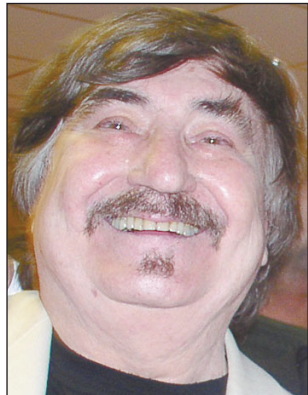


# Double dose of jazz

AS I write I am listening to Track 10 of the Pete Allen CD I indulged in after last week's two-band jazz concert at Taunton's Wellsprings Leisure Centre. 'Float Me Down The River (to New Orleans)' is again transporting me to that home of jazz so sadly devastated by Katrina last September. With its waves of sweet decadence washing over me, highlighted by blue brass riffs and complemented by Pete's deceptively urbane, perfectly in-tune and mellow voice, this track is just one of many we were treated to. Jazz at its absolute best and ten quid well spent.

Hundreds gathered to hear not just Pete, his astonishing array of single reed



instruments and his six fabulous band members, but also Kenny Ball (now astonishingly in his 50th performing year) and his

famous Jazzmen. The hits and riffs, the laughs and groans, the bump and grind of truly gut-wrenchingly good jazz just kept on coming, and we loved it.

Kenny (pictured), with his trademark moustache and small beard (reminding me of nothing so much as Captain Pugwash) was as slick, professional and sharp as ever, fooling about with ease ("Now take your partners - for a blood test") and in total control of his audience.

He built up the atmosphere like the master he is: we worked our way through a glorious hour-and-a-half set, including favourites such as the track that put the band on the map - Midnight in Moscow - plus the Jungle Book hit I

Wanna Be Like You (complete with jungle whoops and screeches from outrageously funny clarinetist Andy Cooper) and closing with All You Need Is Love as the audience rose to their feet as one, waving and singing. But it's hardly surprising that the band demonstrates such discipline and teamwork: they have after all, as Kenny puts it, been playing with each other for years.

This is only the first in a series of five outstanding concerts, all of which feature the Pete Allen Jazz Band. In July, he will be joined by the Chris Barber Band, in September by Terry Lightfoot and His Jazz Band, and in November by Mr Acker Bilk



and His Paramount Jazz Band.

But before any of these, there is another wonderful treat in store when the second in the series of these concerts features Humphrey ('Humph') Lyttelton and His Band - yes, the same Humph who chairs I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue on Radio 4 and a widely declared national treasure.

All of these gigs will take place at the Richard Huish College Concert Hall in Taunton, and I recommend them to you heartily. Tickets are £16.50 in advance on 01823-667863 or £18.50 on the night (but I wouldn't leave it till then if I were you). Your toes will thank you!

JANE EDWARDS

## BRIEFLY Camerata concert

TAUNTON Camerata will be singing at St Mary Magdalene Church on Saturday (March 18) under the direction of Paul Ellis with Rossini's last masterpiece, the Messe Solennelle, the centrepiece of the programme.

The Messe Solennelle, composed in 1863 and often referred to by Rossini as his 'Petite Messe', is dramatic and powerful but contains moments of real spiritual intensity, particularly appropriate for Lent.

To preface the Rossini, Camerata is taking the opportunity to sing a handful of remarkable sacred anthems by great classical romantic composers of the 19th century.

Tickets are £10 (students half price/under-12s free) from St Mary's Bookshop, Taunton Tourist Information Centre, on 01278-732465 or Camerata@dsl.pipex.com

## Students on stage

TALENTED students from West Somerset Community College return to the Regal Theatre, Minehead, on Thursday and Friday (March 23-24) with a mix of serious and comic plays.

First year A level students present 'A Respectable Wedding' by Bertolt Brecht. Guests enjoy supper, the father of the bride tells stories, the mother of the groom keeps hold of the apron strings, the friend sings dubious songs, the young man and the sister flirt ... and the bride and groom begin married life together.

Second year A level students present adaptations of a Canadian play, Albertine Five Times, and Shirley Valentine by Willy Russell.

Curtain-up is at 7.30pm and tickets up to £5 are on sale on 01643-706430 from 10am-3pm, Monday-Saturday.

## Reel fun for dancers

HALSWAY Manor House entertained another fine evening of folk dancing with some good fluent dances, Ron Rudd calling, filling in for Ted Farmer who was unwell.

The band, The Reel Thing, played some interesting tunes, and a lot of fun was had by all.

Halsway dance group welcomes newcomers - it's a lot of fun and very good exercise too. Meetings are on the first and third Wednesdays of the month at Halsway Manor near Crowcombe; details from Tony or Kerin Long on 01643-704438.

## Players pick a farce

THE Monkton Players present their spring production, the Norman Collins farce Pull The Other One, at West Monkton Village Hall from Thursday-Saturday (March 23-25) at 8pm.

It will be directed by Lyn Batt and Jackie Jones.

Tickets are £6/£5 concs on the door or in advance from Monkton Heathfield Stores on 01823-412436 (£1 off all tickets bought by March 23).

# A naughty night

## REVIEW: Taunton Thespians at the Brewhouse

THERE Goes The Bride, performed by Taunton Thespians at The Brewhouse this week, is a typical Whitehall farce. Although written by Ray Cooney and George Chapman in 1974, this play smacks of the early sixties, those wonderful days of law and order, when brides were virgins and had white weddings in church with all the accoutrements. Mothers fussed, fathers flapped and grandparents looked on adoringly.

There Goes The Bride has all this and more. The action takes place in Kensington, in a dazzling white drawing room with that naughty word sex lurking in the wind.

This play is full of well worn jokes, such as mother's casual remark to her daughter: "Sex is like riding a bicycle - you just do it". Even the older generation are not excluded from this agenda. Grandfather, portrayed with endearing vagueness by Tony Venn, comes out with the odd remark like: "I always sleep better in other people's beds". As though to drive the point home, Grandmother, played with dour



West Country humour by Cynthia Jones, gives Grandfather a stern look. These jokes, which in my opinion, are decidedly unfunny, are orchestrated to make us laugh, and they do.

There Goes The Bride revolves around much of the mayhem caused by advertising executive Timothy, the bride's father whose career is at odds with his role of husband and father. On the very day of his daughter's wedding he is fired up with the idea of marketing a sexy 1920s style brassier. In the middle of all this he learns that his daughter is not a virgin. His world of respectability is shattered. He begins to hallucinate by conjuring up the flapper, enticingly played by Dona Bullion

dressed in black glitter, 1920s style.

The show is directed with sincerity and a respect for tradition by Sylvia Fleggit. The teamwork is good and the characters are played with conviction, although they need to be more frenetic, which would give the play a sharper edge, more in keeping with farce. I would also urge the actors to quicken their pace. Indeed, during act two, I felt, on the night I attended, that this was beginning to happen, particularly, when Clive Linthorne, who plays the father, allowed himself to wallow in the craziness of his character.

Finally, for me as a farce, this piece really comes into its own on the entrance of the bridegroom's father, Mr Babcock. He is superbly played by James Carter who has all the energy and strength of a prize bull on heat, and an accent straight out of Kangaroo Land.

The play runs until Saturday, when in addition to the 7.45pm performance there will be a 2.30pm matinee. Tickets are £9/£8 concs on 01823-283244.

MAXINE O'REILLY

# Curry sensation Celebration for Suzuki players

WEST Somerset is rightly proud of its lively arts programme and last Saturday the capacity audience for 'Curry Tales' at the EMN Community Hall in Monksilver was buzzing from the start in anticipation of something different and intriguing.

As we arrived for the show, arranged by Under One Sun with Take Art and performed by Manchester-based Rasa Theatre, the hall was warm with music, a friendly welcome from the kitchen and bar staff, and a stage set as a kitchen. A video backdrop mesmerised us with food preparation and cooking pots simmering and bubbling.

Then Rani Moorthy exploded onto the set and commanded the audience with a powerful and engaging one-person performance. Over the next hour and a half, which flew by, she adopted the persona of a series of cooks in widely-ranging settings, in six different countries. Each powerful cameo comprised a story taking us beneath the surface, right into

the geography, history, cultures and lives of curries and the women who cook them. "You cannot know curry unless you know the ingredients".

Human lives, like curries, are special and unique mixes. We were taken through all our emotions, through the humour and pathos of life. She cleverly and provocatively engaged with us, sharp-witted and commanding our attention. All the while, cooking! Where did they hide that close-up camera? Alongside the performance, we savoured the smells, watched the action and then were finally treated to sharing each curry.

The show appropriately taking place on VSO's national 'share a curry' day, finished with the chance to talk over Rani's excellent performance while enjoying a tasty curry meal. This was prepared by local Indian cookery tutor Lata Walters, whose attractive stall of authentic spices, chapatti flour and chutneys added to the occasion. A marvellous evening.

SUE MARTIN

YOUNG musicians, hundreds of them, have enjoyed their music-making through their violin playing with the Taunton Suzuki Group over the past 30 years, and quite a few of them are returning on Saturday, March 25, to take part in the group's 30th concert at the Brewhouse Theatre.

To mark the occasion there are several special touches, such as guest soloist Rustom Pomeroy, now playing professionally in London, performing Wieniawski's famous Scherzo Tarantella, and the joint orchestra of past and present students playing the Jig from Holt's St Paul's Suite.

March 1977 marked the opening of the Theatre and the launching of the Suzuki Group. Both have,

and still do, contribute to the artistic life of Taunton.

Diane Rivaud later joined founder Mary Trewin as Co-director and they share the directing of this concert in a varied programme of music for all tastes. Solos, ensembles, the ever popular 'Beginners Spot', and much more will share the spotlight along with colourful touches, musical fun and general excellence.

Enthusiasm and delight at making music together are great incentives for the players and it is hoped that sharing this celebration with their audience will bring an afternoon of pleasure.

The concert begins at 2.30pm; tickets are available from the Brewhouse box office on 01823-283244.

# Mother and boy united by conflict

TRAVELLING Light Theatre is bringing a thought-provoking performance of Mother Savage to the Regal Theatre in Minehead tomorrow (Friday) night.

Inspired by a short story by Guy de Maupassant, this blistering new play tells the story of two people thrown together by conflict.

Mother Savage is struggling to cope alone after being abandoned by her son. The Boy is an enemy soldier, snatched from his family and brutalised by what he has seen.

Using live music, exciting physical theatre, dance, singing and great acting, Travelling Light bring you an innovative, high quality production not to be missed by all those aged 14 and up.

To book tickets please contact the village box offices; for more information on the Take Art: Live scheme please contact Take Art on 0146-249450 or becci@takeart.org, or visit www.takeart.org



## Epic poem comes alive

ICON Theatre will be performing 'The Odyssey' at Bridgwater Arts Centre tonight (Thursday).

This adaptation is a very physical new production, which uses masks, mime, puppetry and original live music to bring Homer's epic poem to life.

From the songs of the sirens, through the whirlpools of Charybdis, the cave of Cyclops and the House of the Dead, The Odyssey is one of the world's best known and most loved adventure tales.

It is also the love story of Odysseus and Penelope, whose faltering, human faith in each other battles to survive through 12 long years of absence.

Tickets are £9/£8 concs on 01278-422700.