

The Dolphin and the Ostrich – Darwin & Fitzroy Play

28th October 2009

On the 150th anniversary of the publication in 1859 of Darwin's seminal work *On the Origin of Species*, ACOPS held a one-off performance of Juliet Aykroyd's play *The Ostrich and the Dolphin* at the Royal Institution.

The Dolphin is Robert FitzRoy, pioneer of weather forecasting and captain of HMS Beagle. Charles Darwin, his seasick passenger, is the Ostrich. The outcome of their adventurous sea voyage between 1831-6 was Darwin's momentous account of the *Origin of Species*: a Theory which subverted FitzRoy's beliefs and threatened his very being.

In a 4-way dialogue between their younger and older selves, the play dramatises the FitzRoy and Darwin's doomed friendship, and the tragic aftermath of the great Beagle voyage.

Following the performance at the Royal Institution there was a discussion between Juliet Aykroyd, Lord Julian Hunt, former Chief Executive of the Met Office, and Prof Armand Leroi, an evolutionary developmental biologist, which was chaired by Baroness Susan Greenfield. This discussion picked up on the themes raised by the play and will further explore the radical nature of Darwin's ideas in the 19th century, thinking on his work today, and the next big avenues in evolutionary biology. Other performances were given in East Anglia and Pembrokeshire.

Copies of a live performance at the Arden Theatre, Faversham on November 2009 are available; please contact acopsadmin@gmail.com for further details.

- <http://www.rigb.org/contentControl?action=displayContent&id=00000003409>