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Ready for High Society: Kirby Hughes as Tracy, and her maids. Photo by Lucy Young.

## Review: High Society

By Sheila Armstrong

Cole Porter's musical *High Society* played to enthusiastic audiences at *Upstairs at the Gatehouse*, the theatre above the Gatehouse pub in Highgate. John Plews directed, with assurance, an enthusiastic cast and a host of classic songs.

Two *ARCHER* reporters, both John Plews fans, struggled through ice and snow to Highgate. The glamour of press night, the wintry journey through the snow and the 1950s classic songs all combined to ensure the audience, mainly of a certain age, enjoyed the occasion.

Kirby Hughes and Jessica Bastion-Vines as the two Lord sisters, Tracy and Dinah, shone in an excellent cast.

Unusually, the 1956 film came before the stage show. The plot probably doesn't matter, but unsurprisingly is to do with falling in love. The film was a vehicle for popular

crooners Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and the inimitable Louis Armstrong. The luminous Grace Kelly played her last role before relocating to Monaco. Crosby and Sinatra hoped the film would raise their profile in a musical world where rock 'n' roll was on the horizon and approaching with speed.

Unfortunately, by the time you read this review, this Gatehouse production will have ended but look out for more high-quality shows in an interesting year ahead at [www.upstairsatthegatehouse.com](http://www.upstairsatthegatehouse.com). Scenes from the film are also on YouTube and the songs have worn very well.

## Oh, no! It's that time of year again

By Victoria Davenport

Greetings to all runners, would-be and almost-runners included. The first of January was a beautiful day to start training for this year's London Marathon, except for, um, a pulled hamstring, old age, and, gee, does it have to be so cold?

It could be worse, like, raining, sleet, hailing and blowing, right? So stop complaining, get on those base layers and gloves and get out there.

The latest issue of *Runner's World* is full of over-the-top whoopdeedooda: "Hey, *Be-gin-ners!* Youcandoit, weknowyoucandoit. YouwillLOVEeveryminuteofit." As you've probably found out by now, that is total rubbish. The truth is that it is hard work, a literal pain in the ass, disrupting, corrupting, dislocating, and you get NO thanks or gold medals for your weekly slog of 'x' (count 'em!) number of miles. None!

The good news? If you don't know it already, the training is much, much harder by FAR than the Marathon could ever be. Just a few weeks from now you will be sailing along, waving to the crowds, accepting sweets and oranges from all those cheering, smiling children, fending off the shouts and flowers and wreaths of honour, and loving every minute of it. The *bad* news is, you gotta do those bloody miles to get there to enjoy it all. Your fellow runners are commiserating, even the guy you pass on that horrible hill (him: coming *down* zipping along

effortlessly; you: panting and dying and cursing). They know how you feel, they have been there too and have hated it. What matters more than any of that is the simple fact of getting out of the front door again, again and again. Remember, not everyone is as disciplined (or crazy) as you. Well, except for 40,000 others, all doing exactly the same thing. Onward, brave warriors, into the freezing cold, hating it all, loving the spiritual glow of finishing *yet another* long run.

*Victoria will be running yet another London Marathon this year for the Childhood First charity. To support her, contact [vdavenport@btconnect.com](mailto:vdavenport@btconnect.com).*

## Glorious banners

A collection of beautifully hand-stitched, colourful banners based on prayers from scripture will be exhibited in the Methodist Church on the High Road during the week of 8 March.

This collection from the Deo Gloria Trust is one of several sets designed and produced by the artist Jacqui Frost for the Cathedral Exhibitions project. They won a Gold Award in the Christian Broadcasting Council's 2008 awards for Best Esoteric/Visual Arts.

Visitors are welcome to drop in at the church on Monday 8 March from 2-3pm, on Wednesday 10 March from 10.30am to 12 noon and on Saturday 13 March from 2.30-4pm.

## A tale of two carols

By Marian Bunzl

In December, the North London Chorus was invited to sing carols at a Regimental Ball at the Regent's Park Barracks.

As officers and wives arrived for dinner and dancing, we stood at the entrance and greeted them with traditional carols. There was a further round of carols in the bar, finishing up with a jolly "We wish you a Merry Christmas" as the guests went into dinner. In all, we sang about an hour's worth of carols, so each had to be timed with military precision.

It was a most elegant affair. We were in our black concert dress enlivened with sprigs of holly (Victorian dress was suggested, but firmly vetoed by our members), the WAGs in gorgeous ball gowns, and the officers (male and female) in stunning regimentals of dark blue with lashings of gold braid. It was difficult to hear ourselves sing above the jovial chatter but, as one of the lovely ladies was inspired to come and sing with us, we must have made an impression.

A week later, we were due to sing carols at East Finchley Station, and shake a bucket on behalf of the North London Hospice. Alas, the sudden arrival of the Big Freeze prevented both singers and commuters getting there, and the station was blanketed in snow and deserted. It was indeed the Bleak Midwinter.

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## Review: Dan & DeCarlo café

By James Franklin

After an extensive refurbishment, the café site at 20 High Road has become one of the most popular coffee venues in East Finchley. Located opposite the station and the Institute building, Dan & DeCarlo is attracting a variety of customers, ranging from businessmen to new mothers.

The cupcakes and the muffins are incredible (I recommend the chocolate and blueberry cupcakes), and the café décor is spacious and bright, with a massive table at the front suitable for a group.

Further seating at the back is ideal for those who prefer somewhere more private. Dan & DeCarlo is a worthy addition to East Finchley's excellent range of cafés and eating places.

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