

hightide

MARCH 2008

SCARBOROUGH'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE

**Two blokes
in a bedsit:
it must be
opera!**

John Clarke on poetry
Comedy club on a roll

AND: music arts theatre
comedy film exhibitions poetry

www.hightidemagazine.com

While there has been plenty going on through the winter, we're getting that emerging-from-hibernation feeling. Two new exhibitions start this month and the SJT gets back into full swing with a strong season of visiting shows. Lots of intriguing events of different kinds too (Coastal Connections, iconic landscapes). Not quite time for the sunblocker, but we're heading in the right direction.

This month we ask whether comedy is the new rock and roll, and profile up and coming nights at the Other Side Comedy Club. Showing that there's more than one way to raise a laugh, we talk to Jeff Clarke of Opera della Luna, whose amazing two-hander Nightmare Songs is visiting the SJT.

Finally, in a mood of spring-like inspiration, award-winning poet John Clarke tells us why he reads poetry – and why we might think about doing the same.

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This month's special offer

It's thirty years since the release of Saturday Night Fever. We have a special anniversary DVD of the surprisingly gritty drama that made John Travolta a household name.

We'll draw the name of the lucky winner from our email newsletter subscribers list on Wed 19 March.

So see our website home page and get signed up for a chance to win.

Digital fest set to return

Digital Scarborough returns this year, organised by Darrell Hooper as part of his work with Science City York. The latter is a broader organisation than its name implies, supporting technology in a variety of applications, including art and culture. So the programme this year is based around music, visuals and website creation.

It all starts at Bar2B on 12 March with a selection of digital audio/visual pieces plus live DJ sets and electro-acoustic music. This marks the second birthday of the Creative Coast network, so

all creative people (that means you) are invited. On Fri 14 March there's the UPLOAD digital festival at Vivaz, 10pm-4am.

The big event on 15 March is an 8 hour website code-a-thon challenge starting at 9am at Sigma @ the Cask. Web designers, coders and writers are asked to come along and build a website for a Scarborough charity. Brian Teeman – one of the founders of Joomla! and OpenSource Matters – will be there.

For contacts and details of Digital Scarborough events see our events calendar.

Making connections

A major day-long event aims to draw together creative people in the area, and offer them professional guidance. Coast Connections takes place on 12 March in Scarborough Library.

Speakers Trudi Entwistle and Andy Edwards will discuss

the relation between artistic creativity and commercial success, and there will be workshops on creative business, project management, getting your work known, and the evolving web.

Email: contact@create.uk.net

Northern Net for Woodend

Woodend Creative Workspace (as the new building is to be known) got a boost this month as Yorkshire Forward made it one of the regional portals for a new high speed data connection.

The building will be internally

wired up through NYnet, but now it will have access to a regional facility, called Northern Net, with truly humungous capacity.

The idea is to connect all major urban centres of the north to the new media city in

The great outdoors

If you are interested in seeing your work, or organising event in the spectacular landscape of North Yorkshire then get along to: 'Outdoor celebrations & performance arts in iconic landscapes'.

Organised by Create, this day-long event, with a host of high quality speakers is on 13 March at the Crown Hotel, Harrogate.

For details email contact@create.net

New exhibitions

This month Branching Out at South Street Gallery runs from 1 March to 18 April, featuring work by local artists. Scarborough Art Gallery is running Fairy Tales and Fantasy from 14 March.



Detail from Steve Upton: Queensgate

Comic with Pryor form



COVER STORY:

Roger Osborne talks to Jeff Clarke, whose inventive musical drama plays at the Stephen Joseph this month

High Tide previews the upcoming Comedy Club nights for March

It must be twenty years since someone declared that comedy was the new rock n' roll; nowadays that doesn't seem such a daft claim. Youths with attitude can pick up a mike as easily as a guitar, and a career path of small clubs and big theatres pulls them on. Even TV has managed to find ways of framing the talent of super-cool comedians. While the sitcom has died on its feet, the panel game, once a rest-home for the worst of British so-called humour, has been given a kick up the jacksy by a new generation of sharp-tongued comics.

If you want to see all this happening first-hand (and, believe me, there is nothing like live comedy) join the hordes of Scarboroughians who are packing out the Other Side Comedy Club at the Blue Lounge.

This month's headliners are typical of the new breed. Simon Bligh is a Scouser whose destiny was set when he saw the Richard Pryor Live movie and decided he had to be a comedian. (A word of homage here to Pryor, the godfather of modern comedy –

his live shows on film are blistering; no one-liners or three-part gags, just real life in the raw.)

Ten years later Bligh plucked up the courage to go on stage, and he's now a regular compere at the Comedy Club and one of the most sought after talents in the business. Look forward to manic storytelling in an affable style interspersed with wild, frenetic outbursts.

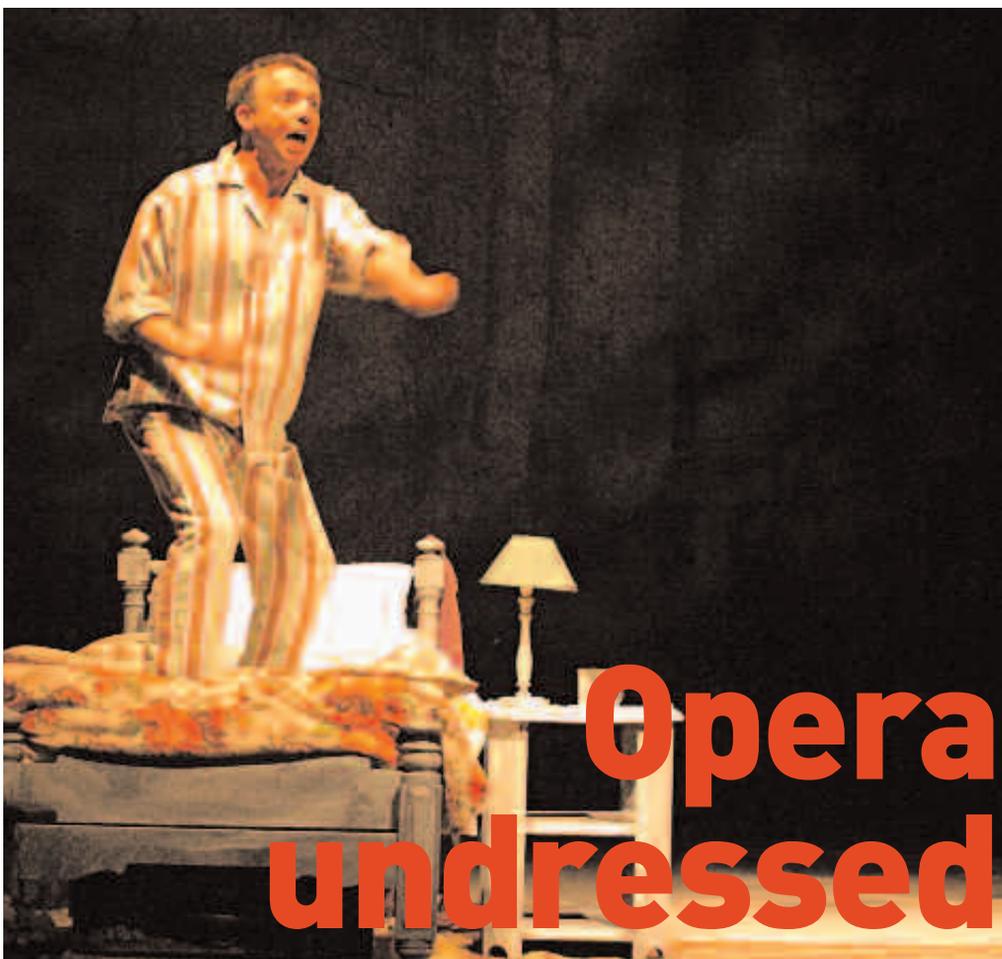
Later in March Steve Harris is, according to Jon Reed, 'a real crowd-pleasing comedian, straightforward and undemanding, performing in an assured, take-no-prisoners way. Honourable mention must go to his closing party piece – a human beatbox number that is mighty impressive, if utterly gratuitous.' Hip-hop, dancing, singing, comedy – what's not to like?

**Simon Bligh & Dan Atkinson
10 March**
**Steve Harris & Matt Reed
24 March**
**Doors Open 7:30 pm, shows
start 8:15 pm**
**Other Side Comedy Club,
Blue Lounge,
St Nicholas Street**

Are you one of those people who hear a bit of opera and think: 'Mmm, that sounds quite thrilling,' but can't make the leap to sitting through three hours of Don Giovanni? Well, Opera della Luna might be just the company for you. Jeff Clarke, co-founder and artistic director, began his career in opera but had a long-time love of theatre. 'My grandparents used to take me to theatre in Oldham, and tell about the days when there were seven theatres in the town. Something got into my blood.' The highlight of those childhood holidays was the annual visit of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company.

Influenced by his mentor Jonathan Miller, Jeff became interested in directing musical pieces that needed the full range of acting skills, rather than classic opera. 'I realised I wanted to be a theatre director, but with a difference.' He formed Opera della Luna in 1994 and immediately won commissions for new productions of several Gilbert and Sullivan works.

As so often happens, the restrictions of a small cast and budget forced the company to think creatively. As Jeff says, 'We needed to be different and so pace and versatility became our watchwords. For example, using the same actors in different roles might seem a difficulty, but it actually adds



Opera undressed

Simon Butteriss gets ready to patter in *Nightmare Songs*

massively to the depth and enjoyment, for the audience and the cast.'

Immersion in Gilbert and Sullivan led directly to *Nightmare Songs*, the two-hander that is a highlight of the SJT spring season. Simon Butteriss, a noted singer of the famous 'patter' songs, asked Jeff to direct a one-man show about the original patter man George Grossmith for the Buxton Festival.

They later decided the piece, now set in a bedroom rather than the original dressing

room, could be improved with a new script – which Jeff duly wrote.

The piece focuses on the fears and hopes of an understudy who endures a sleepless night before his debut. Full of great G&S music, it also touches on the anguished lives of showbiz performers, where talent often plays second fiddle to bluster. Gilbert himself gave some famous advice on this in *Ruddigore*:

'You must stir it and stomp it,
And blow your own trumpet,
Or, trust me, you haven't a
chance!'

Nightmare Songs was in rehearsals when Jeff Clarke asked John Reed, then in his nineties and the last great D'Oyly Carte patter man, whether he still went on stage for the traditional company reunions.

'Oh no,' he said, 'I suffer from panic attacks and nightmares whenever I go near a stage.' The play, it seems, had hit upon a story that was waiting to be told.

***Nightmare Songs*,
Stephen Joseph Theatre,
22 & 23 March**

Listings

HIGH FIVES

The Comedy Club continues its fine season this month - see our feature on Page 4.

Elsewhere, die-hard punk fans can get their kicks with Stiff Little Fingers and the SJT Spring Season kicks off with some excellent visiting shows, including Nightmare Songs (see feature on pages 4 and 5).

Digital Scarborough is running as a series of loosely connected events, preceded by Coastal Connections.

South Street Gallery is definitely worth a visit (or two) and if you haven't been to mima, then just what are you waiting for?

Art shows are listed first. Timings are as correct as we can make them, but check our website for updates or call the venue.

Jan 19 to Mar 2 East Coast Open

Scarborough Art Gallery
Free with pass

Feb 1 to Mar 18 Jane Thorniley-Walker : Black Beauty, Landscapes of the North York Moors

Moors National Park Centre
Scarborough Library
7:45 pm £4

Feb 29 to May 11 Based On Paper: The Marzona Collection

mima (Middlesbrough Institute of
Modern Art) 10:00 am

Mar 1 to April 18 Branching Out

South Street Gallery
10:00 am Free

Feb 29 Amazing Grace

Scarborough Library 7:45 pm £4

Feb 29 Stiff Little Fingers

Vivaz 9:00 pm

Mar 1 Scarborough Symphony Orchestra: Masters of Structure

Spa 7:30 pm £7, £6

Mar 3 Archaeology and History Society: Archaeology at Osgodby Bypass

Scarborough Library
7:30 pm Free

Mar 5 Scarborough Jazz: Mick Donnelly

Sigma at The Cask 8:45 pm Free

Mar 6 Rotunda Geology Group: Geology of Jordan

University Campus 7:30 pm £1.50

Mar 6 Debate: Do the Media Run This Country?

Scarborough Campus 7:30 pm

Mar 10 Comedy Club: Simon Bligh, Dan Atkinson

Blue Lounge 8:00 pm £7 (£5)

Mar 11 Emperor Piano Trio

Stephen Joseph Theatre
7:30 pm £15-£11

Mar 12 Scarborough Jazz: Sandi Russell



Sigma at The Cask
8:45 pm £6 (£5)

Fishie on a dishie

This must be Scarborough's oldest Indian restaurant. It's certainly got that venerable air, though happily the decor is modern – flock wallpaper a distant memory. It's got bigger over the years too, providing a spacious atmosphere where once it was narrow and gloomy.

The fare is standard Bangladeshi, reliably good without ever getting too

interesting. Four fish dishes catch the eye though, these are proper Bengali styles but using familiar types of fish like cod.

We tried two. Palak macher churchori is pieces of meaty cod cooked with ginger and spinach, and it's tasty. The highlight though is moni puri machli massala, a type of fish found in Bangladesh cooked in masala sauce with lemon and garlic. Great stuff!

Puds are less exciting. You might think who cares after all that nan, ladies' fingers, pickles and the rest. But if just one of our local restaurants could produce a decent kulfi ice cream it would be worth an outing just for that.

Scarborough Tandoori, 48-52 St Thomas Street, Scarborough, Tel 01723 352393

Mar 12
Creative Coast Party
Bar2B 6:00 pm Free

Mar 12
Coastal Connections
Scarborough Library 9:30 pm
£25



Mar 14
Film Society:
We Shall Overcome
Scarborough Library 7:45 pm £4

Mar 14
Digital Scarborough:
Upload
Vivaz 10:00 pm Free

Mar 15
Digital Scarborough:
Code-a-thon
Sigma at The Cask 9:00 am

Mar 15 to 21
National Student
Drama Festival
Spa Various times

Mar 17
Archaeology and History
Society: William Smith
in Yorkshire
Scarborough Library
7:30 pm Free

Mar 19
Scarborough Jazz:
Richie Binns
Sigma at The Cask 8:45 pm Free

Mar 20
Empirical
Coliseum, Whitby 8:00 pm £10

Mar 22 and 23
Nightmare Songs
Stephen Joseph Theatre
7:30 pm £15-£11

Mar 24
Comedy Club: Steve
Harris, Matt Reed
Blue Lounge 8:00 pm £7 (£5)



Mar 26
Scarborough Jazz:
Mark Chandler
Sigma at The Cask 8:45 pm Free

Mar 27
Buddy Holly
Stephen Joseph Theatre
7:30 pm £15-£11

Mar 28
Film Society:
The Page Turner
Scarborough Library 7:45 pm £4

Mar 28
Poetry Café
SJT Restaurant 8:30 pm £4

Mar 29
Easter Drop-In
Workshop
Scarborough Art Gallery
2:00 pm Free

Mar 29
Dirty Beasts
Stephen Joseph Theatre
2:00 pm £7 - £5

Jazz 'n' funk
maestros
Empirical play
the Coliseum at
Whitby this
month

Mar 29 Ensemble 360
Stephen Joseph Theatre 7:30 pm
£15-£11

Be here, too



Award-winning poet John Clarke explains why he reads poetry

I read poetry to find out who I might become when in company with some of the most passionate, intelligent and eloquent people that have ever lived.

I like it when a poem has encoded in the way it moves and sounds some sense of the writer's delight at discovering their subject through the words they're using. The poem is a living record of an adventure into the unknown, and to read it is to re-live the excitement of that journey.

All too often, I think I know what the world is like, and tell the same old stories about myself. But when I read a good poem, all those habits get tested: I wander through the limits of what I thought it was possible to think and be. That's where my sense of euphoria, giddiness and disturbance come from. If you've ever closed your eyes and walked for as far as you dare across a beach and then opened them, you'll get a sense of the astonishment that can come from reading poetry.

As Emily Dickinson said, a good poem should take the top of your head off.

Poetry has greatest licence to move swiftly and unconventionally. One of its jobs is to make language surprising in a way that few readers could tolerate if it went on for the length of a novel.

This duty to be surprising is often the cause of complaint that poetry is too difficult. Yes, some poets can be wilfully obscure, but a poem should make us look twice at words. It should make us marvel that it can carry so much meaning and feeling from one person to another; that words can be a sensual pleasure both in the ear and in the mouth.

And sometimes you have to concentrate hard to break your preconceptions of what writing should be like against an alternative point of view, even if in the end you reject it. In a world where we're often categorised by marketing companies, or tested by psychometrics, poetry is one

of the last and best refuges we have for a complete view of our puzzling selves.

We may not all want to write poetry, but we can learn the poetic skills of persuasiveness, efficiency and accuracy and apply them in our working lives to smooth and fine-tune relations. But, as a 'poetry-for-poetry-sake' reader, I'd simply say that it refreshes our sense of what language can do, and, as we're creatures of language, it can refresh our sense of who we are and might become.

I love it when a poem names an indefinable sensation I've had, but which I've never quite known I've had because no one has ever said, until that moment, 'I've had it too', in quite the right way. I think that's ultimately why I read and listen to poetry – it is to discover that someone else has been here, too.

John Clarke is the winner of the 2007 Nottingham Open Poetry Prize, Director of the Beverley Literature Festival and acting poetry editor, Arc Publications