

n2

arts & entertainment

Intergalactic girl power:
Captain Marvel

film review – 60



What's on this week – 53-60 Introducing Daisy Freestone – Open Studios potter's debut – 55 **New Era's Shakespearean storm – 54**

Music

EX-members of Steeleye Span and Bellowhead perform together at Arlington Arts tonight (Thursday, 8pm). Steeleye Span's legendary violinist Peter Knight has paired with leading melodeon player and former Bellowhead member John Spiers. Steeleye Span improvisation and invention meet the listener at every turn. Together they have created a musical document that resonates with history, that should inspire future generations of musicians to engage with Britain's folk dancing heritage. Visit www.arlingtonarts.com

Exhibition

IN *No Eden*, the latest exhibition at Greenham Control Tower, Reading-based artist Robert Fitzmaurice reflects on the camps of Greenham in paintings and mixed media, looking back at the social history of the site. Open Thurs, Fri 10.30am-1.30pm and Sat, Sun 9.30am-4pm.

Coming soon

AMELIE a feelgood musical based on the film written by Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Guillaume Laurant, opens at The Watermill, Baginbun, on Thursday, April 11. An astonishing young woman lives quietly in the world, but loudly in her imagination. She secretly improvises small, but extraordinary acts of kindness that bring happiness to those around her. But when a chance at love comes her way, Amélie will have to risk everything to say what's in her heart. Runs until May 18. French-Canadian stage and screen star Audrey Brisson plays Amélie. Visit www.watermill.org

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Tenor Adam Tunnicliffe on Saturday

The pride of Pangbourne

100 joyful voices prove English amateur choral singing is alive and well

PANGBOURNE Choral Society is a shining example of the pride that England takes in amateur choral singing. It advertises for new members to join them 'to share in the joy of singing... no audition is necessary'. As a consequence, the choir boasted nearly 100 singers at the concert on Saturday. Wonderful!

All were taking advantage of what we now know to be the enormous benefit which singing, particularly choral singing, has on both physical and mental health. Although still relatively light in the lower parts, it was encouraging to see a good number of tenors and basses.

Pangbourne Choral Society undertook an ambitious adventure with the choice of works for their spring concert. Poulenc's *Gloria* is a notoriously tricky piece to sing especially with such large forces. The

Music

Pangbourne Choral Society, at the Falkland Islands Memorial Chapel, Pangbourne College, on Saturday, March 16

harmonic and rhythmic content is almost Jekyll and Hyde – one moment simplicity itself and then turning into quirky and complicated passagework.

Claude Rostand said of Poulenc 'there is in him something of the monk and the street urchin' which is reflected in this composition.

Able accompanied by Southern Sinfonia, they were joined by soprano Danae Eleni whose clean, poised and focused tonal quality was ideal for this work. Her considerable dynamic

range was demonstrated and she added lustre to the performance.

Southern Sinfonia then played *Siegfried Idyll* by Richard Wagner. This was a well-blended rendering with some lovely mellow string passages – the oboe solos were noteworthy.

Puccini wrote his *Messa di Gloria* 70 years earlier than Poulenc's *Gloria* and the style and mood could not have been more of a contrast. Every movement was like a rich dessert course, each covered with a large dollop of double cream. This is really opera in very thin disguise, with long, flowing melodies and sequential rising harmonic phrases whipping the mood into the highest of emotional states time after time.

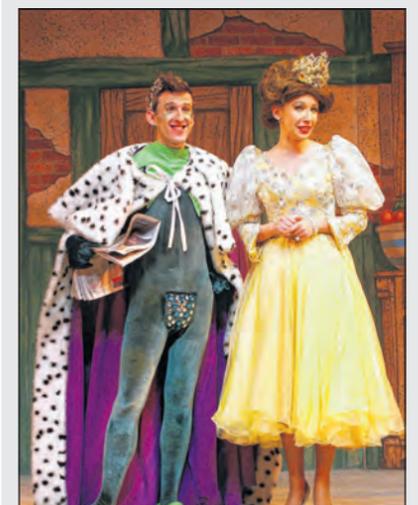
The orchestra, particularly the brass section, gave the choir its full support. The choir was able to show off its skills in this work with good sustained build-ups in the extended phrases. All eyes were on the conductor and the audience could hear the sheer joy of singing. The tenor soloist Adam Tunnicliffe embraced the operatic style wholeheartedly with well-supported high tessitura. The bass soloist, Robert Garland, with his very lovely, warm and controlled voice beautifully demonstrated Isobel Baillie's maxim 'never sing louder than lovely'.

This was a really brave and challenging evening and the applause at the end was well deserved. English amateur choral singing is alive and well.

JULIA ROWNTREE



This was a really brave and challenging evening and the applause at the end was well deserved

Comedy duo to pen
this year's panto

THIS year's Corn Exchange pantomime *Sleeping Beauty* will be written and directed by popular comedy writing team Pledsted and Brown (pictured above).

Audiences will remember Clare Pledsted and Adam Brown for their hilarious performances in previous Corn Exchange pantomimes (the last being 2010's *Sleeping Beauty*) and they were the resident theatre company at New Greenham Arts.

Pledsted and Brown, with co-founder Amanda Wilsher, have created numerous Edinburgh Fringe hits, many of which were performed at New Greenham Arts and as part of Newbury Comedy Festival.

Adam Brown, who grew up in Hungerford, will also be familiar to fans of Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit* trilogy as the dwarf Ori.

Produced by the Corn Exchange, this spellbinding production of *Sleeping Beauty* promises plenty of magic, mayhem, fun and sparkle – a festive treat for all the family.

Corn Exchange director Grant Brisland says: "We are delighted to be welcoming Pledsted and Brown back to the Corn Exchange as this year's pantomime writers and directors. Our audiences will remember them for their hilariously brilliant characters from many years past. When thinking about who could take over the mantle of creating the biggest and most anarchic pantomime, Pledsted and Brown were a natural choice; we're bringing them home."

As the Corn Exchange celebrates its 25th anniversary as an arts centre, it plans to create its biggest pantomime yet.

Grant added: "The success of the Corn Exchange is rooted in its ability to evolve, adapt and be relevant to its community. As we celebrate a landmark anniversary, evolving the biggest event we do every year just made sense. As well as welcoming back Pledsted and Brown, we have other surprises up our sleeves and I look forward to sharing those with you as the year progresses."

Pantomime tickets start from £20 (£15 previews), with concessions, family and group tickets available. New this year is the introduction of Super Saver tickets available for selected performances priced from £16.

Set your alarms now. *Sleeping Beauty* runs from Friday, November 29, until Saturday, January 4. Visit www.cornexchangegenew.com/panto