



## The woman behind *The Secret Garden*

Frances Hodgson Burnett's name is known world-wide, mainly today as the author of the eternally popular *The Secret Garden*, but also of *A Little Princess* and her biggest hit *Little Lord Fauntleroy*.

Born in Manchester and going on to live a truly trans-Atlantic lifestyle, she was as famous and as popular as Charles Dickens in her day. She published an astonishing 52 books in her lifetime and was seen by some as a rather scandalous figure.



Words with music: Alexis Leighton



Popular author: Frances Hodgson Burnett

All this and more features in the new one-woman show about her life called *In the Secret Garden of Frances Hodgson Burnett*, starring Alexis Leighton as Frances. It is being produced by the team behind last year's Edinburgh Fringe show *Mrs Shaw Herself*.

The hour-long piece is all Frances' words from letters and diaries. She once said: "If you look the right way you can see that the whole world is a garden." It will be underscored by live music on Celtic harp and accordion played by Helen Tierney, who lives in East Finchley.

The show will be in the beautiful Bothy Garden at Stephen's House, East End Road, Finchley N3, on Sunday 6 September at 3pm. Tickets are £10 and pre-booking is essential through Stephen's House website at [www.stephenshouseandgardens.co.uk](http://www.stephenshouseandgardens.co.uk).

## Theatre makes a comeback ... and it's a real hoot!

One of the first theatre shows to be staged in London since March was an outdoor performance at Stephens House and Gardens in East End Road, N3. Janet Maitland was there to review it.

A socially distanced outdoor show with hand sanitiser on tap sounds about as joyless as queuing outside a supermarket in the rain, doesn't it? But the performance of *Sherlock Holmes* by The Pantomoon Theatre Company at Stephens House on Wednesday 29 July was a shot in the arm. It was hilarious, inventive and full of glorious silliness.

The company gave it everything they'd got. Holmes and Watson tackled a fiendishly complex case featuring flashbacks, audience participation, live music and a fabulous Moriarty twirling a black velvet cape while holding her head back to keep her moustache from falling off.

Yes, everyone did keep their distance but, just for once, the pandemic wasn't centre stage.



Off the wall: Pantomoon's Sherlock

And it didn't rain and there was a bar and the volunteers organising it all were efficient and unobtrusive, chilled and friendly.

The last time I lay on a blanket on a warm summer evening and watched a live performance was 50 years ago

eating spaghetti hoops straight out of the tin while watching Jimi Hendrix at the Isle of Wight Festival. This time it was a bit more difficult getting up again, but the experience of watching someone giving their all for you was the same.

### Looking ahead

Stephens House is a Grade 2 listed house with extensive gardens at 17 East End Road, N3 3QE. September events include *The Secret Garden* of Frances Hodgson Burnett on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup>, a one-woman performance with live music on Celtic harp and accordion. There's also Street Food Sunday on the 13<sup>th</sup>, Gin on the Terrace on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> and High Tea on the Terrace on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup>. For more information and booking go to [www.stephenshouseandgardens.com/events](http://www.stephenshouseandgardens.com/events).

## Sea Feverish

*It's been a fraught summer of hot temperatures, hot tempers and confusion over how safe it is for crowds to flock to our seaside resorts. Marian Bunzl offers this poem in the style of John Masefield's Sea Fever to sum it all up.*

I must go down to the sea again, to Bournemouth Beach for the day  
And all I ask is we're six feet apart, with a mask if we've something to say,  
And the sun is shining and the waves are gently swishing  
And we can picnic or swim, or drink our gin, or try our hand at fishing.

I must go down to the sea again, for the call of the running tide  
Is a wild call and a clear call that cannot be denied.  
And all I ask is a blue sky with white clouds flying,  
And an ice cream man and a hot dog van, so the kids can stop their crying.

I must go down to the sea again, I'm at the end of my lockdown tether.  
I've got to go down to the sea again in this glorious summer weather!  
If crowds of people feel the same as me, I can only pray that they're virus-free,  
So that I'm safe as along the beach I roam, and can enjoy a cream tea before I go home.



Vibrant venue: How the Jacksons Lane foyer and café space could look next summer

## Jacksons Lane stays closed until July 2021

By David Melsome

Jacksons Lane arts centre in Highgate has announced that it is to stay closed until July 2021 while it undergoes a £3.3 million redevelopment programme.

The venue's management said combining two periods of closure, for the pandemic and for the essential modernisation work, was the best way to secure its future and minimize the length of time the doors stay shut.

Highlights of the redevelopment include a new lift to allow wheelchair access to Studio 1, a foyer almost tripled in size and doubled in height, sound-proofed and modernised studio spaces, an enhanced auditorium with increased and better quality seating, and two new riggable spaces for circus artists.

Funding was secured last year from Arts Council England and Haringey Council with work due to start in 2021, but that has now been brought forward to tie in with the venue's enforced closure while the pandemic lasts.

Jacksons Lane executive director Monique Deletant said: "We're excited by this opportunity to transform Jacksons Lane. We love how much our building is cherished by our communities, but for years they've endured noise bleed in studios, buckets catching leaks when it rains and an overcrowded foyer."

Artistic director Adrian Berry said: "I'm happy that we've been able to push forward our plans to reshape our beloved building, because it gives us the best chance of emerging from the pandemic as a strong, resilient centre for circus, culture and community engagement."



## Humans in or out of harmony with nature

Offshoot Gallery is opening its doors to art lovers again this month with an exhibition of paintings by Araminta Blue called *Splinters & Swimmers*.

The artist's work considers the role of natural spaces and how we as humans connect with nature, or damage it. The exhibition runs at the gallery at 162 High Road, N2, until Thursday 24 September.