

Next Week:
Sleeping
with lions



Reviews: The Critics

Revelations of a woman who stole a king's heart

Tried and tested

*by The Sunday Times
and Best Bear Childcare*

**"A CARING, INTELLIGENT
SERVICE"**

The Good Nanny Guide

**THE LONDON AU PAIR
AND NANNY AGENCY**

020 7435 3891

www.londonnanny.co.uk

**WALLIS
UPSTAIRS AT THE GATEHOUSE**
★★★★☆

Everyone knows about the American divorcee that cost Edward VIII his throne. Now, Jennifer Selway has researched the matter thoroughly and discovered more information about Wallis Simpson and her background.

It was difficult to understand why the Prince – the good-looking playboy – should have fallen so deeply in love with 'That Woman'. She was not beautiful, aristocratic or rich. She wasn't even very nice, but she had something that kept the Prince close to her; that even drove him to give up the throne for her.

She was good company, a witty and lively conversationalist, so why couldn't they have just remained friends? Was it an excuse for him to evade his heavy responsibility? It certainly wasn't her idea. She was ambitious and would have been delighted to be Queen, but it seems she was reluctant to marry him when she knew he would have to abdicate.

Selway's play deals with their meeting, their romance and ends with their marriage.

We are kept up-to-date with the story by another couple – the butler (Robert Hazle) and housemaid (Katie Arnstein) – who have their own romance and are privy to the superior couple's perverted sexual tastes. The butler also plays the piano from time to time and gives us witty commentaries – à la Noel Coward – to music by Simon Slater.

Emma Odell gives a completely convincing performance as Wallis and the prince is played by Windsor look-alike, Grant McConvey.

There is a great deal of very funny bitchiness from the rest of the cast. They joke that from the size of Wallis's hands and feet, she must have been a man. Luckily, the press didn't pounce on that information until the Prince announced his abdication on the BBC.

A very entertaining evening with many revelations, and originally devised by John Plews who directs the production. Well worth the trip to Highgate.

Aline Waites



■ Emma Odell as Wallis Simpson
Picture: Mitzi de Margary

So you want to be a journalist?



**The NCTJ delivers the premier training
scheme for journalists in the UK.**

An NCTJ qualification equips you with the skills you need to be an effective journalist and meet the demands of a fast-changing multimedia industry.

- The majority of successful journalists working in newspapers, magazines, television, radio and online are NCTJ trained and qualified.
- Major newspaper groups and other employers of journalists say they prefer NCTJ qualified applicants.
- NCTJ accreditation is the hallmark of excellence for journalism courses.
- Bursaries may be available from the Journalism Diversity Fund.

The NCTJ accredits around seventy journalism courses across the UK at universities, colleges and commercial providers and also offers distance learning options.

**National Council for the
Training of Journalists**

For more information visit
www.nctj.com

nctj
National Council for the
Training of Journalists

Unconvincing Greek political drama

**SUNSET AT THE VILLA THALIA
NATIONAL THEATRE**
★★★★☆

A new play about Greek political turmoil should feel thoroughly topical, but Alexi Kaye Campbell both illuminates and regrettably sidesteps the current European crisis by setting his in the mid-20th century.

Part morality tale, part history lesson and part horror story, it's an engrossing piece, yet it never quite coalesces into convincing theatre.

Playwright Theo and actress wife Charlotte are holidaying in a peasant cottage on Skiathos in 1967 – beautifully evoked by Hildegard Bechtler's sun-bleached set and period attire. Shadowy CIA guest Harvey arranges the sale of the house to the Brits for next to nothing, taking advantage of the Greek owners' economically necessitated emigration. That same day, the Colonels seize power in a bloodless coup.

The second half, set nine years later, examines the fallout. Kaye Campbell addresses imperialist intervention, cultural appropriation and the capitalist view of democracy, but doesn't let the drama carry those themes – they're rigorously and explicitly



■ Glykeria Dimou and Pippa Nixon

Picture: Manuel Harlan

disputed by a paranoid, haunted Harvey, desperate to justify his actions, and hard-line moralist Charlotte.

A Chile debate is a polemical bridge too far, even if Kaye Campbell is aiming to act as a didaskalos: the dual Greek role of writer and teacher.

Ben Miles produces a dangerously charming Harvey, whose emotionally manipulative sales pitch would make Don Draper proud, while Downton's Elizabeth McGovern is a hoot as his platinum-

blonde lush of a wife. Pippa Nixon does her best with relentless killjoy Charlotte, though the commented-upon sexual tension with Harvey remains absent, and there's good support from a scene-stealing pair of kids and exploited Greeks, Glykeria Dimou, Christos Callow and Eve Polycarpou. Yet the British and American voices are prioritised – we can appreciate the value of those lives affected, but we're kept at one remove from them.

Marianka Swain