



Creative team: Annlouise Butt and Isaac Bernier-Doyle at the Gatehouse in Highgate

## New cast behind the scenes at thriving Gatehouse theatre

by Ruth Anders

The Upstairs at the Gatehouse theatre in Highgate was established in 1997 by John and Katie Plews, and when they stepped back last year, they wanted to ensure that their successful track record of innovative musical productions alongside plays and one-off performances would carry on.

Just over a year ago, the theatre's former manager Annlouise Butt and Isaac Bernier-Doyle took the reins by becoming joint Artistic Directors... and the venue's original vision is still thriving.

With its 122-seat auditorium, Upstairs at the Gatehouse is one of the biggest off-West End venues, its stage and dressing room areas being large enough to accommodate musicians. Annlouise and Isaac have a significant amount of theatre experience between them, alongside additional skills in musicianship, teaching and design.

### All-rounders

Annlouise told *The Archer*: "Whilst each show brings in its own freelance stage management and creative teams, Isaac and I can both turn our hands to absolutely everything relating to the theatre." Isaac added: "We get no government funding and rely solely on our patrons. The job is 24/7, and whilst we have a full programme for the next year, we always have the flexibility to accommodate unexpected items. We also use the space for rehearsed readings and workshops to offer a facility for theatre experimentation and try-outs."

Annlouise told me about the theatre's challenging time during Covid: "We kept preparing to re-open, and then got shut down again," she said. "One production was even closed on the day of its dress rehearsal."

Now, however, they're back with a vengeance. The Gatehouse's recent production of the musical *In Clay* about artist Marie-Berthe Cazin typifies the ambition, the high professional standard and the innovative approach the artistic directors embrace. Not only was the piece top quality with a 15-minute

musical intro by the four-piece band, but the sizeable space next to the auditorium was refashioned to house a stunning exhibition of contemporary ceramics by more than 20 women artists, providing the perfect complement to the show.

For more information about the upcoming productions at this exciting and revitalised venue see [www.upstairsatthegatehouse.com](http://www.upstairsatthegatehouse.com)

## In her father's footsteps

By Lynn Winton

Anne Nicholls, who has lived in Durham Road, N2 for nearly 40 years, is no stranger to the written word, having produced hundreds of articles during her long career as an education correspondent for newspapers such as *The Guardian*. But her latest oeuvre is one from the heart, tracing some of her own family history, and adding her own commentary.

It is a memoir about the experiences of her father Kenneth Hulbert, a doctor during World War II. She travelled in his footsteps, basing her journey on entries from his own diaries, where his surgical skills took him from treating wounded pilots during the Battle of Britain to working on an ambulance train in Sudan, riots in Poona, Japanese bombing raids during the Bengal famine and treating casualties from the Burma campaign of 1944.

Historian Sir Anthony Seldon wrote that the book is "highly original and absorbing" and another reviewer noted that



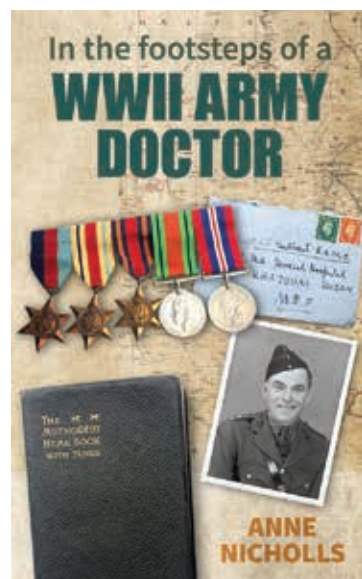
Memoir: Anne Nicholls with her book about her father's life as a war medic

it's "a fascinating read and a reminder to later generations of the sacrifices made by their predecessors".

Post-war, Kenneth married and had a family. Anne told me she had an idyllic upbringing. "He was the most wonderful

man one could have as a father, even though he was quite strict," she said.

The book's title is *In the Footsteps of a WWII Army Doctor* and is available now in paperback or on Kindle, from Amazon.



## Movement and martial art from Brazil

By David Melsome

Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian martial art and game that blends elements of dance, acrobatics, music and spirituality... and it has come to Strawberry Vale in East Finchley.

Classes have been started at the Green Man Community Centre for adults and children interested in taking up this physical activity. Parents can even train with their kids.

They're being run by Matt Gidaszewski, known by his Capoeira nickname of Matt Gato. He took it up in his early teens and trained for 10 years in Brazil, where he joined in workshops in schools for underprivileged children and special events for disabled people. He also helped to found a national Capoeira group in Poland.

Matt says the classes provide a full-body workout as they are all about dynamic movements, agility and balance, set to traditional music with an element of martial art. They run on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8pm to 9pm with private classes also available. Find out more at [www.capoeira-cppa.com](http://www.capoeira-cppa.com)



Capoeira coach: Matt Gato



Vital supplies: Driving Aid to Ukraine volunteers load another lorry destined for the war zone

## Two years on from the Russian invasion

By Lynn Winton

Two years ago Michael Byrne was so affected by watching the Russian invasion of Ukraine unfold that he vowed not to sit idly by.

Using his contacts as a former director of NHS services, he had within days amassed a truckload of vital humanitarian aid that he drove to the Polish border, from where it was delivered to bombed-out cities and towns in dire need of medicine, clothing and essential items like baby food and nappies.

This was the start of Driving Aid to Ukraine which has now made 24 delivery missions, all organised by Michael from his home in Lynmouth Road, N2. Readers of *The Archer* have supported the project from the outset, offering goods and funding.

I asked Michael for an update. "We have moved 300 tons of aid since we began two years ago," he told me. "We have just delivered 56 new hos-

pital beds to Kyiv and Kharkiv, and we now have access to four routes directly into Ukraine."

Michael's biggest challenge now is the overwhelming demand and requests to move more urgent aid. I asked Michael how readers can help. "As well as continuing to donate, we really need someone who has expertise in building philanthropic relationships or has corporate connections. With that kind of support, we can continue to make a positive impact on the lives of those in need in Ukraine."

If you are inspired to offer Michael a helping hand, his number is 07791 912389. He is also continuing to collect medical aids such as crutches and wheelchairs. Donations can be made by visiting [drivingaid-toukraine.org](http://drivingaid-toukraine.org).