

Legally Blonde at Epsom Playhouse

23 March 2023



The Epsom Players performance at the Epsom Playhouse on Tuesday 21st March is reviewed by Nigel Dams for Sardines and reprinted with permission. It runs till Saturday. Tickets from Epsom Playhouse box office

Until I spoke with one of the cast members (the leading cast member actually, the glorious Lydia May Whiteside) after the show, I thought this was a professional production.

When the curtain went up, I thought, hang on, amateurs can't afford a set like this. And then when the dancing began, I thought, hang on, amateurs can't afford dancers like this. Same with the singing.

So I decided they must be pros, and settled back to be more and more entertained as the evening went on.

Let me get the minor niggles out of the way first. I couldn't always make out the words the singers were putting across. This was sometimes because the band, especially the horns, were just a shade too loud, sometimes because the lead was not cutting through the chorus, and sometimes because the vocal frequencies blended too much with the band's. But this was only in the beginning, really, and got better as the show progressed.



Also, when the stage crew flew in various bits of scenery, they sometimes hung suspended and swinging an inch above the boards, which was pretty distracting. It seemed to me that another inch would have grounded them, and eliminated that.

But the rest was great, and kept getting better and better.

Right from the opening number I kept thinking how sharp the choreography was - kudos to Della Bhujoo - and how fit and well-drilled the dancers were. I have great respect for people who can do intense cardio and sing at the same time. They were singing very well too, all of them. Harmonies were crisp and close, high notes and belt notes all well struck, all very impressive. I must make special mention of the eye-popping opening number in Act 2. The entire troupe were skipping (sorry, jumping rope) in time to the music, with great vigour, while singing, led by Millie Shields as Brooke. Max respect. Especially because Ms Shields had to speak shortly afterward and you could barely tell she'd been working out.

It seems unfair to single anyone out from the cast, because they were all excellent, but I must mention Imogen Smart-Steele as Paulette (excellent accent, great singer), Akhil Gowrinath likewise and Ms Whiteside, who led the whole show, playing an enormous part with total confidence, swagger and beguiling blondness. Oh, and the two dogs who were obviously classmates at RADA.

A final special mention to the whole cast for the 'Gay or European?' number, which was perfect, and very funny.

I have to say again, I can hardly believe that this show was done by amateurs (am I allowed to use that word any more?) it was so slick, so tight, so well done. My humble and sincere congratulations to Director Chris Malone, Musical Director Dan Francis and the entire cast, band and crew. Superb.

Nigel Dams

Reprinted courtesy of Sardines Magazine

Ashtead Choral Society celebrated Surrey's Vaughan Williams.

23 March 2023



Andrew Storey conducts the **Ashtead Choral Society** with enthusiasm and vigour, presenting them at their best in this delightful programme, showing off a range of music by Ralph Vaughan Williams in the 150th anniversary year of his birth. A review of the concert held on 25th February in Epsom.

Starting the evening with **Vaughan Williams'** Five Mystical songs, the choir began with a warm and harmonious sound, which remained well balanced and well blended throughout the evening. Accompanied solely by **Stephen Ridge** on the piano, the sound filled the wonderful acoustics of **St Martin's Church in Epsom**. The choir provided excellent support to the baritone soloist, Daniel Tate, who gave an especially commendable performance as a last minute stand-in, and whose tone and clarity propelled the storytelling of RVW's Mystical Songs. The choir especially shone as the focal point in the 3rd song,

demonstrating a beautiful understanding of tonality, and picked up the pace for the 5th song – the well-known ‘Let all the world’ – with an injection of energy to finish off.

The second piece of the evening was The Lark Ascending, played by The Kent Sinfonia with Christian Halstead as lead and violin soloist. As one of Vaughan Williams’ most famous pieces, and an award-winning performance behind Halstead, the audience had a lot to look forward to, and it was as outstanding as we could have imagined!

The orchestra crafted a full-bodied sound and yet took no attention away from the exquisite violin solo, which had the audience mesmerised.

The second half began the titular piece of the evening, Vaughan Williams’ Sea Symphony. Demonstrating strong entries all round, the choir and orchestra provided a majestic sound, with especially impressive lone chorus entries standing up to the magnificent sound of the orchestra. We also had our first entry of the soprano soloist **Eleanor Pennell-Briggs**, who gave another sparkling performance. My own conductor often tells me that “Musicians must be actors!”, which both soloists and ACS demonstrated beautifully this evening, conveying the power and emotion of the sea.

The symphony continues with some elegant call and response passages, well executed by both choir and orchestra, and it was especially pleasing when the main melody passes around the orchestra sections. The scherzo then starts, feeling energetic and urgent, with the chromatic passages handled with great skill and empathy by the choir. The dynamic contrasts by both parties provide drama, again echoing the feelings of the sea.

The final movement begins cinematic and sweeping, with precision by the chorus when they are left exposed. There is power when the basses sing alone, with a great contrast to the delicate female voices. The orchestra and soloists have a moment to shine on their own, with both soloists again demonstrating exceptional storytelling, before the chorus returns for the start of the finale. The regal fanfare from the horns and the vivid energy from the choir draws to a close to finish up the piece.

Overall both ACS and Kent Sinfonia provided a thoroughly enjoyable evening, showcasing a range of musical talent and shining a spotlight onto Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Lizzie McCaffrey

Suffragette stage play review

23 March 2023



Sarah Dewing, who initiated the statue of Emily Davison in Epsom’s Market Square reviews “**Emmeline**” a play about the foremost British suffragette, Emmeline Pankhurst, and the fight for the vote for women at the start of the 20th century.

“Emmeline” was performed at Esher Theatre on 24th and 25th February, as part of a tour that began in Oxford and will end in Manchester on 8th March, International Women’s Day, It is the debut play of young playwright and actor Beatrice Hyde, who also played Sylvia Pankhurst in the production. It was staged by the Theatre Lab Company, a London-based theatre company and was directed by Its Artistic Director, Anastasia Revi.

Beatrice condensed thirty years of suffragette history into two and a half hours, which sounds intense, but the interval broke it up nicely. She spent five years researching the Pankhursts and the events that took place around the struggle for government acceptance of women’s suffrage.

The play focused on the relationships between the newly widowed Emmeline and her three daughters, Christobel, Adela and in particular, Sylvia. Her relationship with her mother becomes increasingly fractious as the strategies pursued by the Women’s Social and Political Union, founded by Emmeline, become increasingly at odds with her socialist principles. These were encouraged further by her relationship with the founder of the Labour movement, Keir Hardie.

At the same time as we are let into the Pankhurst family dynamics, we are shown their social and political context including the debate around the cause between prominent politicians of the day and many of the stand-out events during the suffragette era, including the actions of Emily Wilding Davison at the Epsom Derby in 1913.

The play was well acted by a diverse cast of actors, with a stand-out performance by Georgie Rhys as Emmeline in particular. Direction was impressive, given the sheer intensity of the plot, and coordination of all the different aspects of the production.

The set was very simple but effective, with a two-tier stage with raised platforms at the rear and sides, minimalist lighting and a variety of props that often acted as symbols rather than literal objects. The sound design accompanying the production was an important aspect of the overall impact of the play, with several authentic and beautifully sung suffragette songs. reprieved throughout the play to rousing effect.

I loved the use of the background presence of an actor portrayed as the “heroic woman” motif throughout the play, representing the movement and its ups and downs. This was inspired by an illustration on the front page of an original Suffragette newspaper. I also thought the sound design and production really took the play to a different level.



Emily Davison Statue and the play Emmeline

For me, the psychological aspects of the play highlighted the personal costs, as well as rewards and triumphs, that are paid by those in single-minded pursuit of a mission to the exclusion of all else, including health, safety and relationships with loved ones. The play alludes to Emmeline’s drive to finish the work started by her beloved husband as the source of this obsession.

Ironically, without those like Emmeline and her daughters, who willingly devote their lives to a cause, social progress could not happen. In this case, women would not have the rights they have today, even if there is still a away to go. This is brought home to the present day at the end with a scene where Emmeline is portrayed as her statue outside the Houses of Parliament, This play is an impressive debut for Beatrice Hyde, but also a production that I would highly recommend for anyone with an interest in 20th Century history, women’s rights and psychological drama.

Sarah Dewing
Chair
Emily Davison Memorial Project

After Ronnie Scott's? Epsom of course!

23 March 2023



Fresh from their 'Two for the Road' concert at **Ronnie Scott's**, internationally renowned virtuoso jazz guitarist visiting from Norway, **Frode Kjekstad** is pairing up with local legend **Nigel Price**. Together with Italian drum sensation **Laura Klain** and the brilliant **Mikele Montolli** on double bass, they will give a special live concert in the heart of Epsom on **Saturday 11th March**.

Epsom Jazz Club, resident in the Oaks Room, Church Street, Epsom has sold out all its regular Tuesday concerts this season. So this is the last chance to enjoy the unique cabaret seated venue until next season starts in May. A real taste of the world famous Ronnie Scott atmosphere and music brought to your own Town.

Frode has wowed audiences whilst playing alongside heavyweight jazz stars such as Dr Lonnie Smith, Mike LeDonne and Eric Alexander.

Epsom Jazz Club advises buy your tickets in advance. Go to www.epsomjazzclub.com for tickets.

Epsom's creatives urged to push for growth

23 March 2023



Creative Businesses in and around Epsom are being encouraged to sign-up to Surrey's first Creative Growth and Business Summit. Taking place on March 1 and set-up by the **University for the Creative Arts**, the free-to-attend event will bring together the region's creative trailblazers, entrepreneurs, and creative academic experts to look at how Surrey can build on its global reputation in the sector.

Part of a £450,000 project to fund collaborations and innovation in Surrey's creative sector, the summit will also see the launch of the **Creative Industries Network**.

Professor **Simon Macklin**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor at UCA, said:

"Surrey is home to some of the world's most innovative companies, practitioners, and entrepreneurs in the creative industries. This summit is all about bringing the creative sector together so that we can look at how we can share the University's research, expertise and international connections to turbo-charge growth in the sector across Surrey."

As well as providing opportunities to network, the summit will also provide information on how businesses can access the University's expertise in securing funding to develop new opportunities.

The summit takes place on March 1 at UCA's Farnham campus. Visit uca.ac.uk/growth for more information and to sign up.

The University for the Creative Arts is a specialist art and design university in the south of England. It was formed in 2005 as University College for the Creative Arts at Canterbury, **Epsom**, Farnham, Maidstone and Rochester when the Kent Institute of Art and Design was merged into the Surrey Institute of Art & Design, which already had degree-awarding status;^[4] both constituent schools had been formed by merging the local art schools, in Kent and Surrey respectively. It was granted university status in 2008, and the name changed to the present one. In 2016, it merged with the Open College of the Arts

Emily and Emmeline

23 March 2023



The suffragette movement is celebrated in the heart of Epsom with the statue of **Emily Davison** in Epsom's Market Square. At our neighbouring **Esher Theatre** between 24th and 25th February Emily's colleague **Emmeline Pankhurst**'s life and struggle will be brought to life in a drama play by **The Theatre Lab Company**. "Emmeline - The Suffragette Movement, follows the journey of the inspirational leader of the Suffrage movement on her life's mission to achieve the vote for women. Delving into the dynamics of the Pankhurst family, Emmeline explores the tensions that arose between her and her daughter Sylvia on militant tactics and social values, emblematic of the conflicts that divided the movement. Does the end justify the means?

Should the cause come first, no matter the personal cost? A story of the courage and sacrifice of the Suffragettes, their struggle and exaltation, and their undying determination that made history.

"A story to inspire the country to continue the fight for human emancipation."



ABOUT THE COMPANY

Theatre Lab Company is a London-based international theatre company, with reputation for mesmerising theatrical imagery, physical theatre/performance and work that crosses the boundaries of culture, language and taboo.

Notable credits include commendation from Off West End (2019), an award by Global Entertainment Awards for Most Innovative International Theatre Company — UK (2018), critiques selection at Avignon Festival D'OFF, (2014) and Prague International Theatre festival (2007), nominations for a Fringe First and Total Theatre Awards, Edinburgh Festival (2007) They have produced their shows in highly acclaimed venues like RIVERSIDE STUDIOS (2010-2014), Sadler's Wells Theatre (2016), Hoxton Hall Theatre (2017-2018), BT at Oxford Playhouse (2019) and National Theatre of Greece (2005).

Reviews

A thoughtful, well-researched and compelling production." 4. STARS **** LONDON THEATRE 1

"Every element of this production was so well thought out and meticulously refined to create a cohesive masterpiece." 4.5 STAR ****1/2 THEATRE AND OTHER THINGS LDN

"This is an important, informative and entertaining production that everyone should see." - BRITISH THEATRE GUIDE

Tickets: <https://eshertheatre-tickets.ticketsolve.com/ticketbooth/shows/1173627634>

Epsom students put Xmas style in Centre

23 March 2023



Fashion Imaging & Styling students studying at **Epsom's University for the Creative Arts** (UCA) have created a festive window display for the town's Ashley shopping Centre.

The local students created work that interpreted the festive season through cutting-edge fashion styling and eye-catching photography.

Their work was inspired by colour themes, seasonal climate, festive paraphernalia, and clothing - from wearing a wrapping paper design, referencing traditional tartans, or joining the ski elite.

"Collaborating with local shops and retail allows us to play an active part in the Epsom community. It will give residents the chance to view and share in the creative journey of our young creatives," said Martin Sparkes, a senior lecturer at UCA Epsom.

The Ashley Centre's Manager added: *"The Ashley centre is the heart of the town of Epsom for retail, and it is important that we work closely with the community. So, we are delighted to be able to collaborate with these talented students by giving them the opportunity to showcase their talent, as well as learn more about the retail industry from the shopping centre."*

The window installation will be up until the end of January 2023.



Epsom Playhouse hosts a little horror.

23 March 2023



Leatherhead Operatic Society left the audience laughing and cheering with its production of **Little Shop of Horrors** at **Epsom Playhouse**, a musical comedy directed by John Harries, choreographed by Louise E Wilson and musically directed by Sam Fisher, based on the 1982 off-Broadway musical of the same name.

A failing flower shop on skid-row run by Mr Mushnik (Ben Horseburgh) is almost at the point of closing due to a lack of clientele. A Venus flytrap-looking plant, (Toby James) mysteriously appears during a total eclipse of the sun, attracting Seymour (Daniel Burns) to purchase it and name it after his love interest (played by Ellie-Claire King). This plant, however, is not an ordinary plant – it speaks, sings and lives on human blood and flesh, bringing new customers and, along with that, money and a name.

At first, Seymour can sustain Audrey II with his own blood, but this won't be enough for the ravenous plant who promises Seymour his desires, a success story that could be "bigger than hula hoops". What is Audrey II's goal?

This is not the only question of morality that echoes throughout the performance: how far would you go for love? Or fame, or wealth? And should you feed the sadist-dentist boyfriend of your love interest to your human-consuming plant in order to keep it growing and attract customers? The story ultimately examines the extent to which individuals (Seymour, specifically) will go in order to be successful.

The cast's performance is remarkable and leaves you questioning what you would've done in Seymour's situation, with each character forcing the audience into an empathetic view of the situation. And for those who are already familiar with the story, a different ending to the 1986 adaptation of Little Shop of Horrors alongside the stellar performances makes it worth experiencing again.

The opening night on Wednesday 23rd November was a resounding success, and the show will continue throughout the rest of the week. The performance will run until the matinee show at 2:30 pm on Saturday 26th November.

Locally trained artist's Ewell exhibition closes tomorrow

23 March 2023



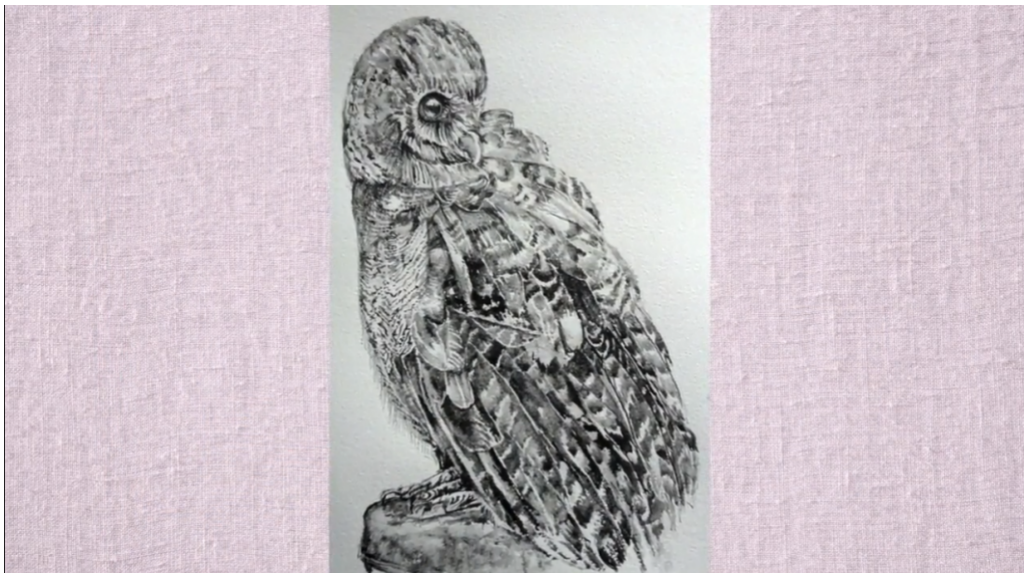
Ending Saturday 19th November your last chance to see selected works of the artist **John Whurr** at his solo exhibition in **Bourne Hall Gallery**. His work varies from pencil sketches of birds and animals to watercolour landscapes and detailed pen and wash of well known buildings in London and elsewhere. Also included is a large collection of portraits in ink and pencil - WG Grace is portrayed at Lords Cricket Ground - the pop artist Rod Stewart in his early days - groups of famous racing drivers and rugby players. His gift for depicting people is incredible. I particularly enjoyed the picture of the actor Leo McKern playing the part of "Rumpole of The Bailey". In this one off incredible exhibition, colour paintings of classic cars, motorbikes and railway trains demonstrate John's wonderful skill in depicting shiny surfaces like metal and glass. Detailed pictures of buildings and cityscapes show his interest in architecture. A very modest and down to earth person - John has been awarded many accolades for his work but prefers to maintain a low profile.



John Whurr has always had an interest in drawing from an early age. He went to school in **Carshalton** and became chief draughtsman for Shell Coal and later worked for the BBC . He studied at **Sutton Art College** and spent time learning watercolour skills at the **Epsom Further Education Centre**. Over the years he has had several exhibitions alongside other artists at Bourne Hall and other places with many of his works going abroad from Australia to the USA and many European countries.



He was commissioned to provide five pictures for the cultural centre in Nagasaki, Japan. He loves sketching and his first love is architectural/coastal subjects but his interest in landscape will get him reaching for the paint palette. For many years his drawing has extended to caricatures and more recently portraits. John is a member of the Society of All Artists & The Molesey Art Society. He's enjoyed being 'artist in residence' at the Brooklands Museum Weybridge.



Reporting by Audrey Ardern-Jones

Organic growth for Epsom Jazz Club

23 March 2023



Epsom Jazz Club - Tobie Carpenter Organ Trio - Tuesday 15th November 2022 .

The Tobie Carpenter Organ Trio delightfully entertained the Tuesday night audience with witty and inventive covers of standards including "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down (And Write Myself A Letter)", "When You're Smiling" and "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You", alongside a fabulously clever Beatles medley.

Guitarist **Tobie Carpenter** was on fine form leading the Trio throughout the evening, and **Jamie Safir** was just masterful on the organ and particularly strong during the opening number of the second set, "Night Train". Drummer **Tim Giles** was clearly relishing being sat between his bandmates as they all traded solos, and within several tunes effortlessly took command of the fluid tempo changes.

The Oaks Room on Church Street has now been established as the monthly go-to venue in Epsom for an evening of quality live jazz. At this Autumn finale concert, the first three lineups for 2023 were revealed.

The Spring season will feature EJC's first visiting jazz accordionist, one of the most exciting vocalists of her generation, and a finalist in the 2022 BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year competition (the final takes place Saturday 19th November, and is televised the following day on BBC4 at 8pm).

After only five events, Epsom Jazz Club has created something rather special. The intimate 70-seater venue, with each table adorned with a charming cocktail table lamp, is the perfect setting to sit back and listen to some of the very best professional jazz musicians the UK has nurtured.

For more information on the 2023 jazz programme please visit <http://EpsomJazzClub.com> or @EpsomJazzClub on Twitter/Instagram/Facebook - tickets are on sale now.