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The Diary: English National Ballet; Jasper Joffe; Mark Wahlberg; Stephen Hawking

BY ALICE JONES | FRIDAY 03 DECEMBER 2010

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A dance to the music of hard times

It could be worse but the squeeze is already making itself felt at English National Ballet. "We're taking a 9.6 per cent cut, that's £485,000," says artistic director Wayne Eagling. "Or four weeks of touring. Some of the new repertory will have to be postponed."

Eagling had wanted to introduce John Neumeier's *La Dame aux Camélias* but has had to shelve it in favour of bigger box-office draws. "It's not an instantly recognisable title so it will be difficult to sell. We did *Manon* six months ago and when we got out on tour we hardly had 50 per cent audiences. It was a very popular production but until we came into the Coliseum, it was quite depressing – seeing rows and rows of empty seats." What's the solution? "Put something with 'snow', 'queen' or 'swan' in the title," says Eagling. "It's getting people out of the mould of saying, 'I'm going to see one ballet this year and it will be *Swan Lake*, even though it was the one ballet I saw last year'. It would be nice to get people to be really adventurous with dance." Until then, there's always *The Nutcracker*, about to start its annual 32-performance run at the Coliseum.

Tate of confusion

Never knowingly under-publicised, Jasper Joffe has unveiled his latest stunt to coincide with the announcement of Tate's rehang. Next week, the artist – banned from Frieze Art Fair, sold all of his possessions in the name of art – will open his own Tate Modern, a few walk from the real deal on Bankside, in a dry cleaners. A collaboration with Harry Pye, the show includes the artists' take on works from the Tate collection including self portraits as Gilbert and George and dashed-off copies of Picasso and Basquiat. "We've been learning from the best", says Pye. "Some of the paintings are more successful than others. Maybe some will prefer our versions to the originals." Maybe: the prices are certainly more appealing, with post-war Picassos and knock-off Hockneys going for £5. Neither Joffe nor Pye has ever exhibited at Tate. "Lucian Freud once saw a painting I made and said he liked it but he might have been just being polite", says Pye. "It would be nice if he came on a trip to see our show."

Hors d'oeuvre oeuvre

Diners at the two-Michelin-star Pied à Terre are used to haute cuisine but do they feel about high art? The London restaurant has announced a year-long residency, giving one artist £10,000 and the run of the kitchen (and a few meals) to create work inspired by its food and atmosphere. The restaurant's art collection already includes work by Peter Blake, Howard Hodgkin, and Robert Rauschenberg, with whom the proprietor David Moore has a long friendship. In his days working at the artist's favourite, Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons, Moore collected this illustrious list is Elpidia Hadzi-Vasileva, an RCA graduate from Manhattan who filled Gloucester Cathedral with birdsong and a ballgown made of pig skins. "Head chef and I hope she will challenge the restaurant", said Moore. Moore should help with leftovers, too.

No holds barred for sentimentality

To the first screening of *The Fighter*, starring Mark Wahlberg as dead-end boxer Micky Ward and Christian Bale as his junkie brother and trainer Dicky Eklund, the film, released here in February and next week in the US, has been baffling American audiences with two very different trailers. The first, for the multiplexes, made it out to be a classic underdog sports movie, with swiftness, training montages and a focus on

Ward's lover (Amy Adams). The second, premiering during the Mad Max finale, adopted a darker tone, focusing on family dysfunction and drugs. It's a mould of *The Wrestler*. So is it more Rocky or Rourke? Somewhere in between. David O Russell's take on Boston's seamy underbelly is unflinching, but you should prepare for a hefty hit of sentimentality too.

Grand unified theory required

Spotted in the West End: Stephen Hawking at *Yes, Prime Minister*. The physicist boggles at what attracted the physicist to the hoary political farce. The cosmologist has recently advocated the possibility of time-travel millions of years into the future. Perhaps he was checking whether going back was possible.

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