

hightide

FEBRUARY 2010

SCARBOROUGH'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE



**Starting from scratch:
printmaking for all**

**Bex gets the blues
Chill at the SJT**

**AND: music arts theatre comedy
film exhibitions poetry food & drink**

www.hightidemagazine.com

The east coast has a reputation for high quality in fine art. But the craft side is every bit as good, and now there's a chance for everyone to develop their skills with Crescent Arts.

The Blues Club is also going from strength to strength with a line-up of utterly modern players who respect the tradition. We profile just one of those visiting this month.

A mental institution under the Nazis hardly seems like material for a good night out, yet playwright Vanessa Brooks has managed the feat. See our feature on visiting drama Hypothermia.

Cover pic: Crescent Arts

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NEWS



Janis Bright on a good summer in store at the Spa

The Spa in Scarborough is to host a series of top comedy acts this summer. In a first for the venue, the gigs will run throughout July and August.

The line-up includes Susan Murray (pictured), a veteran of everything from the BBC to biker festivals, Greg Cook who has been tagged 'the Les Dawson for the 21st century' by no less than the BBC's head of comedy, and Sam Harland who is billed as the east coast's equivalent of Peter Kay. Each gig features at least three standups and the gags promise to be fast and furious.

Comedy Waves starts on 7 July and runs to 1 September. Full event details in our website listings section – www.hightidemagazine.com.

New waves

Class does lines

A new drawing club gets going at the Valley Bar this month. Hosted by Crescent Arts members, the informal get-together will feature fun events like everybody drawing the same object and a game of visual consequences.

The club's first gathering is on Wednesday 3 February, starting from 5.30pm and continuing for an hour and a half to two hours. After that it will be weekly at the same time, same venue. Drop in and let your lines take shape, or find out more at www.drawingclub.co.uk.



Bex gets the blues

Roger Osborne on an exciting run of musicians at the Blues Club

If you like a music performance that stays with you, then Bex Marshall could be right for you. She manages to overturn all the old clichés – she’s a white, British woman who manages to not only sing the blues and play blues guitar – but does them both with the kind of upfront style that gets live music into your blood and bones. A powerful but soulful voice and a fluid guitar style – to use another old music cliché, she owns the stage.

Bex is the latest of an amazing list of performers visiting Scarborough’s Blues Club. Regular mentions on Paul Jones’ Radio 2 slot (Bex Marshall was the featured guest on a recent show) and a loyal and growing audience are giving the club a real reputation among fans and performers alike. Earlier this year Mark Horsley revealed that sponsorship and donations were enabling him to upgrade the PA and microphones to give even better quality sound. There remains the possibility of removing the DJ deck at Sigma to give a wider stage, and better sight lines.

In the meantime get along to see Bex Marshall and keep an eye out for high quality music on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Starting from scratch



There’s something about print that fires up your imagination. Maybe the craft, the doing, or maybe it’s the inky fingers that you show with the pride of a trade. For Dawn Brooks, a specialist in several types of etching, it’s the conversation with the piece, the working and re-working as an item emerges. ‘You slowly build a relationship with the plate you are working on, it becomes a dialogue,’ she says. ‘You are never quite sure what’s there so there’s always an element of surprise.’

Dawn uses two main techniques, carborundum and collagraph, to produce the necessary marks on a metal plate. Each process involves using giant presses, some still in use from Victorian times, to produce the paper ‘proofs’ or samples at each stage, and then the final print.

She is one of two Crescent Arts resident artists offering

courses this month where different print techniques are taught to people who want to give it a try. Some have become regulars on Dawn’s courses and are ready to try more advanced techniques; others will be complete beginners.

The other artist is Jonathan Green, who will be taking participants through the basics of silk screen printing. That’s the method extensively used for posters, and in one of Jonathan’s classes everyone will get to take home a bag or T-shirt bearing a design they have printed themselves.

‘People get things printed and never know how it is done,’ Jonathan says. This course will show them how, right from bringing their own design idea along, to completing the item. Jonathan can help with advice on what kind of design will

work well – the simpler the better – and will show examples of the craft during the sessions.

Jonathan joined Crescent Arts, which is building a range of expertise in printmaking, only three months ago. He mainly produces sculpture but still likes using print to produce outlines and block colours. He and Dawn plan to be on hand after this month’s courses to help any participants who want to develop their skills further. There could be more advanced courses, and there’s an open access facility at Crescent Arts for people to use once they have reached the necessary health and safety standards.

Details of courses and contacts are in our events list on the website www.hightidemagazine.com.

Chilling drama on tour

Janis Bright talks to playwright and director Vanessa Brooks about her drama Hypothermia



It's a tense time for Vanessa Brooks. She is working on the final technical rehearsals for her new drama Hypothermia, and it's not a straightforward job. Among other challenges, the stage experts have to create a scene in which the audience follows the actors under the surface of a frozen lake.

That's just one aspect of the chills in this play set in a mental institution under the Nazis. Brooks drew on real records of the appalling treatment of people with disabilities by that regime to cast light on our current attitudes. The central character is Oskar, a long term resident around whom the tale of grim medical experiments and party believers unfolds. He's played by Ben Langford, who himself has a learning disability.

So for Brooks the pressure is on. She has both written and directed this new play, and her job now is to ensure the detective thrills, magic and comedy shine through as well as the stark subject matter. She's revelling in the challenge. 'It's exciting, though I know that's me saying it,' she says. 'It's very theatrical and the original score by Laurence Kaye helps to transport the audience to a magical and heightened place.'

The team at theatre company Full Body and The Voice where Brooks is artistic director are providing a confident bedrock, having more than a decade of experience with their own productions. Huddersfield-based, they began as a type of social care project, preparing learning-disabled actors for a career in the theatre. Professional input from other actors and a rigorous training programme very quickly raised their ambitions though, as the company realised how much its actors and writers had to offer. The turning point came five years ago with *In the Footsteps of Mr Butler*, written by Ian McMillan and John Palmer. 'That showed that an integrated cast was the model to follow, and major works could come from it,' says Brooks. Meanwhile, she was herself making a name as a playwright, including a stint as writer in residence at the Stephen Joseph Theatre.

So now it's the final preparations for Oskar's story and Brooks is looking forward to the company's visit to the SJT this month. Four years from her first having the idea for the play, it is finally taking shape on stage and she is bubbling with excitement. The endless writing and rehearsal process has not taken any of the play's freshness from her mind. 'It's a fantastic cast, I can't wait to see it,' she says.

Hypothermia plays at the SJT on 19 and 20 February. Details: www.sjt.uk.com