

EIGHT PAGES OF ENTERTAINMENT START HERE

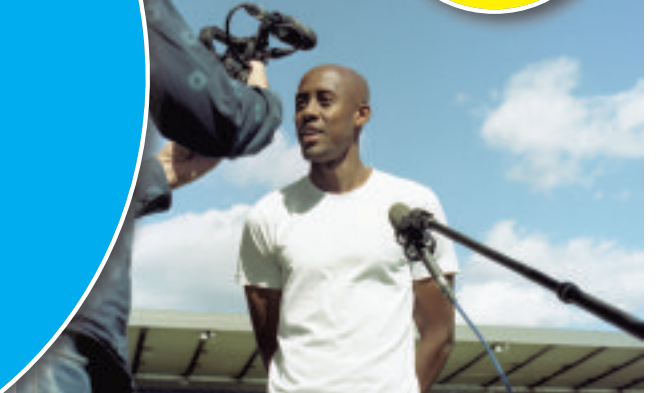
CONCERTS, SHOWS AND DAYS OUT

YOUR ESSENTIAL ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

Talk of the town



SOUTHBANK CENTRE LISTINGS PAGE 32



DOCUMENTARY MILLWALL FC PAGE 33

A gentleman called Joan lands in a subdued, suburban care home like a colourful, combustible cocktail in *Swansong*, a new play written and directed by Nathan Evans, starring Lavinia Co-op, David Meyer and Nathanael Campbell.

This bittersweet comedy with an opulent operatic soundtrack is staged site-specifically at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern (RVT) as part of the And What? Queer Arts Festival, then travels to the Marlborough in Brighton.

A veteran of Gay Lib and no stranger to conflict, Joan dons battle dress with relish, seeking an ally in the young, gay but disappointingly conventional care assistant Craig for his attempt to overturn the heteronormativity of the care system. Then, in this most unlikely of settings, Joan is offered love by a gentleman called Jim. Mr Evans said: "This a story that's not been told: we've seen stories aplenty of young gay love and stories, recently, of mature straight love, but gay love in the care home?"

"It's about bloody time. It's also a story that's very now – reflecting changes in marriage legislation and our ageing population – among them those who began the fight for rights five decades back and are now facing battles with infirmity and isolation."

Mr Evans produced the long-running weekly cabaret Vauxhallville at RVT, a series of shows with David Hoyle and three pantomimes; the venue is infused with gay history and could, indeed, have been attended by Joan – which can only lend the production poignancy.

The performance at the RVT will be followed by a panel discussion chaired by journalist Ben Walters, including ambassadors from Opening Doors for LGBT over 50s and Mosaic LGBT Youth Centre, about the increasingly pressing issue of elderly LGBT care.

Ninety per cent of LGBT people do not have children to look after them as they're aging. They are therefore especially dependent on the care system and there is likely at least one LGBT person in every care home in the country, but you might not know it because most go back in the closet, worried about how they will be treated both by straight peers – whose prejudices may well not have shifted with the times – and staff whose faith or cultures may also not approve.

Mr Evans' work in film and theatre has been broadcast by Channel 4, funded by the Arts Council, toured by the British Council, archived by the British Film Institute, won awards at London Short Film Festival and been performed at venues including Royal Court, Royal Festival Hall, Royal Vauxhall Tavern, Soho, Chelsea & Traverse Theatres, ICA, BAC, Pleasance, Latitude, Aldeburgh and Glastonbury Festivals.

Mr Evans was inspired to write *Swansong* to raise awareness of these problems. He said: "When And What? Queer Arts Festival invited me to stage my play *Swansong* site-specifically in a non-theatre venue as part of this year's festival I immediately thought of the RVT. It's a venue infused with queer history and one which our lead character, Joan, would certainly have attended, were he a real person."

"We'll be transforming it into the Royal Vauxhall Care Home for the evening, which we hope will lend extra poignancy to the performance."

"Lavinia Co-op was perfect as Joan. It felt as if he had literally walked off the street and into the show. I'm looking forward to seeing the finished production. I confidently predict a crying audience, standing ovations and excellent reviews for what is a really beautiful and emotional story with a strong message that comes straight from the heart."

Swansong,
Royal Vauxhall Tavern,
October 17



Nathan Evans and, inset, Lavinia Co-op

Finding love in the care home

Send your leisure and features to:
toby@slpmedia.co.uk

