



Watch out for Benjamin in big-budget drama

By Lynn Winton

Actor Benjamin Victor has lived on the High Road, N2, for the last three years, and has been working between acting jobs at Margot Bakery in East End Road, so his face will already be familiar to many readers.

He will soon get a lot of double takes in our neighbourhood when he is seen in his latest, largest role in the big-budget drama series *The English* starting on BBC2 on Thursday 10 November. It's a period revenge drama set in the US and has a glittering cast of British acting heavyweights that includes Emily Blunt, Rafe Spall, Stephen Rea and Toby Jones.

Plot stays under wraps...

I spoke to Benjamin on one of his rare days off between his weekend shifts at Margot and touring schools around England playing the title role, and

multiple others, in a production of *Macbeth*.

Benjamin spoke about the filming experience but had to remain intriguingly oblique about his character: "I can't say anything about my part, because I'm one of the characters you'll meet along the journey. If I said anymore I would reveal some of the plot."

...but the cast's lovely

Filming took place during stringent Covid restrictions in various parts of Spain which mimicked the topography of places meant to be in the US. The writer and director is Hugo Blick, best known for a

string of BBC dramas over the years, including *The Honourable Woman* and *Black Earth Rising*.

"Everyone was absolutely lovely, talented people who I've looked up to for a long time. They knew it was my first time on the set of a big budget production and were kindness itself," said Benjamin.

Meanwhile, back in the real world of N2, I had one last pressing question for him. What was the very best out of all the sensational cakes, at Margot? He answered without hesitation: "Chocolate Babka."



On screen: Benjamin Victor. Photo Mike Coles



Book lover: Michael Nguyen with the window display he created.

The writing's on the wall at new nail bar

By John Lawrence

An eye-catching window display of dozens of books seemingly flying out of a typewriter has appeared at new High Road nail bar An nails. When it opened in September the owners wanted to steer away from the standard beauty salon décor, so designer and staff member Michael Nguyen was given free rein to turn the walls into a statement work of art.

Inspired by his love of the Harry Potter books, Michael arranged more than 100 paperbacks above and around a handsome LC Smith & Corona typewriter dating back to the early 1900s that he found at Barnet Furniture Centre.

"Customers ask why all the books," said Michael, "and we say it's because they're about having time to yourself and about relaxing. When you relax you come up with good ideas, and that's what we want people to do when they come in."

The story of Susanna

As you pass the carving of Susanna Wesley outside East Finchley Methodist Church in the High Road, you may wonder how the sculptor knew what the 'Mother of Methodism' actually looked like. You can find out at a special history event to mark 200 years of Methodism being held at the church on Saturday 12 November at 2.30pm.

Dr Peter Forsaith, research fellow at The Oxford Centre for Methodist Church History, Hugh Petrie, heritage development officer for Barnet, and Lewis Freeman, a direct descendent of the brothers who brought Methodism to East Finchley, will be speaking at the event. Book your free seats by emailing info@eastfinchley-methodist.org.uk.

Schumann and Sibelius

Finchley Symphony Orchestra opens its 2022-23 season with a concert of music in contrasting styles, Schumann's *Manfred Overture* and *Rhenish Symphony*, plus the final symphony by Finnish composer Sibelius. The concert is at 7.30pm on Saturday 19 November at Trinity Church, Nether Street, North Finchley, N12. Tickets cost £18, £15 for concessions and £7 for under 18s, and you save £2 a ticket if you book online in advance at www.finchleysymphony.org

Rock up for the show

The annual Mineral, Gem and Fossil Show hosted by the Amateur Geological Society takes place at Trinity Church, Nether Street, N12, on Saturday 26 November from 10am to 4pm. The large hall will be filled with fossils, jewellery, gems, rocks and mineral stalls. Refreshments and a children's Lucky Dip will be available. Entrance is £2 with under twelves free.

The Finchley branch of the society meets on the second Tuesday of every month at Finchley Baptist Church, East End Road, N3. Guest speakers give illustrated talks on subjects

as diverse as Essex geology and a million years of the human story. New members of all ages are always welcome. Find out more at www.amgeosoc.wordpress.com.

RICKY SAVAGE ...

"THE VOICE OF SOCIAL IRRESPONSIBILITY"

Auntie is still here

In the weird world of modern Britain three things make our country different: our monarchy, our parliament and the BBC. As the new king finds his feet and the government descends into chaos, it's left to the BBC to celebrate that it's made it to 100.

Back when the corporation started in 1922 the British establishment had a problem with it. This new radio thing looked like it was going to be popular and that meant it had to be controlled. There was going to be none of the 'anything goes' American way where any Tom, Dick or Harriet could broadcast what they wanted when they wanted.

Instead, we got a monopoly British Broadcasting Company under the control of the GPO. They had just the man to run it, a dour Calvinist Scot called John Reith. What he gave us was broadcasting that would not offend your elderly great aunt. We got Auntie Beeb.

With no TV until 1936, radio ruled and with no competition you got what was good for you. Everyone vetted by MI5 and nothing too controversial, which meant news on the Home Service, comedy and entertainment on the Light Programme and highbrow stuff on the Third Programme. They didn't even need censorship during the General Strike or the war because the BBC censored itself.

There was no competition until commercial television was allowed grudgingly onto the airwaves in 1955. We didn't get BBC2 until 1964 and had to wait until the 1980s for Channel 4. Times have changed. All of us can now choose from hundreds of channels, streaming, downloads and endless repeats.

But Auntie is still here. As the political saying goes, if both the Left and the Right think you're against them, it probably means you are neutral. It's easy to throw bricks at a stationary target, but over the years the Beeb has given us *Civilisation*, Shakespeare, The Proms, *Strictly*, *Bake Off* and Monty Python, even if we've had to suffer Eurovision along the way. And if none of that takes your fancy, they're showing Formula 1 on Sky.