

issue two october - november 2006

WAITING IN THE WINGS



Welcome to Issue Two of WITW!

This is going to be a special reviews Issue, with Katie reviewing a selection of TV dramas and Liz a selection of theatre.

It's not as long as we hoped it would be, time got the better of us, but we promise Issue Three will have much more content and hopefully include some exclusives with your favourite actors.

If you have anything to contribute, please email us at witw.mag@googlemail.com

Liz & Katie xx

THEATRE REVIEWS

Cabaret

Lyric Theatre, London
October 2006

One of my favourite musicals, starring one of my favourite actresses, this production of Cabaret was always going to be a hit with me. Anna Maxwell Martin was perfect as Sally Bowles, OK she may not have the most amazing voice, but she can certainly sing and she portrayed the character and emotions beautifully throughout the show. She brought Sally to life and conveyed all the layers of her personality. Sheila Hancock, one of our best British actors played Herr Schulz beautifully, and James Dreyfus and Michael Hayden also gave strong performances.

'Two Ladies' was the great song, both visually and vocally, that it should be, and 'Tomorrow Belongs To Me' was wonderfully dramatic as was the final scene. "If You Could See Her" was interestingly performed, different to how I've seen it done before. The choreography was intense and original and completely fitted the mood of the show. It is a far cry from the traditional musical, and nothing like the Mendes version, but that is it's charm.

Avenue Q

September/October 2006

Noel Coward Theatre, London

"It's like your life...only funnier" claims the poster. And it's true. Featuring a cast of puppets and people, this show was (and still is) massive on Broadway, and it's a joy to have it gracing the West End. The songs are funny and the characters are so real; there's at least one character that everyone in the audience can relate to.

The cast of this show are phenomenal – Julie Atherton effortlessly changes between Kate Monster and Lucy The Slut, Simon Lipkin and Jon Robyns are both fabulous as Nicky/Trekkie and Rod/Princeton respectively, then there's Clare Foster who unfortunately only plays minor roles, but you can tell there's a great talent there. Another cast member worthy of a mention is Luke Evans. Twice I've seen this guy understudy completely different parts, and neither time could you tell he was an understudy. This cast is the future of musical theatre.

It appeals to everyone, even those who usually hate musicals will love it and come away declaring that the 'Internet is for Porn'.

The History Boys

Birmingham Rep Theatre

September 2006

The play needs no introduction. We all know and love it by now. But for those uneducated amongst you, all you need to know is: pretty boys, northern school, 1980s.

Birmingham Rep is the first stop on a 3-month national tour before it heads to the West End (finally!!) in December. Some cast members from the last tour are back again (Steven Webb, Thomas Morrison, Philip Correia and Marc Elliott) and the others are fresh meat. Of the new boys, the standout performance comes from Ben Barnes as Dakin; he's everything Dakin should be, which is a refreshing and most welcome change from the last Dakin. Steven Webb still gives a beautiful performance as Posner, and performances from the rest of the cast are all strong.

So with the tour and West End transfer you have no excuse not to see it. Again.

Bent

Trafalgar Studios, London

October 2006

Set in 1930s Berlin, Bent follows the life of Max a gay man who gets sent to Dachau under the Nazi regime. Max does everything he can to survive, this includes killing the man he loves in an effort to prove he is not gay, thus gain the higher-ranking of yellow star rather than the lowest pink triangle.

Featuring veteran Scot Alan Cumming along with new talent Chris New (ha!) and Kevin Trainor, Bent is one of the theatre events of the year. Flawless performances from the entire cast, as well as beautiful staging and lighting make this a truly mesmerising piece of theatre.

Throughout the play, the tension builds up magnificently to an emotional ending. It is a truly harrowing play.

-Liz

TV REVIEWS

Angelcake
Afterlife
Ancient Rome
Jane Eyre

Imagine you are a producer for the BBC and you were commissioning new one hour dramas for BBC1 (Friday 21.00). Ok? Now imagine a scriptwriter with quite a bit of experience coming to you with a script that's tag line was something a long the lines of "A dowdy underappreciated housewife surrounded by losers accidentally bakes an image of the virgin Mary in her rock cakes."

If you were that commissioner / producer / anyone who had any say surely you would say (after a lot of expletives) "Go away! It's absolute tosh"

With this in mind I wonder what it was that clinched the deal with *Angel Cake* was it Sarah Lancashire I wonder? Or veteran actress Rita Tushingham? Beats me. Sarah Lancashire's not bad. I really liked her in 'Clocking Off' and 'Back Home' but even she looked bored with being a 'dowdy loser housewife.'

The supporting cast were probably quite capable but the situations they were put in, and the words they were forced to say based on the belief of a miracle cake was more than nonsense. The cake didn't even act as a euphemism of say 'mind over matter' or that the power of belief can sort things out (but not major skin complaints.)

Basically, it was an awful idea which didn't make any sense. If you were made to write a drama with this premise then there are ways around it, certainly. But it was almost as if they thought no one would care. I wouldn't even give this half a star. It makes me so sad that the BBC are making drama's like this because even on ITV it would've been a poor drama (and sadly half an hour longer)

After Friday's debacle of 'Angel cake' I was glad that *Afterlife* was back on our screens. There's nothing like a bit of 'spooky stuff', and performances from the wide eyed Lesley Sharp and the newly bearded Andrew Lincoln. I think afterlife is one of those programs an audience member either goes with or rolls their eyes at. I have to admit I enjoy 'going with it'

Stephen Volk the creator and writer of the majority of series one had written the first episode which this review is concentrating on. If you haven't seen it and want to don't read this, it'll spoil it. For those of you not bothered or all ready 'in the know' Did you guess the end of the first episode? I did, but not for a long time. I sat and watched it with three other relatively intelligent people who made comments like 'they haven't changed clothes' and so on... I got it just before Alison told them! Now, coming from an evening of angel cake I was so relieved to watch something that didn't just assume an audience was stupid or asleep. It was a nice twist in the tail and whether it left a shiver or not you have to admit, 'afterlife' is not half bad, especially in comparison to all the rest of the crap drama we are delivered on a weekly basis.

The Rise and Fall of Ancient Rome. "Hurrah! Yet another show about Ancient Rome!" I hear you cry. But this time it's not a drama or a documentary. It's a drama-documentary (as if there really is such a sub genre)

Think of it as a virtual text book but with Michael Sheen. Who relished the open playing field of Rome in which he was allowed to run all wide eyed and rampant! In fact there was nothing wrong with the cast, the scenery was fine, but it's nothing we hadn't seen before. From 'I, Claudius' to 'Carry on running around like a roman' we've seen it. We did find out that Nero didn't fiddle as Rome burnt but you're wrong if you think we'll stop using that phrase. But what really rubbed salt in the wound – apart from the scene where they did just that – was the bumpy dialogue. I wasn't expecting full Latin but some of the phrases were too modern, I was half expecting to come out with 'Kill 'em, they're mingers!'

Suffice to say I have not tuned in for anymore episodes though faced with only terrestrial TV next week I may take a look at young Ed Stoppard in this Thursday's episode.

I was forced to read *Jane Eyre* when I was about fourteen. Sadly I read up to the bit where she scares Mr Rochester's horse. I just pretended I had read it from then on. So I was rather bemused to find those few precious pages I have memory of rushed through at the speed an American sitcom would be proud of. Obviously the BBC had thought it best to get the broody Jane Eyre to meet the broody Mr Rochester as fast as possible, because these days viewers cannot be put in any form of suspense in case they change channels (unless of course it is the suspense before revealing the winner of 'how do

you solve a celebrity come dancing on ice brother.) From then on it slowed to a third of the pace of any costume drama I have seen. It was beautifully shot, but no one tunes in for an hour on a Sunday to stare at a Monet do they?

I did tune into episode two. It certainly left me feeling rested, as the sheer lack of anything allowed me a fifty odd minute nap. I can't even say the performances lifted it out of the slow agonising rut because as far as I was concerned I cared neither for Jane or Rochester or even the usually fabulous Pam Ferris as Grace Poole. I will tune in next week, but only because I have run out of sleeping tablets. After Bleak House, the BBC should be ashamed.

Preview – Robin Hood.

They can only make so many Doctor Who episodes you know! So I imagine you've had to find something else to do at a Saturday team time, needlework or some light exercise. Well stop that immediately as there's a new boy in town. He's slick, he's young, he's followed around by some very handsome young men and a very beautiful young woman. There are baddies, broody in leather and camp in... well, whatever Keith Allen chooses I imagine!!

Yes that's right you can now tune into 'Robin Hood' or as I am calling it 'Robin Hood – the Next Generation' He no longer wears tights, his 'Merry men' are now 'outlaws' (I'm saying nothing!) Maid Marian has dropped the 'Maid' (more rumours) and there's no Friar Tuck. So with no gay insinuation, suggestions of virginity or comedy from a fat religious man. How can we enjoy this new Robin Hood?

Well, I have my doubts (ever the cynic) I think diehards will hate it. I imagine it will be aimed heavily at the typical Doctor Who demographic full of action and adventure with a smattering of romance and comedy. It is unlikely to rival The Good Doctor but with a young cast Jonas Armstrong, Joe Armstrong, Harry Lloyd and Sam Troughton and Lucy Griffiths as Marian. Alongside Richard Armitage as Guy of Gisbourne and Keith Allen it certainly has the potential to make Saturday tea time TV bearable once more and you should almost certainly expect a review in issue three of WITW

- Katie

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Anna Maxwell Martin



Anna was born in 1978 in East Yorkshire. She studied history at Liverpool University, and then went on to train at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. She won Best Actress award at the 2006 BAFTAs for her role in *Bleak House*, she was also nominated for an Olivier Award in 2005 for her role as Lyra in *His Dark Materials* at the National Theatre. It is this role as Lyra which brought her into prominence. Other theatre at the National includes, *The Three Sisters*, *Honour* and *Coast of Utopia* and in February and March of this year she appeared in *Other Hands* at the Soho Theatre.

Anna's TV roles include *Bleak House*, *Doctor Who* and *North and South* and she has recently filmed two film roles, one as Cassandra Austen in *Becoming Jane*, (about the life of *Jane Austen*) and another playing Madonna in *I Really Hate My Job*.

Anna is currently performing in Rufus Norris` new production of *Cabaret* at the Lyric Theatre in London.

WEBSITES

This issue spotlight two great Live Journal sites.

Obscure Brit Actors Squee Consortium

<http://community.livejournal.com/obasc/>

This community has been around since September 2005 and is a place to squee over the best of British talent. And not just to squee over their looks but also over their talent. Pictures and encounters a-plenty make this a must-join for all Live Journal users.



Society for Obscure Brit Female Actor Squee

<http://community.livejournal.com/sobfas/>

The sister community of OBASC, this is dedicated to the best of British female talent. Not as old as OBASC, SOBFAS was created in February this year and is just as packed with pictures and squeeages as it's partner site.



That's it for Issue Two, we hope you'll join us for Issue Three in December!