



Kenwood portraits from the Gilded Age

Kenwood House on Hampstead Heath is to host a collection of portraits by renowned artist John Singer Sargent, the first major loan exhibition at the house in 25 years.

Running from May to October, 'Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits' coincides with the centenary of the artist's death in London in 1925.

Kenwood already has on permanent display his 1898 portrait of Margaret 'Daisy' Leiter, soon to become 19th Countess of Suffolk & 12th Countess of Berkshire. Daisy is considered to be one of his finest paintings and the embodiment of the so-called Gilded Age.

Kenwood Trustee Tracy Abraham told TheArcher: "Dismissed as 'Dollar Princesses' these extraordinary women, painted magnificently by Sargent, will finally have their stories told on the centenary of his death.

"We greatly look forward to welcoming local residents and hope it will remind people of the world class art available on our doorstep including masterpieces made available by philanthropist Edward Cecil Guinness, 1st Earl of Iveagh when he bequeathed Kenwood,



Elegance: Sargent's portrait of Daisy Leiter

the grounds and his selected paintings to the nation for the public to enjoy."

Find out more at <https://friendsofkenwood.org.uk/news/>

Classic tale of blackmail

Garden Suburb Theatre is staging An Ideal Husband, Oscar Wilde's classic tale of blackmail and political corruption. The play tells the story of Sir Robert Chiltern, a successful government minister, well-off and with a loving wife, whose perfect life is threatened when an acquaintance appears with evidence of a past he would rather hide. Sir Robert has to decide whether to

yield to blackmail or risk exposing the origins of his wealth and position. The theatre group said the themes of this play are as relevant now as they were when Oscar Wilde wrote the play 130 years ago.

Performances run from Thursday 1 to Sunday 4 May, Upstairs at the Gatehouse, Highgate Village. To book visit: <https://upstairsatthegatehouse.ticketsonline.com/>

Diary of a 15-year-old

By Aurel Bouayoun

Another three strike days while our teachers at Fortismere School take industrial action feels like winning the lottery. Missing this much school is amazing. Even though they set homework, no one does it. How would the teachers even check if all the students did their work? It's not like they can just email everyone to make sure, and half the time, the work feels pointless anyway.

After my unsatisfactory test results, I think my parents would like me to still do the work. Some revision for my next tests wouldn't hurt especially since it's not exactly the easiest topics. I really don't understand how they expect us to remember all of this for the exams, there's so much to revise!

Either way, all this free time has got me bored for the first time in a while. I thought I'd

make use of the time and try learning something new. So, I've started paper trading on my computer. Paper trading is like practising stock trading, but without using real money.

It's kind of fun, trying to figure out how the stock market works, and I'm starting to get the hang of it. It's a lot more complicated than I expected, but it's interesting to see how minor changes in the market can affect everything. It's also nice to know I can practise without the risk of losing real money.

Tomorrow, though, on another strike day, I'm planning to go to Power League to play football with my friends. Usually, we play at school, but this time, we're going to play outside of school. It'll be nice to change things up and play in a different environment. We might get the big pitch this time.



Double trouble: John Sackville and Lucy Pickles in a scene from Too Many Books. Photo Upstairs at the Gatehouse

Review: Too Many Books

Upstairs at the Gatehouse Theatre, Highgate

By Jessica Holt

Judi Bevan's debut play successfully explores in depth the tension between couples who want to adopt and social workers who must decide their suitability.

The couple Julia, played by Lucy Pickles, and Daniel, played by John Sackville, are middle class, well educated, professionally successful but for the social worker Zaydee, played by Alexandra O'Neill, this is somehow not good enough for her approval.

In a scene between Zaydee and her supervisor it is revealed she has made a serious mistake concerning a previous adoption case which obviously haunts her. The question arises whether she is now exercising poor judgement again. Into the mix comes China and its decisions to adopt a one-child policy to reduce its population plus in 1992 a law to enable

foreigners to adopt the abandoned children, mainly girls. Daniel and Julia are happy to do so but Zaydee raises many issues such as cultural displacement of the children, emotional sacrifices they would have to make, pressure on their relationship and much more.

The script is well written and there are many humorous moments which make the play entertaining as well as thought-provoking. The performances are very strong and the scenes with the couple and Zaydee are dramatically full of tension. She is brutal with this vulnerable couple, and we do not like her. She comes across as full of prejudice against

them and their lifestyle, but we recognise throughout she may have a point; they may fail, and another child goes back into care.

The design elements support the play, the music sets the context, the bookshelves which are very full give the play its title and the front room effortlessly transforms into an office.

The play is well worth seeing and during the interval it was clear the audience was engaged in discussing the first half. However, it felt too long. I wondered if it was necessary to have two visits to China despite the fact the couple could well afford to do so.

Rare plants

Once a year the opportunity comes round to buy rare heritage plants at a local fair, with all funds raised going to plantheritage.org.uk. This year's Plant Fair is taking place on Saturday 26 April from 9.30am to 2pm in its regular venue St Michael's School on North Road, Highgate. Specialist nurseries include Culinary Herbs, Dyson's Salvias, Monksilver, Hedgehog Garden and dozens more. Entry is £2.50. More information from organiser Mel Watson at melwatson@me.com

Gardeners

The Grange Big Local team is looking for volunteers to help plant vegetables and grow flowers at the Tarling Road Community Hub in East Finchley. Find out more at any of the Warm Spaces mornings that run at the hub on Thursdays from 9.30am to 12pm (except Thursday 13 March).



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BY ALAN AYCKBOURN
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