

December

PREVIEW



Christian Garrick and John Etheridge tour with Artsreach in December

When Christian met John VILLAGES

TWO jazz and fusion musical powerhouses get together for a December tour with Artsreach. Christian Garrick and John Etheridge will present a feast of interplay, improvisation and eclectic repertoire on Wednesday 10th December at Hinton Martell village hall, Thursday 11th at Halstock, Friday 12th at Portesham and Saturday 13th at Shillingstone's Portman Hall, all starting at 7.30pm.

Garrick (violin) and Etheridge (guitar) are two of Britain's most virtuosic and versatile performers on their respective instruments. Comfortable with pretty much any style of jazz and contemporary music, from gypsy and Hot Club to jazz rock fusion, this world class duo performs a programme that ranges from Peter Gabriel to Richard Rodgers via Dollar Brand and Alison Goldfrapp.

British guitar legend John Etheridge (Soft Machine, Stephane Grappelli, Dizzy Gillespie, John Williams, Nigel Kennedy) and acclaimed violinist Christian Garrick (Van Morrison, Cleo Laine, Budapest Café Orchestra) have played together for many years.

Together the free-wheeling pair use extensive

looping and effects to create exotic tapestries of sound which are almost orchestral at times yet switch seamlessly to a pure acoustic with rollicking renditions of Hot Club swing, evoking the spirit of Reinhardt and Grappelli—simply unmissable!

A magical winter wonderland DORCHESTER

CHRISTMAS is a magical time for families—but there will be a special sparkle when magician Peter Clifford comes to the stage of Dorchester Corn Exchange on Saturday 13th December, with his festive show, *Wonderful Wintery Wizardry*.

Peter, who is a well-known actor in Bristol, is highly praised by his magician peers—Derren Brown calls him “one of my favourite magicians and one of the loveliest people I know” and David Blaine says: “Peter Clifford's love of the art resonates throughout the field of magic, bringing life and hope to us all.”

Join Peter at Dorchester for his new Christmas magic show and be entertained by what Bath and Bristol's *Venue* magazine calls his “unique and brilliant blend of bamboozlement and banter, ... in a show full of madcap mirth and magical merriment.”

Christmas at Bridport Arts Centre

Wings of Desire (1987)

📅 Thursday 27 Nov.
🕒 7.30pm

Primordial Dance

An exhibition of paintings by Helen Garrett with poetry by Kate Innes
📅 From 29 Nov, Tue-Sat
🕒 10am-4pm

Consone Quartet

- Haydn and Mozart
📅 Friday 28 Nov.
🕒 11.30am

La Vie en Rose

- Gypsy Jazz
📅 Friday 28 Nov
🕒 8.00pm

All That Heaven Allows

(1955)
📅 Saturday 29 Nov
🕒 2.30pm

Vermiglio (2024)

📅 Thu 4 Dec
🕒 7.30pm

The Demon Barbers

- 25th Anniversary Tour
📅 Friday 5 Dec.
🕒 7.30pm

Cabaret With Claus

- The Christmas Show
📅 Saturday 6 Dec
🕒 7.30pm

The Umbrellas of Cherbourg (1964)

📅 Thursday 11 Dec
🕒 7.30pm

Menopause of Sound

Christmas Party
📅 Saturday 13 Dec
🕒 4.30pm

The Mellstock Band

- The Christmas Hearth
📅 Thursday 18 Dec
🕒 7.30pm

The Cratchits' Christmas Cracker

📅 Friday 19 Dec
🕒 7.30pm

Winter Celebration

📅 Sat 20 Dec
🕒 6pm



Tickets

bridport-arts.com
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Sirens and Babes

EXETER

MUSIC at Exeter Cathedral in the weeks before Christmas ranges from the songs of Whitney Houston, one of November's big events, to Devon-based folk duo Sound of the Sirens and the traditional favourites, carols and Handel's *Messiah*.

Sound of the Sirens on Friday 5th December is a special homecoming gig for the singer-songwriting duo who are based in the city. Abbe Martin and Hannah Wood have been honing their craft over the past decade, earning them critical and audience success as "one of the UK's finest folk acts".

The following evening, 6th December, from 7pm, the choral ensemble Mediaeval Baebs comes to Exeter Cathedral as part of their 2025 Christmas tour. Enjoy an evening of carols, old favourites and offerings from their forthcoming album, and expect performances in Latin, Middle English and Old French.

The classical chart-topping choir was created in 1996 by musical director, composer and producer Katharine Blake. The group have since won an Ivor Novella Award for their performance on the BBC drama *The Virgin Queen* and received two Emmy nominations and a Royal Television Society award as the featured artists alongside composer Martin Phipps for the theme tune of ITV's *Victoria*.

The cathedral choir, with Devon Baroque, performs *Handel's Messiah* on Sunday 7th from 2.30pm, and has several carol concerts and services through to Christmas Eve.

Other ensembles and performers include Exeter Chamber Choir, London Concertante, Exeter Philharmonic Choir and the LaLa Choir, on Friday 12th, celebrating its tenth anniversary and raising money for Children's Hospice South West.



OPUS Anglicanum comes to St Mary's Church, Dorchester

A medieval Christmas DORCHESTER

OPUS Anglicanum comes to St Mary's Church, Dorchester, on Thursday 18th December at 7pm with a programme of medieval carols and readings. This concert has become a favourite for the ensemble which has been performing medieval and contemporary music for more than 30 years.

The music varies from simple Gregorian chant to joyous and even raucous Christmas songs, alongside more devotional pieces, some of which are more than 800 years old.

The programme features masterpieces of the period by Guillaume de Machaut, Magister Perotin, Josquin des Prez, Johannes Ockeghem and Jacob Obrecht alongside recognisable early English carols such as *Nowell, There is no Rose of such Virtue* and *Gaudete!* Beautiful mediaeval readings delivered by actor Alex Knox are interspersed within the music, creating moments of quiet reflection.

Opus Anglicanum's repertoire ranges from light-hearted festive offerings to sequences on the First World War, folk music and contemporary—they have commissioned and premiered pieces from composers including Judith Bingham, Sally Beamish, Howard Skempton and Cheryl Frances Hoad.

Classic Christmas film on stage LYME REGIS

EIGHTY years ago, Frank Capra directed James Stewart in a film that was to become a fixture on

Christmas movie programmes around the world—this year *It's A Wonderful Life* is on stage in a new play at the Marine Theatre, Lyme Regis, from 19th to 22nd December.

Gilroy Theatre, whose productions are now an eagerly anticipated part of the Marine's summer and winter seasons, delighted audiences last Christmas with Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and this year it is another heart-warming fable. It is set in Bedford Falls, the epitome of small-town America, where George Bailey, a desperately frustrated businessman, is at the end of his tether. He feels that the world would have been a better place if he'd never been born, so an angel is dispatched from heaven to show him exactly what life would have been like for his family, friends and neighbours, had that been the case.

Adapted from the 1946 film, which also starred Clarence Obody as the Guardian Angel, *It's a Wonderful Life* reminds us that "no one is a failure who has friends"—a perfect message for the season of goodwill.

Mother Goose by the sea SIDMOUTH

MANY amateur pantomimes are performed in February—often coinciding with half term—but Sidmouth Amateur Dramatic Society stays traditionally close to Christmas, staging one of the oldest and best-loved stories, *Mother Goose*, from Saturday 27th December to Saturday 3rd January.

In this version by pantomime maestro Alan P



St Agnes Fountain play in Honiton and South Petherton in December

Frayn, the “leading lady” is a beautiful goose named Priscilla. There is, of course, a good fairy, as well as two baddies and Mother Goose’s son, the very silly Billy.

The audience is invited to journey with this host of colourful characters to the magical waterfall, to fly with the geese and eventually to see good triumph over evil.

Folk at the Beehive. **HONITON**

FANS of folk music have a double treat in December at Honiton’s Beehive Centre, with gigs by St Agnes Fountain and Seth Lakeman.

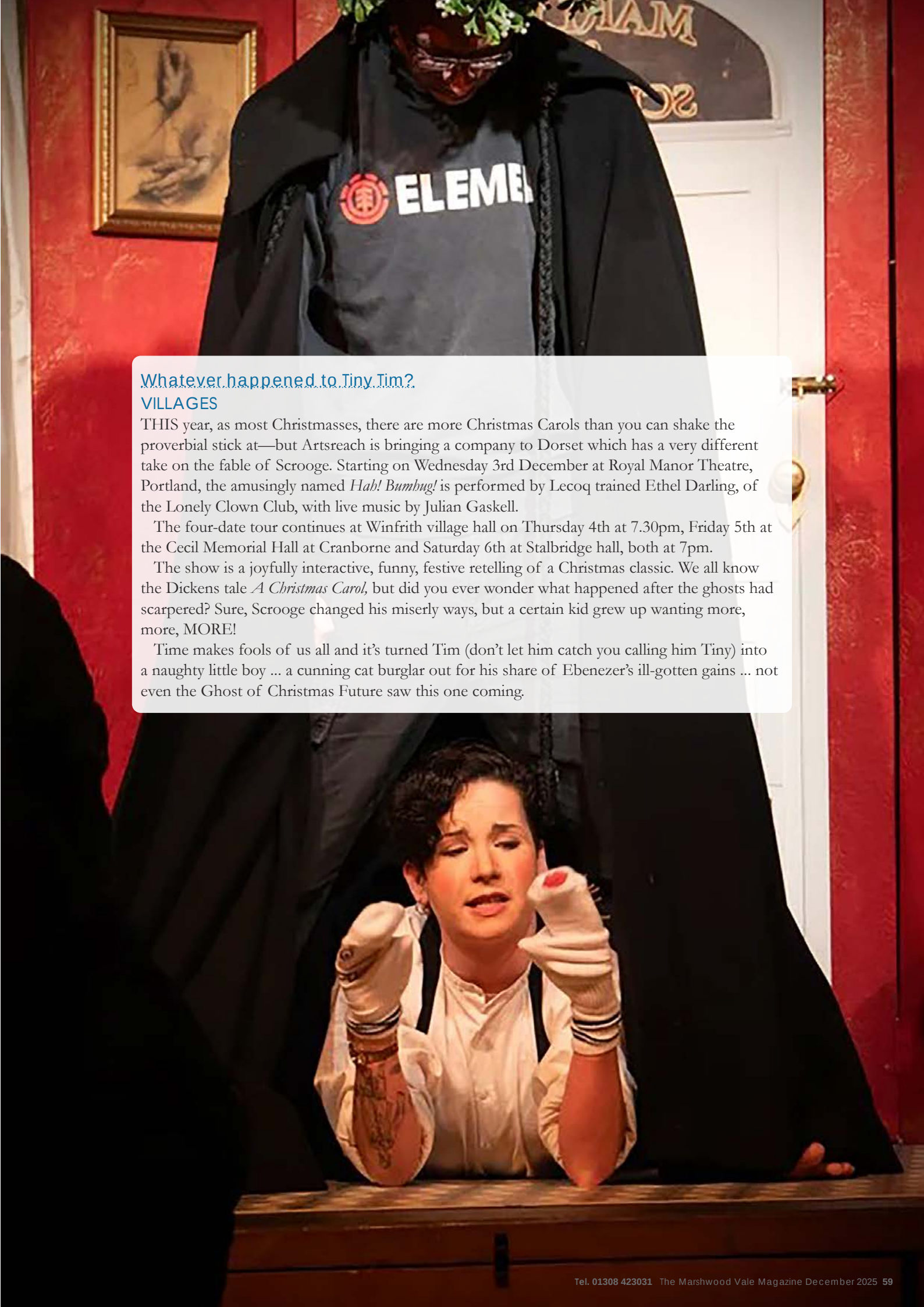
On Thursday 11th, St Agnes Fountain—Fairport Convention’s Chris Leslie and multi award winning duo Chris While and Julie Matthews—bring their much-loved and unique musical invention and laughter to Honiton, continuing to keep the Christmas spirit alive, while still remembering founder member David Hughes who left the band in 2020 and sadly passed away in 2023.

Although their albums are the sound-track for thousands of friends and families putting up their Christmas trees and decorations throughout Britain and around the globe, it is their magical live performances that have endeared them to audiences.

St Agnes Fountain will also be playing their Christmas gig on Sunday 14th December at a venue that has hosted them for many years—the David Hall at South Petherton.

Seth Lakeman gives two concerts on Saturday 13th at 2pm and 7.30. He is one of three brothers who continue a folk tradition started by their father, Geoff—Sean performs with his wife Kathryn Roberts and Sam with his wife Cara Dillon.

Seth was nominated for the Mercury Prize in 2005 for *Kitty Jay*. Multiple albums, tours and high-profile collaborations later, in February 2025, he released his latest studio album, *The Granite Way*, on his own label, Honour Oak Records. It’s a collection of songs recorded alongside a group of longtime collaborators, staying true to his roots and referring to ancient stories that inspired early West Country storytelling.



Whatever happened to Tiny Tim?

VILLAGES

THIS year, as most Christmasses, there are more Christmas Carols than you can shake the proverbial stick at—but Artsreach is bringing a company to Dorset which has a very different take on the fable of Scrooge. Starting on Wednesday 3rd December at Royal Manor Theatre, Portland, the amusingly named *Hab! Bumbug!* is performed by Lecoq trained Ethel Darling, of the Lonely Clown Club, with live music by Julian Gaskell.

The four-date tour continues at Winfrith village hall on Thursday 4th at 7.30pm, Friday 5th at the Cecil Memorial Hall at Cranborne and Saturday 6th at Stalbridge hall, both at 7pm.

The show is a joyfully interactive, funny, festive retelling of a Christmas classic. We all know the Dickens tale *A Christmas Carol*, but did you ever wonder what happened after the ghosts had scarpered? Sure, Scrooge changed his miserly ways, but a certain kid grew up wanting more, more, MORE!

Time makes fools of us all and it's turned Tim (don't let him catch you calling him Tiny) into a naughty little boy ... a cunning cat burglar out for his share of Ebenezer's ill-gotten gains ... not even the Ghost of Christmas Future saw this one coming.



Top Six at the Flix

Bridport Arts Centre

The Umbrellas of Cherbourg (1964)

A glorious romantic confection unlike any other in movie history. Washington Post. Hal Hinson.

Plaza Cinema Dorchester

It's a Wonderful Life (1946)

It's one of those ageless movies, like *Casablanca* or *The Third Man*, that improves with age. Some movies, even good ones, should only be seen once. When we know how they turn out, they've surrendered their mystery and appeal. Other movies can be viewed an indefinite number of times. Like great music, they improve with familiarity. *It's a Wonderful Life* falls in the second category. Chicago Sun-Times. Roger Ebert.

The Polar Express Pyjama Party

All aboard The Polar Express for a Pyjama Party! Come along to the cinema in your cosiest pyjamas and dressing gowns and enjoy a special screening of *The Polar Express*. December 13th and 14th at The Plaza.

The Rex Cinema Wareham

Blue Moon (2025)

Blue Moon, which plays out on the night of the premiere of Rogers and Hammerstein's first hit, *Oklahoma!*, is a romantic, funny, moving, life-affirming chamber piece. Screen Daily. Lee Marshall.

Poole Lighthouse

The Shining (45th Anniversary 4K Restoration). Ostensibly a haunted house story, it manages to traverse a complex world of incipient madness, spectral murder and supernatural visions ... and also makes you jump. Empire. Ian Nathan. 17th December at The Lighthouse.

Weymouth Pavillion

Wicked For Good (2025)

'Poised to cast another spell on the Oscars as first reactions call it a 'heartbreakingly tender conclusion' with 'jaw-dropping performances' Variety. Clayton Davis.

Beauty and Santa

BRIDPORT

ONE of the best-loved pantomime stories, *Beauty and the Beast: The Musical* has been chosen by Bridport Young Performers for their Christmas 2015 show, at the Electric Palace from Monday 13th to Thursday 18th December.

Belle sets out to rescue her father Maurice, who has been taken captive by the mysterious Beast in his castle. She offers herself to free her father from imprisonment, and over the ensuing weeks she begins to learn more about the curse that has left the castle inhabitants as objects, waiting for true love to break the spell placed on their master to return them to human form.

From 20th to 23rd December, Darling Productions UK bring *Santa Live!*, a new festive extravaganza to the Electric Palace.

Disaster strikes in Christmas-town when the Christmas spirit runs out and all the children's names have mysteriously vanished from Santa's naughty and nice list.

In this hour-long interactive show, young audience members can join the cheeky elves Tinsel, Snowflake and Candy, as they try to help Santa save Christmas with the power of song and dance.

The Christmas Hearth

BRIDPORT

FOR many lovers of folk and traditional music, Christmas and the Mellstock Band go together like turkey and cranberry sauce. This delightful quartet, who recreate the music of Thomas Hardy's time, come to Bridport Arts Centre on Saturday 13th December at 7.30pm.

The Mellstock Band takes their name from Hardy's fictional Mellstock, the name he gave in his Wessex novels and tales to the villages of Stanford and Bockhampton where he was born and grew up.

In their festive show, *The Christmas Hearth*, they invite you to their Christmas fireside with a seasonal mix of jovial songs, stirring dance music and haunting carols.

This is a costumed show with early instruments, song and spoken word, with hearty harmonies, soulful solos and exuberant instrumentals. The band brings to life the sound of a 19th century village band with fiddle, clarinet, concertina and serpent.



The music is linked by readings of work by Thomas Hardy, Charles Dickens, John Clare and William Barnes, telling the story of Christmas celebrations in 19th-century England.

There is more Victorian Christmas music and merriment with *The Cratchits' Christmas Cracker* on Friday 19th December at 7.30pm. A festive feast of seasonal silliness and a merry mixture of Yuletide foolery.

The Cratchit family is having a party and you're all invited! Join Mrs Cratchit, cousin Edith and Uncle Hugo as they celebrate Christmas with a marvellous mix of festive songs, stories and parlour games.

The show has been created and performed by Mary Woodvine, Craig Johnson and Jenny Beare, who between them have decades of theatrical experience with Kneehigh, Wildworks, the Minack, the RSC, the National Theatre and countless village halls.

Grand opera in small spaces **STUDLAND AND YETMINSTER**

GRAND opera? That's for grand opera houses—Covent Garden, the Met, Sydney Opera House, La Scala ... but how about Studland village hall on Thursday 4th December at 7.30pm or St Andrew's Church, Yetminster, on Sunday 14th, at 7pm?

On a short tour with Dorset's Artsreach rural touring charity, soprano Callie Gaston, tenor Roger Paterson and pianist Elspeth Wilkes, invite you to delve into a heart-breaking and enthralling world of vengeance, love and regret.

Callie Gaston and Roger Paterson work internationally as performers in a variety of touring ensembles, but this new opera gala tour makes it possible to bring the grand drama of opera to life in intimate venues.

The show features well-loved opera arias and duets followed by some musical theatre classics. It's ideal for a relaxed introduction to the genre. Revel in the romance of Puccini, the passion of Gounod and the heartbreak of Verdi. Each piece is set into context by the performers, so no prior knowledge is necessary.

GPW



Join *The Cratchits' Christmas Cracker* at Bridport Arts Centre in December

The Young Lit Fix

Santa's First Christmas

By Mac Barnett and Sydney Smith



Published by Puffin Books

Paperback £8.99

Reviewed by Nicky Mathewson

"IN the old days, Santa didn't have Christmas. All year he made toys at the North Pole, which he loaded up in his sleigh each Christmas Eve, then flew all over the world to place under trees.

When he got home, he slept. And when he woke up on Christmas morning, he went back to work. That's it."

Santa deserves a special day as much as anyone and the elves decide it's time they gave Santa a treat. They help him to celebrate the day by decorating the house, finding the perfect tree, preparing a feast, filling stockings with socks, fruit and liquorice, and giving Santa some presents just for him.

They decorate the tree, light up the North Pole with fairy lights, prepare the food together and tell stories around the fire. It's a perfect Christmas day and Santa feels loved and cared for. Everyone is happy and after singing some carols Santa declares: "We should do this every year. And now they do."

This beautiful picture book is a work of art. Mac Barnett is a champion storyteller and Sydney Smith's soft and colourful illustrations bring enormous warmth and fun to the story. The lighting in each picture is sensational.

This is the perfect Christmas book and I'm so excited to share it with you. Perfect for reading aloud to children age 2 to 6, but equally enjoyable to enjoy reading independently for anyone, any age who loves Christmas.

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