



The witches make their entrance at the Little Angel Theatre.

## Bewitched by puppets

By Angela Anderson

Little Angel Theatre in Islington has been celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with five performances of *The Wild Night of the Witches*, using the long-stringed marionettes made in 1959 by John Wright and designed by Lyndie Wright, who founded the theatre. The original recording of John and Lyndie's voices was used too.

When the theatre was converted from a bombed out temperance hall in 1961 it included a purpose built marionette bridge, the only one in London. It is difficult work for the puppeteers who stand either on the front bridge (downstage) operating their marionettes backwards with the puppet facing them or the back bridge (upstage) operating them forwards, with the puppets facing away from them.

These latest performances were given by puppeteers who are all trainee marionettists, directed by Ronnie Le Drew and Sarah Wright. The witches were both frightening and funny, and the small boy who meets them was very appealing. Good triumphed over evil, the pretty heroine wasn't poisoned and the witches flew away at the end.

The show also featured Marionette Variety Turns, including a matador trying to

get the better of a bull to the accompaniment of Bizet's *Carmen*, which had the children in the audience squealing with delighted laughter.

Forthcoming events at the Little Angel include Suspense London Puppetry Festival for adults, *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* for adults, followed by *Goldilocks* over the Christmas season for children aged two to five.

## New nursery brings Park House to life

By Ami Patel

A previously vacant East Finchley building has been transformed into a colourful nursery. The Monkey Puzzle nursery is part of a national franchise, and has opened its doors to 55 babies and toddlers.

Owner Paula Curry, who has had experience in child-minding for a number of years, seized the opportunity to refurbish Park House opposite the tube station and to address a shortage of nurseries in the area at the same time.

"It was pretty grim when we got here but we gutted the place completely and decorated each room with bright colours," said Mark Crosby, Managing Director of Monkey Puzzle, at the nursery's open day. The disused Park House building was given a new roof and a new central heating system and a climbing wall is being built in the outside play area in keeping with the nursery's ethos of encouraging children to be active and helping them grow.

After years of lying unoccupied, Park House's light, bright and open-plan lay out will serve its purpose and the child care



Inside the new Monkey Puzzle nursery. Photo by Ami Patel.

needs of local residents in East Finchley.

There are currently spaces for toddlers aged between one and two years old although

places for babies have already been fully booked. Please contact 01442 878887 or visit [www.monkeypuzzledaynurseries.co.uk](http://www.monkeypuzzledaynurseries.co.uk) for further details.

## KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

### Tinker, tailor, soldier, Tory

In the weird, crazed retro world of politics the madness is starting to take over. This isn't ordinary madness, but retro chic madness as Diddy David, Slasher Osborne, Blonde Boris and the rest of the Eton Rifles live the dream. And what a dream they're living!

In some kind of re-run of the 1930s they are presiding over rocketing unemployment, crashing industries and a celebrity circus. Meanwhile, the super rich complain about high taxes affecting the number of yachts they can buy, as the feral rich swim in champagne.

And just to make this trip back to the past seem even more surreal, spying is back in fashion. In the deranged world of the Cold War spies were the real deal. Everything from the smooth sadism of James Bond to the shabby cynicism of Harry Palmer was there for your delectation. And then there was George Smiley, the closest you could get to the spy as civil servant, especially when played by Alec Guinness on the BBC.

The real world was even better. So what if Britain had won a war, lost an empire and found the Beatles, no country did public school traitors better than us Brits. Donald Maclean, Guy Burgess, Kim Philby, Anthony Blunt and John Cairncross kept treason chic when all around them was grey and austere. KGB here I come!

And in the midst of it comes the startling news that the Soviet Union could have been brought crashing to the ground by a dashing young Tory. Yes, the KGB nearly recruited David Cameron, but changed their minds. Maybe they knew something we didn't, maybe they realised that he was more useful to world revolution if left alone. Maybe they knew he would rise to the top of the Tories, get into government and then slash and burn the NHS, education and the army, causing such outrage that the people would rise in revolution. Pity really, because had David taken up spying as ineptly as he's done everything else he'd be locked up by now.

## Forgotten films of London

Thousands of hours of forgotten footage of London life have been rediscovered lying unseen in local archives and made available for everyone to view.

Capturing scenes of celebrations, street life, schools and sports, the films can be viewed at the London Screen Archives website [www.londonsscreenarchives.org.uk/Londo/Main/](http://www.londonsscreenarchives.org.uk/Londo/Main/)

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