Wicked
The Untold Story of the Witches of Oz
Apollo Victoria Theatre
14 November 2014 – 22 February 2015

FREE ENTRY Open Monday 1pm–5:30pm • Tuesday–Friday 10am–5:30pm • Saturday–Sunday 11am–5pm
108a Boundary Road (off Abbey Road), St John’s Wood, London NW8 0RH • 020 7604 3991 • www.benuri.org.uk

Refiguring the 50s

EARDLEY • FELL • FRANKFURTHER • HERMAN • LOWRY
Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red

Viewing extended until the end of November

Don’t miss the major art installation Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red at the Tower of London, marking one hundred years since the first full day of Britain’s involvement in the First World War. Created by ceramic artist Paul Cummins, with setting by stage designer Tom Piper, 888,246 ceramic poppies have filled the Tower’s famous moat in the last few weeks. Each poppy represents a British military fatality during the war.

The poppies encircle the iconic landmark, creating not only a spectacular display visible from all around the Tower but also a location for personal reflection. The scale of the installation intends to reflect the magnitude of such an important centenary creating a powerful visual commemoration.

The sale of the poppies that make up the installation have raised millions of pounds which will be shared equally amongst six service charities.
Parliament Week 2014

A fascinating programme of events and activities will take place across the capital from 14-20 November as part of Parliament Week, an annual programme of events that aims to help people feel connected with Parliament and democratic life, and inform them about how they can take part and make their voices heard.

Organisations from across the UK, including charities, youth groups, schools and museums are organising activities demonstrating how people can engage with different aspects of democracy in this country.

Anyone living in or around London or visiting the capital can get involved by taking part in activities including a guided walk through the city, attending specially devised arts events such as plays and poetry readings and attending debates covering a variety of topics.

Parliament Week is a national initiative co-ordinated by the House of Commons and House of Lords, and include a full programme of activities taking place at Portcullis House in Westminster.

On 19 November, Parliamentary Outreach is inviting sci fi, fantasy and comic fans, gamers and scientists to re-imagine democracy in 2115 and debate the future in today’s Parliament. What could Parliament look like one-hundred years from now? What issues will we face? Who will represent us? And who will be listening?

For more details about the events and activities taking place during Parliament Week 2014, how to register an interest or participate in events, visit the website at www.parliamentweek.org.

To book tickets for guided tours of the Houses of Parliament, telephone the booking line on 020 7219 4114 or visit www.parliament.uk/visiting.

Foreign language tours are currently offered in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian and Mandarin.

Wembley Stadium Tours

Wembley is possibly the most famous stadium in the world, the home of the England football team and of many flagship football events. A Wembley Stadium Tour allows visitors to experience 75 minutes behind the scenes and follow in the footsteps of the many legends who have played there.

Limber up in the England dressing room, carry out a mock press conference, walk out the players’ tunnel to the cheer of the crowds and sit in the team dugouts. You can even walk up Wembley’s famous trophy presentation route to the Royal Box and hold the FA Cup! Book tickets on 0844 800 2755 or at www.wembleystadium.com/tours.

Meet Santa at ZSL London Zoo

Every weekend from 22 November until Christmas Eve, visitors can Meet Santa himself and share their Christmas wishes having joined his hardworking elves in making festive treats for some furry residents of London Zoo.

Getting fully into the Christmas spirit, children can write a letter to Santa and take a guided tour around Elfville joining in with musical elves dancing and serenading visitors with their favourite Christmas tunes. Visitors can also hear talks on the Zoo’s Reindeer Royalty from keepers while Dancer and Prancer enjoy some seasonal snacks. Book tickets online at www.zsl.org/meetsanta.
REGENT STREET COMES TO LIFE THIS CHRISTMAS

Join us for the switch-on show on Sunday 16 November and enjoy a traffic-free Regent Street from 12 noon in celebration of the forthcoming release of:

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
SECRET OF THE TOMB
IN CINEMAS DECEMBER

regentstreetonline.com
#RegentStComesToLife
HAMLEYS – THE FINEST TOY SHOP IN THE WORLD

For more than 250 years, Hamleys has continued to leave its mark on London as the Finest Toy Shop in the World. Greeted by model airplanes circling overhead and shiny new train sets underfoot, more than one million visitors from around the world each year have been awed by the store’s dazzling selection of toys and treats.

Hamleys rich history began with William Hamley, a Cornishman from Bodmin, England, who set out to achieve his dream—to own the world’s best toy store. Hamley succeeded in opening his first shop at Holborn, London in 1760. After growing in popularity among the world’s nobility and royal families, Hamleys opened another location on London’s Regent Street. Today, the majestic flagship store at 188-196 Regent Street spans seven floors and is filled to the brim with more than 40,000 kinds of toys, books, games, and sweets.

From 0 to 99, guests of all ages are in for a magical experience upon entering the doors. Rows of grand doll houses, brand new colouring books, miniature cars, and shiny action figures will leave children wide-eyed and gasping in wonder, while bins of colourful marbles and time-honoured Lego sets take mums and dads back to their own childhood. Toy collectors from around the world marvel over Hamleys’ impressive variety of collectable Beanie Babies and plush animals. Staff members dressed in the store’s signature red greet visitors on every floor, demonstrating some of the newest gadgets, from high-flying helicopters to light-up bouncy balls. Children and grown-ups alike are all encouraged to stop and play.

If you are in London, Glasgow, Cardiff, Manchester or Dublin, do spare some time to visit Hamleys. And, there are special treats for everyone to be found at the Finest Toy Shop in the World this weekend as the Regent Street Christmas Lights are switched on.

INTRODUCING ‘EPICUREAN RITZ’ AT THE RITZ LONDON

In celebration of the re-opening of the kitchen at The Ritz London this autumn, the famous London hotel has created the ultimate experience for culinary enthusiasts: Epicurean Ritz.

The experience includes two nights’ accommodation at The Ritz London, an English breakfast each morning, and a 30 minute tour of the newly refurbished Ritz Kitchen by Executive Chef, John Williams or one of his Sous Chefs. Guests will be treated to a glass of Champagne and canapés in the kitchen before enjoying a four-course dinner in The Ritz Restaurant as well as a 30 minute cocktail lesson in the Rivoli Bar and a copy of The Ritz Book.

For over a century, The Ritz has been the benchmark by which other hotels are measured. Perfectly located in a landmark position in the heart of London’s West End, the iconic hotel has long been the hotel of choice for Royalty and aristocracy, dignitaries and countless other discerning guests. Following refurbishment, it is sparkingly renewed though still retains the luxurious Louis XVI style interiors, meticulous service and the exquisite bar and restaurants for which The Ritz name is synonymous.

Since opening in 1906, The Ritz Restaurant has left an indelible impression on all who have dined there. Vast floor to ceiling windows, rich Louis XVI-inspired décor and dazzling garlands of lights reflected in grand mirrored walls combine to create one of the most spectacular interiors in London, as charming by day as by night. The West facing windows overlook The Terrace and The Green Park and during the day, the sunshine enhances the interior brightness while in the low evening light, the circle of chandeliers and table candelabras create a magical reflection.

For more information and booking enquiries, visit www.theritzlondon.com

THE CRYSTAL – CARING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR CITIES

The Crystal is a new science-based attraction which looks at future global trends and challenges, and showcases the best in the world’s technological advances to build environmentally sustainable, livable and prosperous cities. The high-tech exhibition is fully interactive with two immersive film theatres and more than 50 screens with a host of games and experiences that help visitors explore the cities of the future. Highlights include a Tesla coil in the ‘Go Electric’ area where visitors can ‘create electricity’ by moving their bodies. The Crystal is housed in an uniquely shaped, glass-clad structure near Royal Victoria Docks on the Docklands Light Railway.
REGENT STREET CHRISTMAS LIGHTS BROUGHT TO LIFE FOR 2014

On Sunday 16 November, the festive season officially begins as Take That's Mark Owen, Gary Barlow and Howard Donald switch on the Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb themed Christmas Lights on London's world famous Regent Street. London's Heart Breakfast presenters Jamie Theakston and Emma Bunton will host the event, and will be joined on stage by fellow Heart presenters.

The show will kick off at 16.00, with live performances from the one of the UK's biggest boy bands, Union J, stunning singer/songwriter Jessie Ware, plus the West End smash hit musical The Jersey Boys and, from Britain's Got Talent, The Jack Pack. The official switch on will take place at 17.00, followed by a spectacular fireworks display.

Although not performing themselves, Take That have the ultimate privilege of flicking the switch to help launch Christmas across London. Take That said: 'Turning on the Christmas lights in London is like the starter gun for the main event. It's the official start to the party season. We're really looking forward to flicking the switch on the Regent Street lights next Sunday.'

From 12 noon onwards on Sunday 16 November, all the family can enjoy on street entertainment as well as offers in many of the stores, taking advantage of the traffic-free environment to enhance their Christmas shopping experience. City Academy, one of London's leading creative and performing arts academies will be showcasing their amazing talents on stage areas up and down the street. They will encourage visitors to join in their workshops held between 12 noon and 6pm. Children will get the opportunity to meet some of their favourite movie characters including Skipper, Rico, Private and Kowalski from the upcoming DreamWorks Animation Penguins of Madagascar as well as Po from Kung Fu Panda and Toothless from How to Train Your Dragon 2.

Additionally, living statues from Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb will come to life at sites across Regent Street including Robin Williams' character Teddy Roosevelt, Steve Coogan's character Octavius, Dan Stevens' character Sir Lancelot, Owen Wilson's character Jedediah and Rami Malek's character, the Egyptian Pharaoh, Ahkmenrah.

Regent Street activities include a prize draw from Watches of Switzerland to win an exclusive Baume & Mercier Clifton watch, the chance to meet Hamley and Hattie, the bears of Hamleys, plus an array of discounts and instore activities in many of the Regent Street shops, which will stay open until 18.00.

David Shaw, Head of Regent Street Portfolio at The Crown Estate, said: 'We're delighted to once again partner with 20th Century Fox to celebrate the forthcoming release of Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb. The Regent Street lights switch on event is the highlight of our year round events calendar on Regent Street, marking the true start of the festive season in the West End. It's been an exciting year on Regent Street with lots of retailers joining the street, and more flagship stores set to open their doors in 2015.'

Further information online at www.regentstreetonline.com
NEW SUSSEX OPERA’S OBERON REVEALS HIDDEN DELIGHTS

True to its tradition of introducing audiences to less familiar works by well-known composers, New Sussex Opera’s production of Weber’s Oberon brings a stellar cast to a work that marries a fantastical plot with delicate, tuneful music rich in subtle harmonies and beautiful orchestration. Heading the cast in the role of Reiza is South African born Sally Silver, who wowed the critics in the title role of Scottish Opera’s acclaimed production of Donizetti’s Lucia di Lammermoor. Sally, who makes a welcome return to NSO after her 2011 performance in Gounod’s Mireille is joined on stage by Australian tenor Adrian Dwyer, Canadian tenor Adam Tunnicliffe, Irish mezzo Carolyn Dobbin and British baritone Damian Thantrey.

Supporting the soloists will be the famous NSO chorus – augmented for this major production to a total of 44 experienced, disciplined voices.

The international make-up of the cast mirrors the twists and turns of the plot, which switches with breath-taking speed from the caliph’s palace in Baghdad to the shores of the Tigris, a shipwreck on a Greek shore and the emir’s house in Tunis. But audiences should be able to keep pace with the action thanks to the fact that the opera will be sung in the original English. Marshalling the NSO’s creative forces is director Harry Fehr, who says: ‘The plot of Oberon may be loosely based on A Midsummer Night’s Dream, but it does have considerable contemporary resonance.’

On the conductor’s rostrum and getting the best from the many talents of the St Paul’s Sinfonia is Nicholas Jenkins, a familiar figure to NSO audiences – and, increasingly, to audiences across Europe. Visitors to London are in for a treat at Cadogan Hall on Tuesday 25 November (19.00).

Musically, theatrically, artistically, NSO’s Oberon will show audiences just what lies behind one of the world’s most famous overtures.

Tickets from Cadogan Hall box office telephone 020 7730 4500 or visit the website www.newsussexopera.org

SYLVIE GUILLEM & AKRAM KHAN IN SACRED MONSTERS

Sacred Monsters, the hugely acclaimed collaboration between Sadler’s Wells Associate Artists Sylvie Guillem and Akram Khan, returns to Sadler’s Wells from 25 - 29 November.

First performed in 2006, in Sacred Monsters Guillem and Khan explore the dynamics and language of two classical dance forms, kathak and ballet. ‘Sacred monsters’ is a term that marks the birth of contemporary stardom, in which the icons of arts and sports worlds are given divine status by their audience and the media. The pressure of living up to these expectations leaves no room for failure, self-expression or emotion, and the divine status becomes inhuman and monstrous.

Sylvie Guillem has performed all the leading roles of the classical repertoire with the world’s leading companies including the Royal Ballet, Paris Opera Ballet, Kirov, Tokyo Ballet, Australian Ballet, American Ballet Theatre and La Scala.

Akram Khan is one of the most exciting dancers/choreographers in Britain today and has, in just over a decade, created a highly imaginative, accessible and relevant body of work, including productions such as DESH, Vertical Road, Gnosis and zero degrees.
CHRISTMAS MARKET
AT TATE MODERN

14 NOVEMBER -
24 DECEMBER

Facing the Thames, you will find us now in front of Tate Modern. There will be numerous chalets offering traditional handcraft, unique gifts and culinary specialities.

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GYPSY

‘Curtain up! Light the lights! You got nothing to hit but the heights’, wrote Stephen Sondheim to music by Jule Styne in Gypsy, unarguably one of the greatest Broadway musicals of all time. The heights, I’m happy to report, are hit by the Chichester Festival’s terrific revival of this on-going 1959 classic eclipsing recent Broadway revivals starring Bernadette Peters and Patti LuPone.

Closely following on the heels of that other imperishable masterpiece, Guys and Dolls, a West End transfer is inevitable (or should be!) if only to allow the widest possible audience to savour the power-house central performance of its star, Imelda Staunton.

For the uninitiated, Ms Staunton plays Madam Rose, the stage mother from Hades, who, in the dying years of vaudeville, has been touring the same tacky kiddie act for a decade or so hoping to make a star out of its headline attraction, her daughter Baby June, a mace-twirling moppet who asks audiences in every flea-pit theatre across the States to ‘Let Me Entertain You.’ And when, at the age of fifteen, June elopes with Tulsa, one of the male dancers in the act, an undaunted Rose determines to have her less talented daughter Louise, take her place.

In time, Louise grows up to be the stripper Gypsy Rose Lee whose celebrity sprung from the ‘sophistication’ (or gimmick) of an act in which she actually revealed very little indeed. She ultimately became the star her mother always dreamed of being herself.

I never saw the legendary Ethel Merman, who created the role of Rose on Broadway, but, having subsequently seen her a couple of times on stage, she never possessed the touching vulnerability Imelda Staunton brings to the part.

Sure, Madam Rose is loud, bossy, pushy and utterly determined to get her own way regardless, but she’s also a dreamer with a heart, a quality Merman’s work never displayed. I cannot imagine her ever bringing a lump to the throat or leaving you moist-eyed as Staunton does in the climactic Rose’s Turn, followed by the short, moving scene that closes the show. This is a truly great performance that crowns Chichester’s remarkable year in glory.

All the lead performers are excellent. Lara Pulver is touching as the adult Louise, Gemma Sutton is a feisty June, and as Herbie, Rose’s long-suffering lover-cum-business-manager, Kevin Whatley draws maximum mileage from the least showy role in Arthur Laurent’s otherwise exemplary book.

Jonathan Kent’s direction, assisted by designer Anthony Ward’s sets, atmospherically captures the seedy milieu of the vaudeville circuit (from the early 1920’s to the early 1930’s) and the run-down ‘digs’ that went with it; while Stephen Mear’s choreography, remains faithful to Jerome Robbins’s brilliant original blueprint.

A couple of cavills: The number All I Need Is The Girl, in which Tulsa (Kieran Kae) tries out a new dance routine, marginalises Louise who is watching him (mostly in darkness) when she should be seen yearning to be that girl. It is only at the very end that she joins him for an unconvincing ‘big finish’. Also failing to bring the house down, which it should, is You’ve Got To Have A Gimmick, in which three strippers demonstrate their art to the virginal Louise. As none of them can bump or grind with much conviction, this brilliant show-stopper, one of the best ever written, doesn’t have the impact it should. Also, The dressing-room setting in which it is staged feels too cramped.

That apart, this Gypsy is something to see, and its leading lady someone to treasure.

CLIVE HIRSCHHORN
NSO Chorus, St Paul’s Sinfonia

conductor Nicholas Jenkins, director Harry Fehr
with Sally Silver, Adrian Dwyer, Adam Tunnicliffe
Carolyn Dobbin, Damian Thantrey

“First class singing by any standards” - Rupert Christiansen

Lewes Town Hall
Wednesday 19 November 7.30pm

Devonshire Park Theatre, Eastbourne
Sunday 23 November 3pm

Cadogan Hall, London SW1
Tuesday 25 November 7pm

www.NewSussexOpera.org
Unlike the majority of the pop groups of the middle sixties who definitively put the North of England on the pop world’s musical map, The Kinks were London lads whose songs, courtesy of Ray, celebrated the city of their birth. Davies wrote about the people and the places he knew. He literally made music out of the mundane, and one of the great strengths of this show is the way it delves into the creative process.

In one of the best scenes, for example, we watch the creation of Waterloo Sunset. And although in reality it didn’t quite happen the way it’s depicted here, it nevertheless gives you a palpable sense of the way Davies and his group worked.

Though the Kinks stayed together until 1996 (their last recording was made in 1993), Sunny Afternoon ends in 1969. Skilfully worked into Penhall’s economic yet revealing script, are most of the defining events of their formative years.

We’re privy to the creation of their first hit, You Really Got Me, the unfavourable contracts they signed with Robert Waice (Dominic Tighe) and Grenville Collins (Tam Williams), their exploitative, toff-like managers who were all too aware of their differences in class, the manic, unpredictable behaviour of Dave culminating in an on-stage fracas with the band’s drummer, Mick Avory (a brilliant Adam Sopp), the defection of bassist Pete Quaife (a simpatico Ned Derrington), their disastrous American tour which resulted in a four year ban from the country for refusing to pay their union dues, Ray’s forced marriage to his first wife Rasa (Lillie Flynn) whom he made pregnant, the birth of his first daughter, and the fortuitous appearance of the high-powered American pop impresario Allen Klein (Philip Bird) who renegotiates their contracts on more favourable terms and brings them back to the States where they are only moderately successful.

The show ends on a high with a rousing rendition of Lola which, quite literally, has the audience dancing in the aisles. Also effectively show-cased are Dead-End Street, All Day and All of the night, Dedicated Follower of Fashion, and of course, the imperishable title number.

Miriam Buether’s set, a collection of high-powered speakers attached to three walls, which, in the American sequences, changes to variations of the stars and stripes flag, provides a discreet, unflashy yet evocative milieu; while her costumes add authenticity to the overall sixties mood of the piece.

The impeccable direction, which makes effective use of a thrust stage, is by Edward Hall. He’s blessed with a really wonderful cast, a clutch of great songs, and Penhall’s penetrating, and often moving book. So are we.

Unequivocally, the best British musical in a couple of decades.

CLIVE HIRSCHHORN
REFIGURING THE 50s AT BEN URI GALLERY

The new exhibition at Ben Uri Gallery brings together for the first time the work of five powerful, individual, figurative painters working in Britain in the 1950s: Joan Eardley (1921–1963), Sheila Fell (1931–1979), Eva Frankfurther (1930–1959), Josef Herman (1911–2000) and L S Lowry (1887–1976).

Spanning the years 1945–64 and featuring some 50 works including paintings, works on paper and related ephemera from more than 20 lenders, both public and private, it showcases the range, inventiveness and often widely differing approaches to figuration and practice by these five painters in this pivotal postwar period.

Each artist had a strong identification with the place (and its people) in which they chose to live and work and which formed, for a significant part of their careers, the primary focus of their practice: Eardley, the Townhead area of Glasgow; Fell, the mining community and landscape of her native Aspatria, Cumbria; Frankfurther, London’s East End, as well as the multi-cultural working-class communities whom she worked alongside in the West End at Lyons Corner House, Piccadilly; Herman, the Ystradgynlais mining community in South Wales; and Lowry, the people of his industrial hometown of Manchester. Each produced a concentrated and coherent body of work imbued with this strong sense of place and the largely working-class people associated with it.

Work is shown across a range of themes uncovering often surprising narratives: the strong single portraits which open the exhibition include Lowry’s mask-like Portrait of Ann (1957), which caused a stir when first exhibited at the Royal Academy among a public more accustomed to his large-scale industrial scenes. It contrasts with Fell’s spare, sculptural portrait of her mother, Ann (c. 1955), which was included like a mascot in all her subsequent exhibitions.
The BP exhibition

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britishmuseum.org/ming

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Cloisonné jar, decorated with dragons and imperial mark. China, Ming dynasty, Xuande mark and period, 1426–1435.
Rembrandt: The Late Works

This autumn, the National Gallery is presenting a once-in-a-lifetime exhibition, Rembrandt: The Late Works – the first ever in-depth exploration of Rembrandt's final years of painting.

Far from diminishing as he aged, his creativity gathered new energy in the closing years of his life. It is the art of these late years – soulful, honest and deeply moving – that indelibly defines our image of Rembrandt the man and the artist. This landmark exhibition, featuring unprecedented loans from around the world, is a unique opportunity to experience the passion, emotion and innovation of Rembrandt, the greatest master of the Dutch Golden Age.

From the 1650s until his death, Rembrandt (1606-1669) consciously searched for a new style that was even more expressive and profound. He freely manipulated printing and painting techniques in order to give traditional subjects new and original interpretations. The exhibition will illuminate his versatile mastery by dividing paintings, drawings and prints thematically in order to examine the ideas that preoccupied him during these final years: self-scrutiny, experimental technique, the use of light, the observation of everyday life, inspiration from other artists and responses to artistic convention, as well as expressions of intimacy, contemplation, conflict and reconciliation.

The exhibition will give visitors new insight into some of Rembrandt's most iconic works such as, The Sampling Officials of the Amsterdam Drapers' Guild (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) better known as The Syndics, revealing his brilliance in combining light and shadow, colour and texture to give a radical visual impact to a traditional portrait. Numerous examples of Rembrandt's finest etchings will demonstrate his skilful development of printing techniques to achieve unique individual effects.

A highlight of the exhibition will be the juxtaposition of a number self portraits including Self Portrait as the Apostle Paul (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), Self Portrait with Two Circles (English Heritage, The Iveagh Bequest (Kenwood)), Self Portrait Wearing a Turban (Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague), and Self Portrait at the Age of 63 (National Gallery). The latter two, painted in the final years of his life, show Rembrandt's exceptional honesty in recording his own features as he aged.

In one of the most moving works in the exhibition, the so-called Jewish Bride (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), Rembrandt depicted a couple's tender affection for each other with exquisite sensitivity. Upon viewing this painting for the first time in 1885, Vincent Van Gogh confessed to a friend that he would gladly give up ten years of his life to be able to sit in front of the painting for a fortnight with only a crust of dry bread to eat. It is this relentless, un fettered creativity of Rembrandt that influenced countless printmakers, painters and draughtsman in the generations that followed him, and which continues to inspire artists today.

www.nationalgallery.co.uk
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TRANSLATION NOW AVAILABLE IN 9 LANGUAGES
A world wracked by ecological disaster in which a chronic shortage of water results in a government-enforced banning of all private toilets, is hardly the dreams of which successful Broadway musicals are made. Here, when you need to spend a penny, you have, quite literally, to do so only in a public convenience. And at a cost. If you’re caught peeing anywhere else, you’re hauled off to a place of execution called Urinetown – which also happens to be the controversial title of the musical in question.

Running through the show’s humorous fabric is a serious seam that touches on ecological disaster, the victimisation of innocent men and women by greedy corporate schemers, and callous vengeance (the hero is thrown to his death from a skyscraper – a shocking moment, no doubt, for New York audiences as Urinetown opened three weeks after 9/11).

The crux of the plot involves a revolution (echoes of Les Mis) organised by the show’s hero Bobby Strong (Matthew Seadon-Young) against the government-lead baddie of the piece (Simon Paisley Day) whose daughter Hope (Rosanna Hyland) provides the obligatory romantic interest as she’s in love with Bobby.

Unfortunately, the authors haven’t always heeded the adage on ‘exposition’ provided by the narrator, and the first act occasionally bogs down with too much of it. The second act is much livelier and benefits from two of the show’s best numbers – Snuff That Girl and the gospel-like Run Freedom Run.

What is constantly on offer, though, is the endless supply of energy director Jamie Lloyd generates from a fully committed, terrifically talented cast, and Sutra Gilmour’s atmospheric, darkly foreboding, subterranean set. The production is slick and professional to its core.

Yet, despite it’s boldness of theme and occasional touches of originality, I’m not quite sure why the show ran a massive 965 performances on Broadway. It’s good, but only sporadically.

CLIVE HIRSCHHORN
INTERNATIONAL WICKED STAR
JENNIFER DINIOIA IN LONDON CAST

Jennifer DiNoia, who has enjoyed a remarkable eight year association with the hit musical WICKED in North America and internationally, has joined the West End production as Elphaba (from 27 October to 31 January) at London’s Apollo Victoria Theatre.

Jennifer DiNoia first joined the cast of Wicked in 2006 and has subsequently performed the role of Elphaba to huge acclaim across North America in the national tour, in both the Broadway and Chicago productions, and internationally in Seoul and Sydney. Her West End debut in the role marks the fourth country and sixth company of Wicked in which she will have performed the role.

Executive Producer (UK) Michael McCabe said: ‘We are all delighted that Jennifer DiNoia will now get to add London to the extensive list of cities in North America in the national tour, in both the Broadway and Chicago productions, and internationally in Seoul and Sydney. Her West End debut in the role marks the fourth country and sixth company of Wicked in which she will have performed the role.

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‘WHERE LATE THE SWEET BIRDS SANG’ AT THE ROSE PLAYHOUSE

Shakespeare’s 154 sonnets are some of the most breathtaking, exquisite, yet succinct investigations into what it means to be human within the entire literary canon. Using a rich selection of the sonnets performed by actresses Katherine Heath and accompanied by baroque cellist Lucia Capellaro, ‘Where Late The Sweet Birds Sang’ investigates the desolations and joys that life affords every one of us.

The Rose Theatre is the perfect location for these often under-valued and under-performed sonnets: at once intimate and epic, the space offers an opportunity to focus on these forensically detailed hymns to humanity in close up, whilst at the same time affording them a dramatic sweep in which they can truly, yet sweetly sing. The sonnets are often likened to a very intimate autobiography of Shakespeare’s private life and loves.

‘Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang’ is at The Rose Playhouse, Bankside from 4-29 November. Tel: 020 7261 9565.
THE 39 STEPS
Maria Aitken’s tongue-in-cheek adaptation of John Buchan’s whodunnit has four actors playing 150 parts and includes all the legendary scenes from Hitchcock’s movie.
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Piccadilly Circus, WC2 (0844 847 1778)

THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG
A Polytechnic amateur drama group are putting on a 1920s murder mystery and everything that can go wrong... does! A sell-out hit at the Edinburgh Festival.
DUCHESS THEATRE
Catherine Street, WC2 (0844 482 9672)

NEVILLE’S ISLAND
A star-studded cast portray the misadventures of four out-of-condition, out-of-their depth businessmen on an out-of-control team-building exercise.
DUKE OF YORK’S THEATRE
St Martin’s Lane, WC2 (020 7492 1552)

THE WOMAN IN BLACK
An innocent outsider, a suspicious rural community, a gothic house and a misty marsh are the ingredients of this Victorian ghost story.
FORTUNE THEATRE
Russell Street, WC2 (0844 871 7626)

HENRY IV
Two years ago, Phyllida Lloyd directed a taut, all-female version of Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar, setting it in a grim prison block where the track-suitied inmates staged their own production.
Now, in the second of a planned trilogy, she’s turned her attention to his Henry IV, stripping out minor characters and conflating both parts into an interval-free two hours. We’re made even more aware of the dehumanising experience of being processed and locked up as, via a bleak unwelcoming staircase, ‘wardens’ marshal us into the jail’s recreation room to take our places on grey plastic chairs.
The hook here is that the prisoner taking the role of Hal (a cold, Irish-accented Clare Dunne in a Chelsea shirt) is about to be released – and, like the dissolute prince, she’s on the point of putting her questionable past and reprobate associates behind her. So it’s a ruthlessly harsh ‘goodbye’ to a coke habit as Hal disowns his old cronies (including Ashley McGuire’s superb, grubby-vested, Cockney Falstaff). Then it’s into battle and a vicious boxing match with Jade Anouka’s restless, hot-headed Hotspur to retain the crown previously usurped by Harriet Walter’s gaunt, troubled and disappointed King Henry.
And making her professional stage debut, Sharon Rooney (from TVs ‘My Mad Fat Diary’) is unbearably moving as Lady Percy, clinging to her Hotspur, in an intense, vigorous production in which the prospect of rebellion – in the context of both the play and the prison – is never far away.
Donmar Theatre
Louise Kingsley

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME
Based on Mark Haddon’s best-selling novel, the play follows a 15 year-old maths genius who tries to unravel the mystery of his neighbour’s murdered dog.
GIELGUD THEATRE
35 Shaftesbury Ave, W1 (020 7452 3000)

Royal National Theatre
Plays in repertory
OLIVIER THEATRE

BEHIND THE BEAUTIFUL FOREVERS
From Katherine Boo’s book, winner of the National Book Award for Non-Fiction 2012, David Hare has fashioned a tumultuous play on an epic scale.
LYTTELTON THEATRE

JOHN
Powerful new verbatim work by DV8 Physical Theatre follows the extraordinary life story of one man, John. It combines spoken word with movement to create a touching and poignant theatrical experience.
DORFMAN THEATRE

HERE LIES LOVE
Traces the astonishing journey of Imelda Marcos, First Lady of the Philippines, from her meteoric rise to power to descent into infamy and disgrace.
NATIONAL THEATRE
South Bank, SE1 (020 7452 3000)

WAR HORSE
The National Theatre’s epic based on the celebrated novel by Children’s Laureate, Michael Morpurgo. Actors work with magnificent life-size puppets on a gruelling journey at the time of the First World War.
NEW LONDON THEATRE
Drury Lane, WC2 (0844 412 4654)

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE
Declan Donnellan directs world premiere play of the 1998 hit movie, adapted by Lee Hall. The amusing, yet touching story of an impoverished ‘Will’ Shakespeare, as he struggles to write a desperately needed new play.
NOEL COWARD THEATRE
St Martin’s Lane, WC2 (0844 482 5140)

SPEED-THE-PLOW
Lindsay Lohan takes her first ever stage role as Karen in David Mamet’s brilliantly satirical portrayal of the Hollywood system, a part originally played by Madonna in 1988.
PLAYHOUSE THEATRE
Northumberland Ave, WC2 (0844 482 5140)

GREAT BRITAIN
Richard Bean’s fast and furious new play is an anarchic satire about the press, the police and the political establishment.
THEATRE ROYAL HAYMARKET
Haymarket, SW1 (0845 481 1870)

THE MOUSETRAP
Agatha Christie’s whodunnit is the longest running play of its kind in the history of the British theatre.
ST MARTIN’S THEATRE
West Street, WC2 (0844 499 1515)

KING CHARLES III
Mike Bartlett’s critically acclaimed new future history play explores the people beneath the crowns, the unwritten rules of democracy, and the conscience of Britain’s most famous family.
WYNDHAM’S THEATRE
Charing Cross Road, WC2 (0844 412 4663)
MADE IN DAGENHAM
New musical comedy inspired by the women workers at Ford’s Dagenham car plant 1968, the first women to challenge for equal pay leading to them going on strike and winning their case.
ADELPHI THEATRE
Strand, WC2 (0844 412 4651)

WICKED
Hit Broadway story of how a clever, misunderstood girl with emerald green skin and a girl who is beautiful and popular turn into the Wicked Witch of the West and Glinda the Good Witch in the Land of Oz.
APOLLO VICTORIA THEATRE
Wilton Road, SW1 (0844 826 8000)

URINETOWN
Award winner Jamie Lloyd directs this rampant riot of a musical, telling the tale of a town about to burst, a place where spending a penny can prove problematic when the privilege to pee has a preposterous price tag.
APOLLO THEATRE
Shaftesbury Avenue, W1 (0844 482 9671)

WHITE CHRISTMAS
Irving Berlin’s classic tells the story of two ex-army pals as they team up with a pair of sisters to put on a show to save their former General’s remote Vermont ski lodge.
DOMINION THEATRE
Tottenham Court Road, W1 (0845 200 7982)

MATILDA
Critically acclaimed Royal Shakespeare Company production of Roald Dahl’s Matilda, directed by Matthew Warchus.
CAMBRIDGE THEATRE
Earlham Street, WC2 (0844 800 1110)

SCOTTSBORO BOYS
Nine young black men, aged 12 to 19, are travelling on a train through Scottsboro, looking for a new life in this provocative musical drama, directed by Susan Stroman.
GARRICK THEATRE
Charing Cross Road, WC2 (0844 412 4662)

SUNNY AFTERNOON
The Kinks exploded onto the 60’s music scene with a raw, energetic new sound that rocked a nation. With music and lyrics by Ray Davies.
HAROLD PINTER THEATRE
Panton Street, SW1 (0844 871 7627)

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Long running epic romance by Andrew Lloyd Webber, set behind the scenes of a Paris opera house where a deformed phantom stalks his prey.
HER MAJESTY’S THEATRE
Haymarket, SW1 (0844 412 2707)

THRELLER – LIVE
High octane show celebrating the career of the King of Pop, Michael Jackson. Over two hours of the non-stop hit songs that marked his legendary live performances.
LYRIC THEATRE
Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2 (0844 412 4661)

THE LION KING
Disney’s phenomenally successful animated film is transformed into a spectacular stage musical, a superb evening of visual delight.
LYCEUM THEATRE
Wellington Street, WC2 (0844 871 3000)

MAMMA MIA!
Hit musical based on the songs of ABBA, set around the story of a mother and daughter, on the eve of the daughter’s wedding.
NOVELLO THEATRE
Aldwych, WC2 (0844 482 5170)

THE COMMITMENTS
Roddy Doyle’s classic story about an assorted bunch of Irish kids who find salvation through soul music comes to the stage for the first time.
PALACE THEATRE
Shaftesbury Avenue, W1 (0844 412 4656)

ONCE
Based on the Academy Award-winning film, the story of an Irish musician and a Czech immigrant drawn together by a love of music.
PHOENIX THEATRE
Northumberland Ave, WC2 (0844 493 0650)

JERSEY BOYS
Rags to riches tale of four blue collar kids working their way to the heights of stardom as Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons.
PICCADILLY THEATRE
Denman Street, W1 (0844 871 3055)

MISS SAIGON
Set in the final days of the American occupation of Saigon at the end of the Vietnam War, the legendary musical returns to the West End.
PRINCE EDWARD THEATRE
Old Compton Street, W1 (0844 482 5155)

THE BOOK OF MORMON
Broadway musical takes shots at everything from organised religion to consumerism, state of the economy and the musical theatre genre.
PRINCE OF WALES THEATRE
Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2 (020 7379 5399)

LES MISERABLES
A spectacularly staged version of Victor Hugo’s epic novel about an escaped convict’s search for redemption in Revolutionary France.
QUEENS THEATRE
Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2 (0844 482 5160)

DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS
New multi-million pound musical based on the classic comedy film stars Robert Lindsay and Rufus Hound.
SAVOY THEATRE
Strand, W1 (0844 871 7687)

MEMPHIS THE MUSICAL
Transferring from Broadway, the Tony Award-winning musical, inspired by true events from the underground dance clubs of 1950s.
SHAFTESBURY THEATRE
Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2 (020 7379 5399)

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY
Roald Dahl’s story of young Charlie Bucket and the mysterious confectioner Willy Wonka is brought brilliantly to life in a new West End musical directed by Sam Mendes.
THEATRE ROYAL
Drury Lane, WC2 (0844 871 8810)

BILLY ELLIOT – THE MUSICAL
Hit British film transformed into a thrilling stage musical by its original director, Stephen Daldry, with music by Elton John.
VICTORIA PALACE
Victoria Street, SW1 (0844 811 0055)
HELIOT STEAKHOUSE

You have seen the exterior of course: handsome Edwardian brick pile on the corner of Leicester Square. It has a neon sign depicting a Roman charioteer (one assumes) but in real life it was at first a venue for circuses with elephants and polar bears. Apparently, it had an enormous tank at the centre, which could be filled for aquatic displays and the entrances could be flooded to let in boats. Wow. I would like to have seen that. Too bad those days are gone, but the history of this famous building – renamed the ‘Talk of the Town’ in the 60s and before that a music hall and place where Charlie Chaplin entertained – somehow permeates each new incarnation.

It has been a casino since 2012 and the new owners, Jimmy and Simon Thomas, spent tons of money renovating the place over a period of three years, so that it twinkles in a sub-James Bond sort of way.

I admit to knowing nothing of casinos, beyond what you see in the movies. The security guys at The Hippodrome are spot-on, all dressed in black, with their little earpieces and short haircuts. Would someone be shot running down one of the curving glass staircases, or would some shady character in a white dinner jacket send secret messages across a roulette table? Seems not.

What is more shocking to the novice in such an establishment is quite how casual gambling has become. At 6.30pm in the evening (the Hippodrome is open 24 hours), there were young women in parkas placing chips on the Blackjack table, as if they had come to buy apples in the market and middle aged men in golfing sweaters, whose twenty pound notes were being posted down cunning slots in the tables. They all seemed pretty cool on the surface, considering that they were losing.

We left them to their fate, but in any case you can observe the gaming floor from the tiered heights of the restaurant, the Heliot Steakhouse. Another surprise: here’s an eatery in a casino that has really good food. Sorry to reveal all my prejudices in one go, but I really did think this would be a fancy burger bar with salads covered in cheese sauce.

Instead, we had ham hock terrine (£6) with fresh broad beans, peas and lemon oil. It was great – only the crackling was too hard, maybe a bulk lot from the morning service. Tuna tartare (£7), with its topping of white radish, was a revelation. So fresh. Only the Bloody Mary jelly was absent, in my opinion, or was I just too absorbed by roulette wheels to notice?

We heard the owners of the Hippodrome – Jimmy and Simon Thomas – were British, and yet here are USDA steaks. Apparently they just wanted ‘the best’ and these slices of beef were the business in a blind tasting involving Herefordshire rivals. Sigh! The truth is, the steaks are fantastic. They range from £13 to £29 but you would have to be a professional boxer to eat a whole T bone, surely?

Meanwhile the girlies in the party (moi) could nibble on smoked haddock with a poached egg and mustard sauce (£13). This was textbook perfect – even had spinach below the fish – apart from the fact that it could have been hotter. I blame the egg poacher.

Cheeses were nothing special – something chilly from the fridge – and ‘tarte tatin’ was more tarte fine aux pommes – that’s to say, exquisite thin slices of apple, pastry with no sign of caramelisation. But the wine list is decent. Plenty of glasses at £7-9, including Gruner Veltliner, the Austrian novelty, and Argentinian Malbec.

Besides, there are other delights at The Hippodrome to drag you away from dinner. Almost every night features a different cabaret – everything from military bands to opera, classical soloists, ballet dancers and rock stars. The programmer is an ex-Ronnie Scott’s manager. You can eat fancy bar snacks etc in the theatre and the atmosphere is rarefied.

Down in the basement, Lola’s has a more intimate ambience. Named after a racy Edwardian entrepreneur-cum-chorus girl who ran an illegal gambling joint within the establishment, it is now a smaller casino in the hippodrome. It seemed less embarrassing to learn the ropes here and the staff are friendly and fun.

Did we win? Certainly! Here’s the advice of a beginner: buy very few chips. Place them at the edge of the table on ‘Odds’ or ‘Evens’. Leave when you have lost your original stake. Bob’s your uncle! I won £100 after buying £20 of chips. It’s not the most fun though. Fun is clearly when you place your chips on random numbers and wait to see if our ship comes in.

I prefer ice cream and cabaret.

Sue Webster

Heliot Steak House
The Hippodrome Casino
10-14 Cranbourn Street, WC2
Telephone 020 7769 8844
Have a
Hamleys
Christmas!

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