

Section 3

ENTERTAINMENT

Arts in brief

■ The effects of the tsunami still rumble on and now January 19th has been set aside for the Asian Quake Appeal Charity Concert, scheduled for The Wedgewood Rooms in Portsmouth, to raise funds to forward to The Disaster Emergency Committee in aid of the DEC Tsunami Earthquake Appeal. No less than seven acts—Andy Comley, Rosalie Deighton, the-low-country, Obviously Five Believers, Arlen, The Mustangs, and Saturday Night Beaver—will be taking to the stage between 7.30pm and 12.30am.

■ The extraordinary tale of *The Owl and the Pussycat* and their beautiful pea-green boat takes to the stage at Theatre Royal, Winchester, on January 29th. It combines story-telling, comedy and songs to create a magical world of nonsense for everyone aged three and up. With just a pot full of honey and plenty of money, two best friends embark on a long, perilous sea journey. They travel for a year and a day, until they reach the land where the Bong Tree grows...It's all very well to run away but who knows what you might find? Box office 01962 840440.

■ Many people will remember Jean Francis in connection with her catering in the Winchester area, particularly as part-owner and chef at Below Stairs Restaurant in the St. Cross Road. Since her retirement in 2002, she has been using her experience as a party planner/caterer, and has just published her first book in the *Milestones of Life* series. *Time to Go* is a practical guide full of flexible ideas for anybody thinking of either planning their own funeral or as a tribute to someone they love. With no intention to trivialise death, the book offers many thoughtful suggestions. She was inspired to write *Time to Go* after attending funerals both personally and in her catering capacity. "I've been to some pretty depressing funerals and then there have been others where I've come out feeling uplifted. Death having been such a taboo subject for so long, I felt I had to do something to get people talking and to acknowledge the journey we all must make." Some of the topics it deals with are funerals with an ecological approach, ceremonies that encompass many religious beliefs or none at all. Now living in West Sussex, Jean is returning to Winchester tomorrow to Waterstones, in The Brooks Centre, where she will be available from midday onwards to sign her book and give ideas and information.

■ Youngstar is on the look out for young people in Winchester, aged between 12-20 years, who are interested in acting to come along and star in its next film, to be screened at the Harbour Lights cinema in Southampton. A similar scheme has already been run in Southampton and proved very popular and successful. All those involved will be taught acting techniques for film and TV, and then work on the film alongside a professional crew. The screening will be a real West End premier affair, with the chance to arrive in limos and walk down a red carpet to a cheering crowd of family and friends. The course will be running from the Badger Farm community centre on Wednesday evenings from 6pm-7.30pm (12-14 years) and 7.30pm-9pm (over 14). For more information call Youngstar on 023 8033 9322.



Stopping into the breach is Karen Bridle (centre) as Eliza, flanked by Ian Morley as Professor Higgins (left) and Guy Boney as Pickering (right)

Lots to do for Doolittle role

The Maskers Theatre Company returns to the Nuffield Theatre, Southampton, with George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*.

This comedy classic tells how the cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, learns to "speak like a lady."

A chance meeting with Henry Higgins, professor of phonetics, leads to many arduous days of tuition by the learned prof until he feels able to "pass Eliza off as a lady in high society."

Already, there has been a great deal of behind-the-scenes drama in preparing for this show. The original Eliza, Grace McGowan, fell ill, so Karen Bridle, who was the understudy, had to jump into the part.

"She has worked extremely hard during the last ten days of the rehearsal

period," said Maskers spokeswoman, Angie Stansbridge. "She has been supported by all the other members of the cast and will do the company proud."

Pygmalion is about class-consciousness and how language is used as a social barrier.

Shaw himself was a student of phonetics and had strong opinions on how English should be written, spelt and punctuated.

He invented his own rules and spelling for many words and wrote the part of Eliza for the actress, Mrs Patrick Campbell, with whom he was having an affair.

He chose, however, to end the play with Eliza marrying her young suitor, Freddie, perhaps Shaw's way of coping with her

inevitable rejection of him.

Eliza has a fiery temper and a stubborn streak.

Professor Higgins, pompous and self-important, tries to control her manners and emotions—almost as if she were a wild animal.

Higgins is played by a veteran Masker, Ian Morley.

Guy Boney plays the gentle-natured Pickering and Albie Minns the jovial cockney dustman, Alfred Doolittle.

The play is directed by Mollie Manns, whose middle name just happens to be Eliza.

Pygmalion runs from Tuesday, 18th to Saturday, 22nd January.

Box office: 02380 671771 or online at www.nuffieldtheatre.co.uk

Five go down to celebration

A whole year's worth of musical events will mark the 125th anniversary of All Saints' Church, Denmead.

Clear the diary for March 12th when there will be a concert with harp and flute, performed by Rachel and Ian Bartels. They are both outstanding musicians in their own right, and frequently perform nationwide as chamber musicians and concerto soloists. They accompanied Sir Cliff Richard on his Gospel Tour of Britain and took part in a special *Songs of Praise* to celebrate the Golden Wedding of the Queen and Prince Philip, performing a trio with the late Sir

Harry Secombe.

Celebrations continue on May 21st when the Portsmouth Choral Union pay a visit. They too are 125 years old this year, so the Choral Celebration will rock the rafters. The programme includes Faure's *Requiem* and Handel's *Zadok the Priest*.

Summer festivities get under way on June 11th with an evening of music by Renaissance Choir and Kaleidoscope adds to the splendour of the Flower Festival.

Emsworth-based Renaissance Choir's repertoire is mainly unaccompanied sacred music. Kaleidoscope, on the other hand, is a

piano and violin duo, back by popular demand.

October 22nd sees a cello and piano concert by Louise Dixon and Karen Kingsley, and on November 24th it is the return of the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines School of Music, which has featured every year in Denmead's Season of Music since it started eight years ago.

Tickets for all five concerts are priced at £7 each, including refreshments and wine, and are available now from 023 9224 1161, 023 9226 6159 and from Xavier Hairdressing in the village centre.