



Get to grips: The cast of *Going Dutch* argue and fight on their comic journey

REVIEW: GOING DUTCH

Upstairs at the Gatehouse, Highgate

By Jessica Holt

The Garden Suburb Theatre successfully revived this early observational comedy by John Godber set on board the ferry from Hull to Rotterdam, a trip he had experienced for himself in all its glory.

Mark, played by Andy Farrer, celebrates his 50th birthday with his wife Sally, played by Alice Gill-Carey, by going to Holland to see a Bruce Springsteen concert. They have invited college friend Gill, played by Miranda Chessman, who brings along her current boyfriend Karl, played by Joe Ellison.

He clashes immediately with Mark, who has always had a soft spot for Gill. While Mark and Sally prefer the Sky bar and its tranquillity, Karl prefers the Irish bar. The clash of cultures dominates many of the scenes. Mark and Karl are from different worlds and often display male aggressiveness which we laugh at but also find distasteful.

The playwright's style incorporates short scenes, characters addressing the audience directly and the deliberate use of stereotypical characterisation, all of which is challenging. The company met this challenge and provided the audience with well-timed comic one-liners alongside tremendously energetic physicality.

An added joy was Barry Fernandez, played by Tim Solomons, who teased the audience at the beginning and throughout with his karaoke. We were encouraged to sing songs such as *Sweet Caroline* to place us on the ferry with these characters.

In the second act the play moved into a more serious examination of the characters and their situations. The comedy was still strong, but the hopes and disappointments of these characters came to the foreground and their inability to change anything as they retreat back into their comfort zones introduces a sad tone as the play ends. *Going Dutch* was a fine example of great ensemble playing.

Choir gives airing to rarely performed work by suffragette

By David Melsome

Following North London Chorus' sell-out performance of favourites by J S Bach and Handel last November, their next concert will include a performance of *The Prison* by English composer Dame Ethel Smyth.

Well-known and highly regarded in her day, Ethel Smyth was a suffragette and close friend of Emmeline Pankhurst, with whom she was incarcerated in Holloway Prison for throwing stones at the homes of politicians who opposed votes for women.

Smyth composed the music for *March of the Women*, the anthem of the suffragettes, and was reputedly observed by her friend the conductor Sir Thomas Beecham leading the women in prison in song whilst conducting with a toothbrush.

Smyth's work has been unfairly neglected until recently and this will be an exceptionally rare opportunity to hear a piece that was premiered in 1930 and appears not to have been performed since 2005. Scored for soprano and baritone soloists, chorus and large orchestra, *The Prison* is essentially a dialogue between a dying man and his soul.

A cantata by Beethoven and a lamentation by Brahms, both composers admired by Smyth, complete the programme on

Three causes for celebration

By Daphne Chamberlain

Acclaimed poet Fleur Adcock celebrated three events last month: her 90th birthday, the launch of her latest book and the birth in New Zealand of her "incredibly beautiful" great-granddaughter Mira Fleur. This month also happens to be the 61st anniversary of her arrival in East Finchley.

Her son Andrew went to Martin School and Fleur will be remembered for her consistent support of the East Finchley Arts Festival. She is particularly sad at the loss of Black Gull Books in the High Road, where she read her work several times.

Fleur has been talking to us about her early years, including a particular poem, written when she was nine. She told us: "My class at school had to write a poem about the Pilgrim Fathers. Mine had five verses and began as follows:

We sailed away on the May-flower

To America over the sea
There were one hundred and four of us,
And nine children sailed with we.(sic)

"Terrible grammar, but the teacher gave me a gold star for this effort. There is nothing like praise to encourage someone to carry on writing."

Since then, Fleur has received an OBE in 1996 and The Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 2006. In 2019 she travelled back to the land of her birth to receive the New Zealand Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in Poetry, presented by then

Statue mix-up

When giving the answers to our close-up photo competition in last month's edition, we wrongly stated that one of the locations was the statue of Mary Wesley outside East Finchley Methodist Church in the High Road. In fact, the wooden carving is of Susanna Wesley, known to many as the Mother of Methodism.



Collected poems: Fleur Adcock reads her latest volume of poetry published to coincide with her 90th birthday. Photo Mike Coles

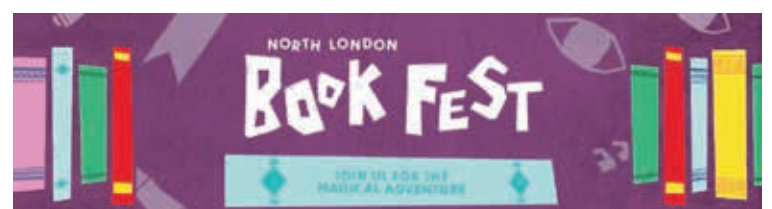
premier Jacinda Ardern.

Her own first collection of poems is in a little notebook she had when she was seven. "It has the calendar for 1941 inside the cover, and a faded pencil drawing of a fairy on the outside. I called it Poetry Book," said Fleur.

Fleur's mother read poems to her in bed at night. That encouraged her to read extensively, and later to share her

work with other writers. "I often advise students to join a group of people discussing each other's work." Another of her inspirations is travel. "Just looking out of a train window can get me going."

Fleur Adcock: Collected Poems, the first complete edition of her poetry, was published by Bloodaxe Books in hardback and paperback on her 90th birthday, 10 February 2024.



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