of 12 people. It became very successful and everyone worked hard to make it so. Of the many highlights, Derek was particularly pleased with the visits of the Dance Theatre of Harlem and the Finnish National Opera, which if they had been a UK company would have won the Evening Standard prize for artistic achievement of the year.

All this was achieved without an Arts Council grant, despite which Derek always believed in keeping ticket prices reasonable. This also included the marvellous salads and coffee on offer in the old Wells Room front of house, which became very popular.

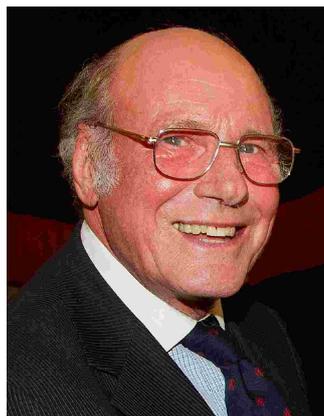
Derek left the post in 1980, when incidentally plans were under way for stage enlargement costing one or two million pounds. He continued his career, mainly as ballet director, but always retained fond memories of his 18 years at the Wells, first with the opera and then the theatre. Derek and I always felt that this period of its history, and the people working tirelessly for its success, should not be forgotten



Pearl Westlake

# Jim Ranger Remembers

*Liz Shafer continues her article*



On returning from a 5 year posting to Japan, Jim was asked to take over from Michael Wood as Director of The Council for Dance Education and Training. Their main task at that time was to Accredite Professional Dance Schools so that they could get grants for their students and to ensure they met high standards. They set up an Accreditation Panel using retired Dancers and Teachers which included Pamela May as well as other well known people from the worlds of Ballet, Musical Theatre and Contemporary Dance. Some 15 schools were accredited and formed the Council of Professional Dance Schools. It soon became apparent that Counties who were the source of the grants at that time needed further reassurance. So they set up Assessment Panels and brought the prospective students in for auditions where the panel marked them for their potential to benefit from the course for which they had been accepted. In this way many more students were grant- aided. Gradually, this scheme was phased out and grant money came directly from the Department of Education for students attending degree courses which the schools set up but this meant no longer admitting 16 year old students.

## Major Achievement

He was then asked to join the Board of Governors and the Management Board of Sadler's Wells. Their role was to ensure good governance, raise funds and ensure artistic excellence as well as the financial stability of the theatre. Later he was appointed Vice Chairman of the Governors and Management Board and later still Chairman of the Management Board. His major achievement was to recruit Ian Albery as Director of Sadler's Wells. Without Ian there would be no new theatre building which was his dream. Ian also negotiated the contract to use the Peacock Theatre on very advantageous terms. When Jim approved the contract he was amazed at what Ian had achieved and the use of the Peacock has enabled Sadler's Wells to mount its own productions. A lot of Royal visits, including the Queen and Prince Charles as well as other members of the Royal family, were made to shows at Sadler's Wells. Princess Diana visited on a number of occasions and was always very helpful charming sponsors. Earlier the Queen Mother visited *The Sound of Music* on her 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday and at the end of the show the whole cast sang Happy Birthday.

## £50 Million Grant Funding

When the National Lottery started Sadler's Wells was one of the first arts organisations to submit an application, for funds to rebuild the theatre. One of the Governors arranged for the Theatre to have two man years of free consultancy from Andersen Consulting. A series of young consultants visited the Theatre and asked all the 'what if' questions leading to seven thick volumes of data covering every aspect of the new theatre building, including five year forward financial forecasts. In memory of Grimaldi, the clown who used to run in costume from Sadler's Wells to Drury Lane Theatre, some of the supporters dressed as clowns and marched from Sadler's Wells to Drury Lane and on to the Arts Council building behind Westminster Abbey to hand in the seven volumes. As the group proceeded more and more people joined until a crowd of at least fifty stood outside the door of the Arts Council. The submission was very successful and ultimately led to nearly £50 million of grant funding. When the new build was secured Jim resigned as Chairman to have a heart by-pass operation.

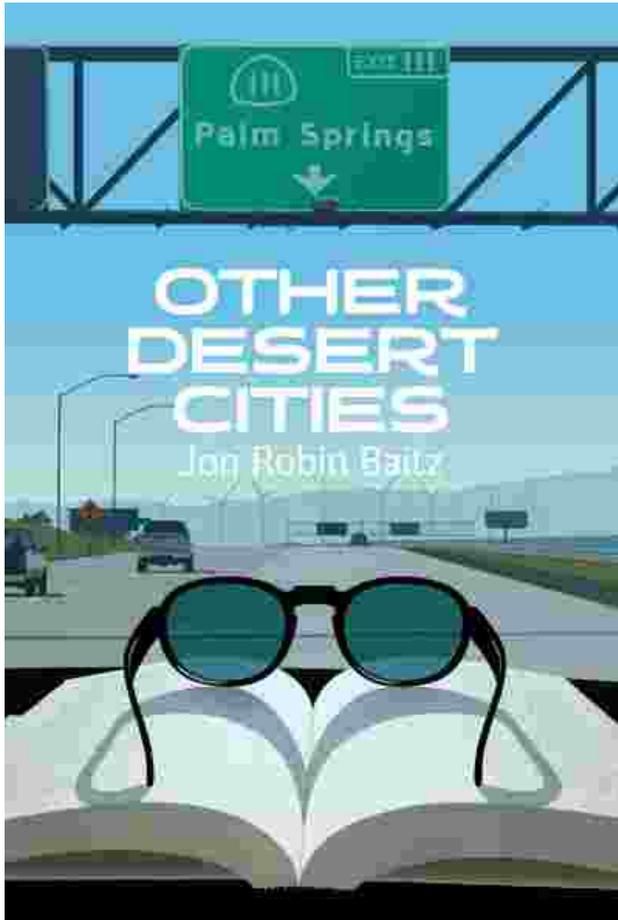
The Vic-Wells Association states in its constitution that a Governor of Sadler's Wells should be on the Committee so Jim joined the Association. Eventually he became Vice-Chairman and later Chairman, a position he has held for the last eight happy years.

## Have you Paid? An Important Message from VW Secretary

Lists of addresses for the circulation of information tend to get out of date very quickly and the Vic-Wells list of e-mail addresses is no exception. I have been checking our current list against the information on the Membership Secretary's files and find there are many discrepancies. So I will be "cleaning-up" the list and making some corrections. Any e-addresses of individuals who are no longer members will be removed but, to avoid any mistakes, the individuals concerned will be notified. This will also allow those who might have forgotten to renew their membership to do so. Our membership remains very inexpensive, £7.50 for adults and £6 for "seniors", and has been unchanged for more than a decade, so it should not strain the wallet even in these times of economic stringency.

## News from the Old Vic

Report by Liz Moon



The 5 star *Fortune's Fool* draws to a close on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, making way for *Other Desert Cities*, directed by Lindsay Posner, which will be the first in a season of productions to be presented in-the-round at The Old Vic.

Pulitzer Prize finalist and creator of hit television series, *Brothers & Sisters* and contributor to *The West Wing*, Jon Robin Baitz has taken America by storm with his Broadway debut. *Other Desert Cities*, an acidly witty and deeply affecting tour de force, melds the political and personal with electrifying results.

Nominated for five Tony Awards, this award-winning play now makes its UK premiere at The Old Vic with Lindsay Posner (*Noises Off* and *The Winslow Boy*) returning to direct the stellar cast, Sinéad Cusack, Peter Egan, Clare Higgins, Daniel Lapaine and Martha Plimpton.

It's Christmas Eve in Palm Springs. Novelist Brooke Wyeth is back home to celebrate the holidays with her well-heeled parents, brother and aunt. But the long-awaited reunion is soon set alight by a bombshell – Brooke is to publish a tell-all memoir. Exposing the most painful chapter of the Wyeth's buried past and threatening to destroy everything her famous parents hold dear, Brooke's revelation pushes fractured family relations to the point of no return.

To keep up to date with the latest news and announcements from The Old Vic you can join our list of e-subscribers by visiting [oldvictheatre.com](http://oldvictheatre.com) and signing up to our newsletter, search for The Old Vic on Facebook or follow us on twitter @oldvictheatre

---

## Sadler's Wells - Try Something Different

The Sadler's Sampled festival debuted last summer, and was inspired by a weekend programme of the same name that has been an annual fixture at Sadler's Wells since 2007. A unique event, the weekend programme has presented a diverse assortment of dance styles, from hip hop to flamenco, along with free talks, events and activities throughout the building.

That original weekend now forms the finale of the Sadler's Sampled festival, offering the same showcase of genres from around the world, with it's new name Playlist. This year, the bill will include performances from the

National Youth Dance Company - choreographed by Akram Khan - and from Sadler's Wells resident company ZooNation. With more artists still to be announced, Playlist offers something for everyone to enjoy; a great opportunity to introduce someone new to dance and discover some new favourites.



# WHAT'S ON



Sadler's Wells, Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4TN

Phone: 0844 871 0090

## Main Theatre \*\* UK Premieres

- 03 - 06 April Savion Glover - *SoLe Sanctuary* \*\*  
08 - 09 April Alain Platel - les ballets C de la B  
11 - 12 April Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre  
16 April National Youth Dance Company  
18 - 19 April balletLORENT - *Rapunzel* ▶  
25 - 26 April Kidd Pivot / Crystal Pite - *The Tempest Replica* \*\*  
03 - 05 May Breakin' Convention  
08 -10 May Olivier Dubois Company - *Tragédie* \*\*  
14 -17 May Scottish Ballet - *Romeo and Juliet* ▶  
20 - 24 May Rambert  
27 - 29 May Rosas & Ictus - *Vortex Temporum* \*\*  
03 -04 June Bruno Beltrão - *CRACKz*  
05 -07 June Russell Maliphant Company - *Still Current*  
10 - 14 June Akram Khan Company - *iTMOI*

## Lilian Baylis Studio

- 18 - 19 April Family Weekend: gobbledegook  
20 - 21 May Hetain Patel - *American Boy*  
06 - 07 June TAO Dance Theatre - 4 & 5

## Peacock Theatre

Portugal Street, Kingsway, London WC2A 2HT

- 08 - 19 April ENB and ENB School - *My First Ballet - Coppélia*  
24 - 27 April London Children's Ballet - *Nanny McPhee*  
06 - 24 May Havana Rakatan ▶  
27 May - 8 June FLASH MOB™  
10 - 28 June Rasta Thomas' Bad Boys of Dance



Stills from Sadler's Wells website used with permission

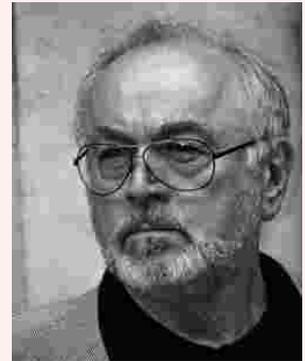
## Old Vic Theatre

[www.oldvictheatre.com](http://www.oldvictheatre.com)  
Waterloo Road, London SE1 8NB  
0844 871 2628

13 March - 24 May 2014

*Other Desert Cities* by Jon Robin Baitz

with Sinéad Cusack, Peter Egan,  
Clare Higgins, Daniel Lapaine and Martha Plimpton



Don't forget the  
*Shakespeare*  
*Birthday Party*  
5.00 to 6.30 on  
*Saturday 26<sup>th</sup>*  
*April 2014.*

Make a note of the  
date now, full  
details on the front  
cover of this issue.

## The Vic-Wells Association

*Founded in 1923 by Lilian Baylis CH*

### Chairman:

Mr. James Ranger  
Cromer Cottage  
Cromer  
Stevenage SG2 7QA  
0143 886 1318  
[jim@jranger.com](mailto:jim@jranger.com)

### Vice Chairman:

Mr. Tim Rooke  
302b Park Road  
London N8 8LA  
020 8352 0492

### Secretary:

Dr. Richard Reavill  
7 Nuns Acre  
Goring  
Reading RG8 9BE  
0149 187 2574  
[vicwells@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:vicwells@tiscali.co.uk)

### Membership Secretary:

Professor Liz Schafer  
372 Stroude Road  
Virginia Water  
GU25 4DB  
0134 484 2836  
[e.schafer@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:e.schafer@rhul.ac.uk)

### Treasurer:

Mr. Neville C Taylor  
Flat 1  
128 Gloucester Terrace  
London W2 6HP  
020 7262 5898  
[neville.taylor@homecall.co.uk](mailto:neville.taylor@homecall.co.uk)

### Broadsheet Editor:

Mrs Marjory Agha  
18 Pembroke Road  
Kensington  
London W8 6NT  
0774 684 7126  
[vwbroadsheet@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:vwbroadsheet@hotmail.co.uk)

Copy deadline for  
the next issue of  
*The Broadsheet* is

**Saturday,**  
**10<sup>th</sup> May**

Items or letters  
for publication  
should be sent to  
The Editor  
by this date.