

LITERALLY SPEAKING

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www.cheltenhamfestivals.co.uk/literature

Exploring Jane Eyre

BY JOCELYN WALBRIDGE

The Cheltenham Ladies' College Princess Hall provided the perfect setting for *Exploring Jane Eyre*, a series of four presentations investigating Charlotte Brontë's novel.

Year 11 GCSE Drama and Theatre Arts students from the College opened the event with a sequence of key scenes in the story. The group's use of the hall was excellent, creating the feeling of being surrounded by the action. Particularly notable in this piece was the scene in the red room, which combined lighting, sound and movement to give the necessary nightmarish quality.

The Everyman Youth Theatre used single words and actions well to express feelings, and their mirroring of the main action from behind was a innovative technique.

Gampa showed a refreshing slant on the task, delving deep into thoughts and creating an excellent atmosphere with repetition of phrases. Pates Grammar School finished the presentation with the inclusion of Brontë in their production, who gave a very engaging insight into the story. The movement of the stools when bringing Jane and Mr Rochester together was very clever, bringing out the idea of the control Brontë used when writing.

The only criticism would be that the use of the floor instead of the stage prevented any but the front row from seeing parts of the event, but disregarding this, a superb effort by Felicity Ross and the students involved.

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A canter round Chaucer

BY RUPERT ALCOCK
& CHLOE PREEDY

With the usual boundless energy that *The Chaucer Man* has become renowned for, Trevor Eaton relayed superbly the Reeve's bawdy and hilarious tale. He ran wildly around the Pillar Room whilst recounting the tale in fluent Middle English, before explaining the details in modern language.

The Miller's Tale got even livelier. With a subject more suited to the 'How Embarrassing' page of a magazine than a highbrow literary festival, Eaton took his performance to four rousing climaxes – and yes, the innuendo is intentional!

The audience certainly enjoyed the



event. There's something original in the sight of a middle-aged man leaping over the furniture in his imitation of a lively young wife getting up to all sorts of tricks – you wouldn't see it anywhere else!

It's certainly given us a better impression of Middle English literature. If only the rest of the speakers were so energetic.

Shadows of Fundamentalism

BY ALIYAH MADHANY

Inspired by the universal perspective of Arabs as a 'people without



political culture', Tariq Ali's recently published *The Stone Woman* discusses the clash between western Christendom and the Islamic world.

Viet Man

BY ANDREW PRIMROSE

'Incoming fire has a way of prejudicing your report' observed Max Hastings during a frank discussion on war journalism and the difficulties of objective coverage. Peppered with anecdotes, such as the obliging Americans who re-staged an exchange of fire in Vietnam after the camera-



man failed to record the original, Hastings offered a remarkable insight into front-line reporting. He recognised the importance of in-situ reporting whilst pointing out that motivation of most war

correspondents was ambition.

Hastings' experience of conflicts as diverse as Vietnam and the Falklands produced some fascinating comments on war. He observed that, in war, the victor is 'the side which makes one less cock-up than the other.' In a parting shot about his future plans Hastings admitted to doing many terrible things in the name of journalism: 'But,' he told us, 'I won't do a Martin Bell and enter politics.'

TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS

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Esther Freud, Carlo Gebler & Lucia Graves
Town Hall,
2.30-3.30pm

•
Richard Ingrams & Humphrey Carpenter
(programme change)

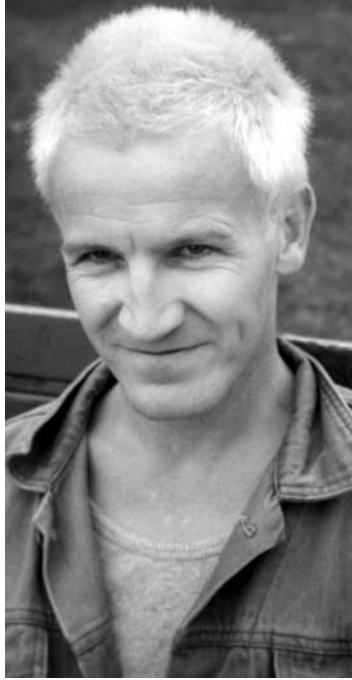
Town Hall,
8.45-10pm

Steve Tasane is sic

BY GLENN CARMICHAEL

This is 'Live Literature' announced Sara-Jane Arbury, introducing performance novel [*sic*]. Steve Tasane lay central stage, inside a play-pen, swaddled in a tiny teddy-bear duvet. Tasane is Tinky Winky, a high-powered executive, indulging his fantasies at the Rock-a-Bye 'adult baby' club, London N1. His opening words to the audience are 'Ga ga'. He narrates how he has paid £150 to have his botty smacked, but nanny is late. In come Mickey & Minnie, the psycho-heroes, the drug-fuelled doyens of orgy and violence. As Tinky Winky meets his violent end, his last memory, pre-climax, is that he never told his wife about the hidden Swiss bank account.

Steve Tasane is Mickey as he rides



in a prison van, musing on the sad world, full of sad individuals, wishing they could rebel against the system and, like Mickey and Minnie 'Mean Motherf**kers Incorporated', make an impact in this sad world.

Tasane is Chief Inspector Begbie, the coke-shooting psychopathic Glasgowian Detective, determined to be the arresting officer, telling us how he raped a whore.

Tasane is Minnie as she is released from prison, waiting at a bus stop, contemplating 'strangling' a granny. In staggeringly passionate, poetic prose, Tasane

shows a Cheltenham audience one possible future for the world of literature. Several people left, most stayed; not shying away from the dark, violent, unsanitised world of modern, ground-breaking live literature.

Baker lite

BY SHONA RAMCHANDANI

Writer and former Cabinet Minister, Kenneth Baker, took us on a poetic journey through the moods and many faces of landscapes in Britain. His recent book is a 'happy marriage of the language and landscapes' of the country and justly praises these, its two most important assets.

He introduced us to the evolution of the language and took us on a celebration of its oldest and greatest form, the poem. From Ted Hughes' *Crow Hill* to Stevie Smith's *The Humber*, from Seamus Heaney ('the greatest contemporary poet alive today') to Edward Thomas, we were treated to some of the most beautiful poetry of the English countryside.

His voice lulled the mind with its passionate renditions of John Clare's peasant poetry, Charlotte Mew's tree poetry, or even of our very own Gloucestershire poet Ivor Gurney, extolling the natural beauty of the countryside. 'In England, if her spirit lives anywhere its by the banks of the Severn...'

The only disappointment, if any, was that of all the great poets, we didn't get any Wordsworth!

THE TEAM

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Sara-Jane Arbury, Adam Horovitz & Jon Andriessen

LAYOUT:

Glenn Carmichael

The mountain image incorporated in our logo © Michael Martin from *The Deserts of Africa*

All you want to know about text...

BY SIMON RANDOM

Stan was afraid of red. He was completely bald. I couldn't get the bottle open. And a car driving down a dark country road stops, turns round and drives back the way it came. Take ten minutes writing on any of these. You'll then have an idea of Anna Davis' *Starting to Write* course.

As a literary agent, tutor in a Novel Writing MA and multiply published author, she was well qualified to teach *Starting to Write* and showed it, unlike the room.

Perfect for fifteen students, thirty of us were squeezed into a circle like two perfumed rugby teams in their pre-match huddle. Perfumed? Twenty-seven of us were women.

In three hours of knitted brows, earnest questions, and eager scribbling, we hardly smashed down the barriers of modern prose, but showed each other we could string a few words together. Those of us who came to learn how to write rather than to get her business card went away happier and more confident: a good return for three hours' work.

And now for something...

BY HENRY HOGGARTH

Terry Jones gave a detailed and informative talk on 14th Century Knights which is in great contrast to his previous efforts in *Monty Python*. Building from the description given in *Chaucer's Knight*, Jones was able to create a picture of Europe's domination by these mercenaries, who caused chaos and widespread death.



So why did they fight? Supposedly for Christianity and not their country, thinking only of themselves. Jones presented what is quite a serious

The Stoat

Overheard in the Writers' Room: "Rob, I've found the string you were asking for. What shall I do with it?" To which came the sarcastic reply: "How long is it?"

Food was finally served at The Beehive last night, thanks to Steve Tasane. Sadly, for anyone expecting to eat at least, it ended up on the floor pretending to be blood and guts.

Late-night poetry returns to The Pillar Room on Saturday. The Stoat hopes that the bar will stay open this time.

A late story; it appears Sophie Grigson has only just finished her lecture on 'terribly simple food'. Her event finished yesterday.

Illustrations of The Chaucer Man, Tariq Ali and Ken Wiwa by Heather Spears. Thanks Heather.

matter in a casual and humorous way; entertaining as well as informing. A common theme was the 14th century jokes - often questioning their humour. 'Don't kill me, I'm worth a thousand dollars' described a Knight's attitude.

Combined with the actual talk was a series of pictures and manuscripts which captured the spirit of his humour. At one point an audience member shouted 'It's John Cleese', which got the biggest laugh of the night. A successful, yet ironic, portrayal of the so-called 'Christian crusades'.