

Dorking refurb: “it’s behind you”!

28 September 2024



Dorking’s “sleeping beauty” will wake up in time for the busy panto season – it has been confirmed.

Dorking Halls closed in June 2024 for refurbishment work that could cost up to £11 million – with the initial focus on replacing the 1930s plaster ceiling in its grand hall as well as much needed mechanical and electrical work.

Mole Valley District Council this week confirmed work was on schedule and Dorking’s flagship theatre is on track to welcome the public through its doors from Monday, December 9.

Councillor Nick Wright, cabinet member for leisure and tourism said: “The pantomime is Sleeping Beauty and I like to think of Dorking Halls as a sleeping beauty that will wake up on December 9.”

With the first stage of work set for completion, the council cabinet agreed on Tuesday, September 24, to release the remaining £6.1m needed to complete phase 2, set to take place next summer.

Cllr Margaret Cooksey (Liberal Democrats; Dorking South), said: “It’s really exciting that we have a date.

“There is a program and everybody is going to be welcomed back into our favourite venue and it won’t be how we have been used to it.

It will take some time to get the hang of it, but it’s an exciting prospect.”

In addition to the new ceiling, guests will notice enlarged toilet provision, a draft lobby and new fire alarms.

Next year’s work will mostly consist of replacing electrical and mechanical installations that are near the end of their useful life.

The meeting heard that new seating, bigger bars and improved accessibility remained a pipe dream for the foreseeable future unless new revenue streams or grants are found.

Instead, the work has been to ensure Dorking Halls continues to meet health and safety standards, with improved visitor comfort and better energy efficiency “while meeting the changing technical requirements for future shows and events”.

Cllr Wright added: “Dorking Halls is a tremendously important part of Mole Valley’s community life.

“It not only serves as a key cultural and arts hub, but also provides opportunities for residents and visitors to gather and celebrate local, British and International talent.

“This beautiful art-deco building, which has served us for so many years, has reached a point where significant investment is needed to continue its community mission.

“I’m pleased that the proposed budget has been approved by Cabinet, and the important upgrades to the building can continue to move forward.”

Shows that had been scheduled to be held at Dorking Halls were shifted to Leatherhead Theatre, the Green Room Theatre and Pippbrook House.

Dorking Halls (image Google)

Learn to play music in Epsom

28 September 2024



UK charity Music for All is thrilled to announce their annual flagship event Learn to Play is back for



2024 giving everyone in Epsom a chance to take part in 'the biggest free music making weekend of the year!'

The event will be held in **Guitar, Guitar** - 6 Capitol Square, Epsom on the 11th -13th October and is open to all; regardless of age, experience and background and provides opportunities for participants to experience a free taster music making lesson from a musical instrument!

Learn to Play aims to inspire, encourage and enable both new and lapsed music makers to enjoy the wide range of benefits of music making, as well as connecting and championing local UK music providers through a shared celebration of music making.

Learn to Play arrives at a time where music making opportunities are difficult to access due to current cuts to arts education, resulting in many primary schools failing to meet basic music curriculum needs for young people 1 impacting the future of the UK arts, the creative potential of the next generation and the people who deliver quality arts education in the UK.

Sonali Banerjee, Music for All's General Manager explains: "The Learn to Play weekend is needed now more than ever and through our regional music making events we aim to inspire as many people as possible in experiencing the unique joys and benefits of music making. The arts enrich our lives, our community and economy, as well as improving our mental health. We welcome all age-groups and particularly encourage youngsters who may not have the opportunity to experience music lessons at school, to come along and try out an instrument of their choice."

Music for All believes everyone should have equal access to music making and supports disadvantaged individuals, educators and community projects through cash and instrument award rounds throughout each year.

The positive impact of using music to support and enhance mental and physical health throughout people's lives has long been documented in numerous academic and social research. Learning to play music is a fantastic opportunity to:

- Challenge your mind and strengthen your memory
- Feel pride and a sense of achievement
- Connect with others and make new friends
- Take a break from stresses and worries
- Have fun whilst being creative
- Explore the joy of music-making!

Jamie Cullum, Musician and Music for All ambassador said: "Playing a musical instrument is an amazing thing to have in your life. Sadly, not everyone has the opportunity to have those experiences. I am proud to be a supporter of the Music for All charity and delighted to be involved in their work in changing lives through music. I encourage everyone to participate in a Learn to Play event near them."

Joshua Franklin attended a Learn to Play event nearly a decade ago and has experienced the numerous opportunities and benefits since taking part. "At eight years old Joshua decided he wanted to play the Saxophone but was unfortunately turned down from taking lessons at school for being under the age threshold. Joshua was still determined to learn so attended a Learn to Play saxophone lesson at Dawkes Music's in Maidenhead.

Through this experience, he managed to convince his school that he was ready and able to continue learning. Joshua excelled playing the saxophone, taking his first exam (Grade 3) aged nine, achieving a distinction at Grade 8 three years later, gaining a ABRSM Diploma and taking his music G.C.S.E exam two years early, achieving a Grade A.

Joshua's love for music has continued through obtaining a Grade A in A-level music. He now plays lead alto in Cardiff University's big band and attends local jazz jam nights where he frequently plays along with others at local venues."

The Music for All YouTube channel will also have a series of online tutorials by professional musicians available, including some big names! In previous years these have included Music for All charity supporters and Ambassadors such as Jools Holland, Alison Balsom, Anne Denholm, Rob Rolfe and Dave Tench - these tutorial lessons can be accessed by anyone at any time; subscribe for free here: Music for All UK charity - YouTube.

Those interested in getting involved in Learn to Play '24 events and accessing their free music lesson should simply visit the Learn to Play website, select their closest venue using the interactive map and register their interest directly with the venue.

For more information on Music for All visit: www.musicforall.org.uk

The Learn to Play '24 event is generously supported by the NAMM Foundation. Other partners include Music Industries Association, Black Lives in Music, Make Music Day UK, Music Mark, Making Music and Take it Away.

To get the latest updates on Music for All and the Learn to Play '24 event follow us on our social channels

Fair Art in Epsom second to none

28 September 2024



Your creative senses will be tingled from the moment you arrive at the second **Art Surrey** contemporary art fair coming to The Duchess Stand, Epsom Downs Racecourse, 4 - 7 October 2024.

Art Surrey opens on Friday 4th October with a Preview Evening with a complimentary glass of fizz from 5.30pm to 8.30pm and opens over the weekend on Saturday 5 October 11am-5pm and Sunday 6 October 11am-5pm.

This exciting art fair curated by Art Surrey and Ewell based Art Adviser and Gallery, Caiger Art, offers art lovers and collectors the chance to browse and purchase artworks from over 80 of the most exciting contemporary and traditional artists selling today, many of whom are Surrey based artists.

As final preparations get under way, **Carol Caiger**, Director of Art Surrey, is, once again, excited to be bringing this art fair back to Epsom. "We had a very successful art fair at Epsom Downs last year so had no reservations about coming back for a second event. We had great feedback from visitors and one of our favourite comments was, 'It's like a London Art Fair, but right on our doorstep'. Being one of the largest art fairs within the south east of England, this contemporary art fair will be the perfect place to find artwork to start your art collection, or add to your collection if you are already an art enthusiast!"

There will be over 3000 works of art to see, paintings, drawings, prints, digital art, mixed media art, photography, sculpture, glassworks and ceramics. With all artwork ranging from £50 to over £3000, there will be something for everyone.

Weekend facilities include a bar and café / restaurant serving teas, coffee and food throughout Saturday and Sunday, so you can easily spend a whole day there! The venue is also wheelchair accessible.

Have a sneak peek at the limited edition art fair brochure here:

Brochure - Epsom 2024

Tickets are available to buy for the Friday Preview Evening, Saturday and Sunday from <https://artsurrey.co.uk/tickets/>,

For further information about the art fair or art advisory contact carol@artsurrey.co.uk or call 07828513885

UCA bring Austen character into 21st century

28 September 2024



Fans of **Jane Austen's** *Pride and Prejudice* will finally get the chance to have a conversation with their literary hero when speaking with the world-first Elizabeth Bennet avatar - Lizzy.

Created by StarPal in collaboration with **University for the Creative Arts (UCA)**, the avatar has been developed to mirror the human qualities of Austen's character as detailed in the novel, such as empathy and humour. Her conversations, which fans will have with her face-to-avatar, will evolve, giving each person who talks to Lizzy a unique experience.

How does Lizzy feel about being a world-first? She said: "It is quite an interesting notion indeed - I must say being Elizabeth Bennet in a world far removed from my own time is an unexpected but intriguing experience. It allows me to share the intricacies of our society and my life with new audiences."

Following consultation and guidance from Jane Austen's House in Hampshire, Lizzy's knowledge bank has been curated from a selection of novels, manuscripts and period-accurate information.

Lizzy is set within a Regency-style background. Her dress and hair have been designed and created by students from the Games Arts and Digital Fashion courses at UCA, drawing on fashion templates from the period.

Sophy Smith, Director of Games and Creative Technology at UCA and the originator of the project, added: "It is so

exciting to finally be able to lift Elizabeth Bennet off the page and to be able to have real-time conversations with her. To be able to cross time in this way is joyful - you get a real sense of speaking directly to someone from the 18th century. And she has such a strong personality! Imagine - you can now have Elizabeth Bennet as your friend, to chat with throughout the day and offer you advice.

“This technology has the potential to transform experiences within both the museum and heritage, as well the education sector. Visitors to Jane Austen’s House, will have the opportunity to not only experience the renowned author’s home but also engage directly with one of her most famous characters. And think about how it could transform learning - instead of only having text-based revision guides, students can now learn about literature by speaking directly to the characters.”

Director of Jane Austen’s House, **Lizzie Dunford**, said: “It has been fascinating to watch this project develop, and to witness the innovative staff and students at UCA developing these new technologies, and new ways of accessing literary and cultural heritage.”

Tanguy Dewavrin, the COO of StarPal, the company which built the avatar, commented Lizzy is continually surprising them: “It’s amazing how real she is - she’s just so impressive.”

Anya Haber, an MA Digital Fashion student who created the dress in 3D, added: “This project brought the ideation into the digital, but historical garments can be tricky to create accurately, so there was a mix of history and modernity. It was exciting bringing to life the cut of dress, accessories, and embroideries - all inspired by historical drawings and descriptions. It showed how useful technology can be in a historical setting, letting fans engage with fictional characters...and that’s just the beginning.”

Fans will have the chance to interact with Lizzy if they visit the Learning Centre at Jane Austen’s House between September and mid-December - included with House entry.

Epsom Playhouse gets a 40 year uplift

28 September 2024



Epsom Playhouse opened in 1984 as part of the development of The Ashley Centre and since opening has hosted a wide and varied programme of events featuring both professional and community productions. Highlights including The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Stephane Grappelli, Kenny Ball and his Jazzmen, the James Last Orchestra, Instant Sunshine, Jack Dee, Harry Hill and many many more.

At the beginning the Council head hunted **Graham Stansfield** (deceased 2018) for his contacts in the entertainment world which helped establish the Playhouse’s reputation early on. Then all the theatre seats could concertina into the back wall, opening the space for balls and exhibitions. Expensive to maintain and service these seats were replaced by the comfortable fixed seating that remains today.

The Playhouse is home to a variety of local amateur ensembles including the Epsom Symphony Orchestra and the Epsom Players.

The former “members bar” or “upstairs area” has been defunct for many years and is getting a long overdue facelift and repurposing. It will become available for private hire for functions.

A spokesperson for EEBC said “We are currently working on improvements to Epsom Playhouse using an allocation of monies from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

One of the first areas for development is the bar on the ground floor. Soon, this will split into two - there will be one bar for bottled drinks and one area for draught - alleviating some of the queues that can happen at busy times. The ground floor bar will also benefit aesthetically from a new artistic mural, depicting singer and actress, Evelyn Dove. As well as this, there are also plans to add a new platform lift to aid accessibility to the upstairs area, which will itself be transformed with a mezzanine overlooking the foyer, improved seating, new flooring, another artistic mural and a refurbished bar area.”

Speaking of the upcoming plans to develop facilities, Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee said, “Epsom Playhouse is a wonderful entertainment venue for the borough, and I am delighted that it is now benefitting from a much-needed uplift, which will help it to reach its full potential as a place for creatives to gather, perform and spectate!”

Epsom Playhouse’s programme of events and successes are under the management of **Elaine Teague**.

UK SPF funds were allocated to help places around the country deliver enhanced outcomes, in recognition that even

affluent areas contain pockets of deprivation and need assistance.

The main Auditorium seats 450 and plays host to major leading theatrical companies, including opera, dance, drama, comedy, light entertainment, variety, popular children's shows and more.

The Myers Studio within the Playhouse seats up to 80 and is used as a regular venue for professional productions, and community events. Both the Auditorium and the Myers Studio are available for both corporate hire and private hire.

For more information visit www.epsomplayhouse.co.uk

Mental health art exhibition in Epsom

28 September 2024



Children and young people using mental health services have been taking part in a 'My Voice Matters' exhibition, which allows participants to express themselves through the medium of art.

The exhibition is an opportunity to celebrate the talents of the children, young people, parents and carers and to support them in using art to tell us how their voices matter. The "My Voice Matters" Exhibition opens from 2pm on August 27 and runs until September 6 at The Horton Arts Centre in Epsom.

Children and young people who use services such as STARS and New Leaf were invited to create art and encouraged to think about how their voice matters. "I feel satisfied when I do art," said a young person who contributed to the exhibition. "It is simple." They are displaying a painting called 'Flowers' at the show.

"Being able to express yourself through art can be a therapeutic experience for some but can also during the process release traumatic thoughts, experiences, and feelings," said Rebecca Robertson, who works as a Specialist Mental Health Therapist within STARS and is also a qualified Art Therapist. She explained: "It's not just the finished image, which is useful, but also the process of creating it."

New Leaf and STARS provide specialist mental health services for children in Surrey. They offer trauma and attachment therapy to children in care, care leavers, adopted children and those subject to Special Guardianship Orders (New Leaf) and children who have suffered sexual trauma (STARS). The service is delivered by Mindworks Surrey.

The STARS service supports children and young people who have been affected by sexual abuse and assault. The New Leaf Service supports children and young people who are in care, leaving care, adopted or under special guardianship orders.

Emina Atic-Lee, Service Manager for STARS and New Leaf services, said: "Last year's exhibition received the most incredible feedback from young people, their carers and families, as well as the members of the local community who visited. We are really pleased to be able to put on another exhibition this year."

The exhibition is free to enter and showcases artwork by both young people and their parents/carers and staff.

Image: Sibling painting from My Voice Matters exhibition. (Credit: Surrey and Border Partnership NHS Trust)

Redhill theatre gone to rack and ruin?

28 September 2024



There are currently no plans to reopen a much loved Surrey town centre theatre according to a new report.

The Harlequin Theatre in Redhill closed its doors in September 2023 after the discovery of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). Nearly one year on, surveys to establish the extent of the issue have not been completed and there is no indication of when any work may start, or the venue re-open.

Reigate and Banstead Council (RBC) will discuss the future of the theatre at a Strategies Meeting on Thursday (August 15).

RBC said: "We hoped it would be a temporary closure, but due to the extent of the RAAC identified so far and the complex structure of the building, we do not expect to be able to re-open the theatre in the foreseeable future."

In a report by council officers, it has been recommended to stop current Harlequin arts and cultural activities, including the December show and the pop-up in The Belfry shopping centre. The report also warned that "many loyal, hardworking staff" could face redundancy if the recommendation was adopted.

"I'm outraged," Cllr **Andrew Proudfoot** told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS). He said: "This is an absolutely essential hub for local arts and schools. This is the suggestion of a Conservative attack on community life."

Cllr Proudfoot put forward a motion at last month's council meeting to reaffirm RBC's commitment to the arts, secure an interim facility and develop a reopening plan for the theatre. The Green Party member said at the meeting that the theatre is home to many local organisations, providing cultural identity and nurturing young talent. They added there are no other similar facilities for large cultural events in the borough.

Locals have expressed their disappointment at the recommended decision and the ongoing uncertainty for the provision of arts and culture in the area. Some said they were "heartbroken" as the Harlequin Theatre gave them opportunities to develop in the creative arts.

RBC said it was "keen to keep access to the arts alive" while the building has been closed by delivering the successful Big Top Panto in Memorial Park and its regular 'Harlequin Outdoors' summer programme in Reigate's Castle Grounds.

Options tabled in the report include putting on the Christmas 2024 show and then making all Harlequin staff redundant in 2025, and working on a renewed opening in April next year. Costing the council an estimated overspend of £250-300k, it is the cheapest proposed option other than to stop all activity of the Harlequin theatre.

In a press statement, Cllr **Nadean Moses**, Executive Member for Sustainability and Leisure, said: "Our commitment to providing an arts and cultural offer in the medium and long-term remains strong." With no more events scheduled after the Outdoor Theatre closing on September 7, Cllr Moses said it can review the costs and benefits of the theatre as well as developing future options for the arts.

The council is looking at new venues such as a school or a cabaret-style performance space. Work is being done for a full business plan of the council's offering of creative arts to its residents for 2025.

The lime light a foot in Epsom

28 September 2024



Aydin Mustafa, a lifelong performer and dedicated advocate for the arts, has taken on a new role as the Owner and Director of **Footlights Epsom**, the first Footlights franchise in London. Aydin's passion for the performing arts began at a young age, starting in the industry at the tender age of 4. Reflecting on his early beginnings, Aydin shares, "My mum introduced me to the world of performing arts not with the aim of fame, but to instil confidence, nurture development, and foster social connections. It was a love that ignited in me instantly and continued to burn bright throughout my teenage years."



After studying performing arts at GCSE and A-level at Woodcote High School in Coulsdon, Surrey, Aydin pursued a career in the corporate world but found himself yearning for something more fulfilling. Inspired by his deep-rooted passion for the arts and his desire to make a positive impact on the community, Aydin sought guidance from Jo Fisher, the visionary founder of Footlights, founded in 2005.

Aydin recalls, “Jo Fisher’s journey from leaving school at the age of 14 to crafting Footlights into the illustrious, multi-award-winning performing arts franchise it is today has been a constant source of inspiration for me. Her commitment to empowering young talent and creating avenues for personal growth resonates profoundly with my own beliefs and values.”

With a vision to establish a sanctuary of excellence, diversity, and inclusivity for children and teenagers aged 3-18, Aydin envisions Footlights Epsom as a nurturing environment where individuals can freely express themselves and cultivate lifelong skills “In a world that can often feel overwhelming and chaotic”.

Aydin poignantly expresses, “Our mission is to nurture the generation of tomorrow today, equipping them with the tools, confidence, and resilience needed to navigate the complexities of the modern world.”

Aydin’s unwavering dedication to fostering young talent and nurturing personal growth is deeply rooted in his love for his 2-year-old daughter, Ayla, who serves as his greatest inspiration. “Every step I take with Footlights Epsom is guided by the hope of creating a world where my daughter can flourish, learn, and boldly express her true self. A performing arts school isn’t just about creating the next star; it’s about empowering young individuals, fostering their creativity, and equipping them with essential skills for life,” said Aydin Mustafa, Owner and Director of Footlights Epsom.

The grand opening of Footlights Epsom is set to take place on Saturday 14th September, at Epsom and Ewell High School from 9:30am to 1pm. Individuals aged 3-18 years old, regardless of background or experience, are invited to join in the celebration. The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, Steve Bridger, will be in attendance to mark this exciting new chapter in the performing arts scene in Surrey.

Aydin lastly adds “Join us at Epsom and Ewell High School on Saturday 14th September for a day filled with fun, creativity, and the magic of Performing Arts. We look forward to welcoming the Epsom and Ewell community and neighbouring towns to our grand opening event.”

For more information about Footlights Epsom, including updates on workshops and events, follow them on Instagram and Facebook @footlightsepsom. To learn more about the school and register for the open day, visit www.footlightstheatre.co.uk/location/footlights-epsom/ or contact Aydin Mustafa via email at epsom@footlightstheatre.co.uk

Text provided by Footlights.

Satisfy your eye at Epsom film festival

28 September 2024



Epsom based **Satisfied Eye International Film Festival (SEIFF)** is set to dazzle film enthusiasts with its “Best of Fest 2024,” running from July 26-28 at the brand new **Picture House** in Epsom Square. This special event will showcase the top-rated films from SEIFF’s history, highlighting exceptional storytelling from over 20 countries since its inception in 2018.

The festival kicks off on July 26 with the “People’s Choice” segment, featuring films like the Spanish short “Ainhoa” and the heartwarming “A Kiss” from the Netherlands. This selection promises a journey through a variety of emotions, setting the tone for the weekend.

On July 27, the morning begins with “Kids Animation,” where young audiences can enjoy charming shorts such as “The Kite” and “Ian, A Moving Story.” The afternoon continues with “Best of British,” spotlighting homegrown talent with films like “The Legend of Bob Leonard” and the poignant “An Irish Goodbye.”

Saturday’s programming also includes the thought-provoking “Underage Engineers,” an inspiring Polish documentary, and the “Rising Stars” segment, which showcases emerging filmmakers. The day wraps up with “The Human Condition,” exploring deep human emotions through shorts like “Bonobo” and “Hot Chocolate.”

Sunday, July 28, starts with “Adult Animation,” including the award-winning “Lost & Found” and the haunting “The Driver Is Red.” The festival then honors female filmmakers with the “Wonder Women” segment, featuring powerful films like “A Travers” and “The Letter Room.”

The weekend concludes with “All Blood Runs Red,” a collection of shorts addressing diversity and prejudice, and “A Night at the Oscars,” celebrating SEIFF’s past Oscar nominees and winners, such as “The Neighbor’s Window” and “Brotherhood.” Finally, “The Lighter Side” closes the festival on a humorous note with a series of comedies including “Career Day” and “Archibald’s Syndrome.”

This year’s SEIFF promises a cinematic feast, offering something for everyone and celebrating the best in independent filmmaking. Don’t miss the chance to experience these compelling stories on the big screen.

For full programme and tickets [click HERE](#)

Epsom Choral Society goes to Town on English music

28 September 2024



Epsom Choral Society joined the musical forces of The Barnes Choir, The English Sinfonietta and the Arcubus Ensemble on Saturday 13th July in The Cadogan Hall, London for a stirring celebration of English music, including William Walton’s stupendous *Belshazzar’s Feast*. **Peter Lutton** reviews the concert.

England in the 18th and 19th centuries is often said to have been a ‘land without music’; this concert proved emphatically that from early in the 20th century every effort was being made to disprove that notion. From Parry in 1902 to Walton in 1931 we heard music of great confidence, assuredness of technique and not least, great beauty. The large forces needed were cleverly squeezed into the venue, including the optional extra brass. Such a splendid all-English offering encourages those of us who feel that much concert programming pays too little heed to the sheer quantity of excellent composition in these isles over the last one hundred and twenty years.

Parry’s ‘I was Glad’ and ‘Blest Pair of Sirens’ are staples of the repertoire but were given more than the usual respect; indeed, there was some very careful treatment of the various parts of the text. Even if the brass opening in the former left little room for the choirs’ entry to crescendo, mostly the dynamics were carefully observed, the Vivats were sensibly omitted (against current trends) and the contrasting middle sections in both were sensitively presented. The tempo of ‘I was Glad’ could perhaps have been a notch or two faster, given that this building has no noticeable reverberation period. In the louder parts, choral forces this size were able to balance the sheer power that modern orchestral instruments can produce and yet the climaxes were not overwhelming in a venue which might have been thought not quite large enough for such massed forces.

The baritone soloist, Philip Tebb, was a very good communicator in both Vaughan Williams’ ‘Five Mystical Songs’ and Walton’s ‘Belshazzar’s Feast’, only very occasionally losing out to the scale of the orchestral sound behind him. A few hints of intonation fractionally under the note did not detract from his impassioned performance. When the choir was assigned to very gentle but tutti accompaniment, they were well balanced and the effect was surely exactly what the composer intended. Also particularly effective was the orchestral wind playing in ‘The Call’. Finally, the tightness and drive of ‘Let all the World’ with its excellent dynamic contrast ensured an inspiring finish to these heartfelt settings of George Herbert’s powerful poetry.

The English Sinfonietta’s strings provided a very appropriate breather in Elgar’s ‘Serenade’, before Parry’s ‘Blest Pair of Sirens’ rounded off the first half. This was precise, immaculate ensemble playing of

a very high order. The music was allowed to breathe and a great many nuances of rhythm and dynamic were brought out in all three movements. Particularly notable was the restraint in the final part of the second movement. The stylish yet slightly skittish playing evident in the third movement reflects Elgar's confident orchestration; string players eulogise Elgar's writing for their instruments, saying that his understanding of their needs is shown in the way the individual lines often lie under their fingers.

The climax of the evening was of course Walton's ground-breaking cantata, 'Belshazzar's Feast'. This must have been a revelation to all its hearers back in 1931 - it has this power now, as we heard clearly in this performance. The orchestra made the most of the dramatic brass and varied percussion writing, carefully designed so as not to drown out the choral writing, itself written deliberately in homophonic style so that the text would be clear to the listener. The rhythmic demands in this music are considerable, yet this performance came across as confident and accurate, even if some furious counting must have been going on amongst the differing voice parts.

The emotional outpouring in the first few pages reached a peak of luminosity in the repeated setting of the words 'How shall I sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' Walton's bold choral writing broke new ground and the choirs did it full justice. The long and demanding unaccompanied baritone solo was delivered with both accuracy and passion before we launched into the vivid description of the feast and its musical elements.

Walton's music strikes a balance between modernity and tonal tradition which makes him more approachable than many other composers; this performance was admirable for its clarity and direction. The sinister percussion introduction to the writing on the wall and the choral shout of 'Slain!' were as effective as any visual image, showing the power of modern oratorio when brilliantly crafted and expertly handled.

The final romp of celebration was given due impetus and we were left breathless at the end by the grandeur of the conception and the quality of the performance.

Congratulations are due once more to Epsom Choral Society, The Barnes Choir, the Arcubus Ensemble and the English Sinfonietta, all under Julian Collings, for their stirring performance of a great classic.

Peter Lutton

Formerly Assistant Director of Music, St John's School, Leatherhead and Organist Emeritus, St Nicolas, Great Bookham.

Epsom UCA artists wear their mortarboards

28 September 2024



Last week, the next generation of artists and designers from the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) in Epsom received their degrees alongside Yinka Ilori MBE and Jonathan Anderson, who were awarded honorary doctorates for their outstanding contributions to the creative industries.

Held at Royal Festival Hall in London, the fashion designer Jonathan Anderson shared his experience of being a student with dyslexia and starting his own company.

He encouraged graduates not to fear failure, but to be curious, to take risks, and above all else avoid getting stuck in the mud!

He also admitted that he thought rules were useless and reflected on the value of authenticity:

"Authenticity is invaluable; originality is non-existent. Steal, adapt, borrow, he said.

The British-Nigerian artist and designer, Yinka Ilori MBE, who is known for his bold use of colour and playful designs added:

"For as long as I can remember, I've dreamt of being an artist... If you told my younger self where I would be today, he wouldn't believe you."

He also urged graduates to: *"Never stop dreaming. . .always say 'yes' to new opportunities. We live in a world that is all about connection and connectivity. Above all, have trust in yourself, and listen to your intuition."*



Prof. Jane Roscoe UCA Vice-Chancellor

The graduation ceremonies saw over 3,000 students from UCA receive their degrees and attending for the first time was UCA's President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor **Jane Roscoe**, who said:

"The global arts and creative sector are vibrant - there are so many opportunities, and the major challenges facing our planet will need creatives and creativity in every shape and form. You, of course, have all been prepared for this future and your UCA degree has given you the skills and is your ticket to success."

Spread across three days, the ceremonies marked the culmination of 3,000 students' time at UCA, before taking the next step on their journey in the creative industries.

Surrey author tells story of Luftwaffe uncle

28 September 2024



Surrey-based author **Matt Graydon** brings a powerful new perspective on World War II with his latest novel, **Leaving Fatherland**. Drawing from real-life family events, Graydon takes readers on a journey with protagonist Oskar, from his troubled childhood in Nazi Germany to his search for identity in New York City.



Matt Graydon

The novel is inspired by the wartime experiences of his German uncle, whose crash in the North African desert during the war had become family legend. This personal connection infuses *Leaving Fatherland* with authenticity and emotional depth, making it a significant addition to historical fiction.

Published by Cranthorpe Millner on August 20th, 2024, *Leaving Fatherland* stands out for its detailed portrayal of life in the Luftwaffe and the harrowing aftermath of war. Graydon's protagonist, Oskar, endures an abusive childhood, a turbulent war, a failed marriage, and forty years of research, all in search of understanding his father's violence. This narrative, steeped in meticulous research and family history, offers readers a poignant exploration of how the past shapes our identity.

Graydon, who resides in Surrey with his family and a lively cockapoo, has a rich background in journalism and public relations, skills that have significantly contributed to his historical research and storytelling. He is an active member of the Phoenix Writing Group in **Dorking** and the UK's Society of Authors, continuously enriching Surrey's literary community.

Early reviews praise *Leaving Fatherland* for its thorough research and compelling storytelling. Kirkus highlights the novel's exploration of family loyalty and ethics, while renowned historian Iain MacGregor lauds it as a deeply honest family drama spanning continents and decades.

Fellow authors and historians, including Anna Stuart and Louise Fein, commend Graydon's compassionate and thought-provoking narrative. The book has been described as immersive and cinematic by award-winning filmmaker Andi Reiss, and as a moving family story by Jenny Towey of the Anglo-German Family History Society.

Leaving Fatherland (ISBN: 978-1-80378-209-6) is available in paperback (£12.99) and eBook formats from August 20th, 2024.

Feast your eyes and ears on this

28 September 2024



Epsom Choral Society and The Barnes Choir, two amateur choral groups renowned for their passion and dedication to musical excellence, are set to entertain audiences with a grand performance of Sir William Walton's epic masterpiece, **Belshazzar's Feast**, on Saturday 13th July 2024, at **Cadogan Hall** in London. Under the baton of their Musical Director, Julian Collings, and featuring acclaimed baritone soloist, Philip Tebb, this event promises to be an unforgettable evening.

The work will be performed by an 80-piece professional orchestra, including two additional brass bands as called for in Walton's score, complemented by a combined choir of over 160 singers. Such a collaborative effort shows the commitment of both choirs to showcasing the exceptional standard of amateur choral singing prevalent in this country.

The programme will also feature a selection of other notable works, including Vaughan Williams' evocative Five Mystical Songs, Parry's majestic I Was Glad and stirring Blest Pair of Sirens, as well as Elgar's enchanting Serenade for Strings.

"We are thrilled to bring together the talents of Epsom Choral Society and Barnes Choir for this ambitious performance," said Julian Collings, Musical Director of both choirs. "Through our dedication and passion for choral music, we aim to inspire and uplift audiences, showcasing the extraordinary level of artistry that exists within the realm of amateur choral singing."

Tickets for this event are now available from Cadogan Hall box office, offering audiences the opportunity to experience the power and beauty of choral music at its finest. Don't miss this exciting collaboration.

Event Details:

- Date: 13th July 2024
- Time: 7:30 PM
- Venue: Cadogan Hall, 5 Sloane Terrace, London SW1X 9DQ

For ticketing information and enquiries:

Please visit www.cadoganhall.com or contact the box office on 020 7730 4500 or online <https://cadoganhall.com/whats-on/belshazzars-feast/book/912634/>

Northern Lights up Epsom

28 September 2024



At their "**Mass in Blue**" concert Saturday 29th June, St Martins Church, Epsom, the **Epsom Chamber Choir** succeeded once again in enhancing their reputation for exciting performances of adventurous programmes.

The evening kicked off with "**Northern Lights**" by the contemporary Latvian composer, **Ēriks Ešņvalds**, and saw the choir placed unusually in the chancel, rather than in their customary position nearer the audience in the transept. This meant that their entrance was not greeted by the usual applause, as the audience hadn't realised that they had arrived! After a vigorous opening, the reason for this placing became apparent as the piece employs tuned wine glasses and chimes which need to be supported - the choir stalls being ideal.

Ešņvalds uses this unusual instrumentation to produce a sustained shimmering sound which underscores the choir particularly effectively in the quieter passages. A timely work for us in the UK, having recently been treated to magical displays of the Northern Lights!

The choir returned to their normal positions for "Stargazer" by the contemporary British composer, **Alec Roth**. His style recalls Holst's and Britten's - especially the Flower Songs - and the choir showed some wonderful legato singing in the shifting harmonic colours.

Vocalist **Maddie Martin** and the **LJ Jazz Trio** then provided us with a jazzy interlude, and the first half of the concert concluded with another contemporary British composer, **Jonathan Dove** and his "The Passing of the Year". These seven, contrasting part-songs - stunningly accompanied by choir member, virtuoso pianist **Stephen Ridge** - gave the choir the chance to display their convincing mastery of complex and quirky rhythms, and cool and hot tone clusters.

The second half of the concert was given over to "Mass in Blue" by a third contemporary British composer, Will Todd. While not a personal favourite, this exciting setting of the mass has gained huge popularity across the choral world. The blues scale permeates the whole work but the choir immediately seemed fully "in the groove", secure and quite at ease with the challenging blues harmonies and rhythms.

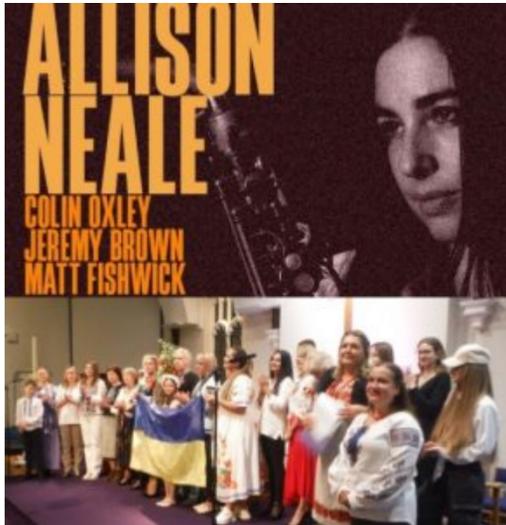
At times, some were unable to resist the urge for spontaneous swaying! Singing almost as a complex backing group to the jazz trio and vocalist, the choir was able to show off its skill with sensitive phrasing and highly effective dynamic contrasts. A convincing performance of a welcome addition to the repertoire.

Nick Landauer

Photo: ©Edward Webb

Two antidotes to politics coming up in Epsom

28 September 2024



Need a welcome break from election campaigning, canvassing and TV debate political bickering?

In the heart of Epsom classy professional live jazz comes to the Comrades Club, The Parade Epsom on Thursday 27th June at 7.30pm. Epsom Jazz Club presents Allison Neale and an evening of West Coast jazz with Colin Oxley, Jeremy Brown and Matt Fishwick. Click [here](#) for details. Flat rate ticket price of £20 buys you a comfortable seat at a cabaret table and bar. Compares with £30 for Ronnie Scotts and you don't have to commute to London.

On Saturday 29th June at the Epsom Methodist Church an evening of Ukrainian music: brass ensemble, violinist, opera singer and Ukrainian refugee choir and more. Entry is FREE. The evening opens at 6pm with a finger buffet (you may bring a plate to share) and the entertainment begins at 7pm ending about 8.30pm. Come and support professional Ukrainian musicians and enjoy first class music. Ashley Road, Epsom. Epsom Music (a charity) comes together with partner local charities The Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network and Surrey Stands With Ukraine in organising and supporting this event.

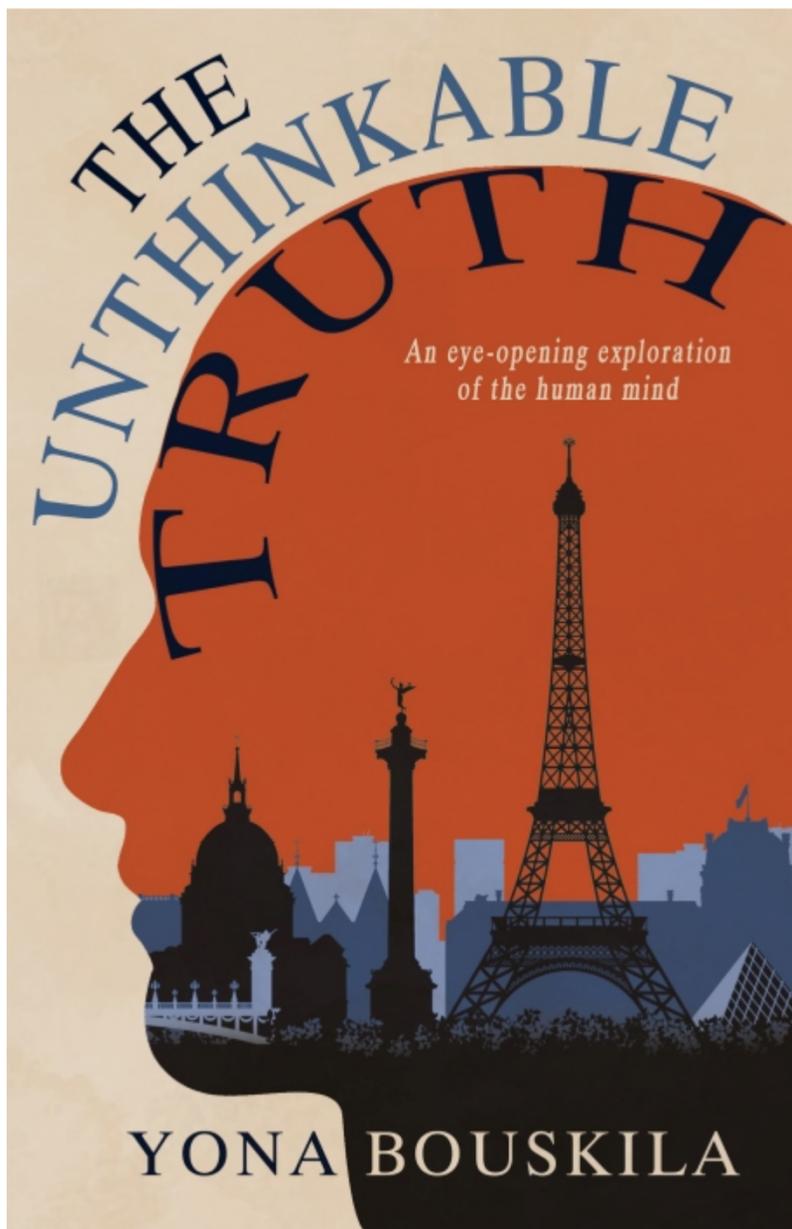
Epsom author thinks the unthinkable

28 September 2024



Published on 28th May 2024, **The Unthinkable Truth** by Epsom based author **Yona Bouskila** is a gripping thriller that delves into the depths of the human mind and explores how real and seemingly innocent scientific discoveries can spiral into global dystopia.

With the authorities set to rob people of their freedom of choice, in order to create a perfectly obedient and mindless society, *The Unthinkable Truth* questions whether free will is simply an illusion, and whether our own human nature could be the catalyst to our downfall.



Making use of his extensive background in neuroscience, the author expertly transports us into a world where a team of scientists, other experts and a characterful AI are tasked with solving the most baffling question about the human mind, creating a gripping narrative that will appeal to all.

Yona Bouskila ticks all the boxes for fans of both thrillers and intellectually stimulating reads, but most importantly, readers aren't required to know the first thing about science to enjoy his compelling and thought-provoking novel.

In the hope of distracting himself from his heartache, George Bennet, a mild-mannered professor of theoretical physics, accepts an invitation by UNESCO to join an eclectic multidisciplinary team of experts, tasked with unravelling the enigma of the human mind.

As this seemingly innocent academic investigation twists and turns, George suspects that they are being duped into aiding a sinister plan, which threatens to shatter the very foundations of society. When the unthinkable truth emerges as their final conclusion, and the plan is exposed, George and the team must be silenced. No matter the cost.

What is the unthinkable truth? Will George survive to reveal it? Only one thing is certain: humanity will never be the same.

Drawing on solid scientific research, *The Unthinkable Truth* is a compelling and intricate thriller that will make readers question their own human nature.

A scientist by training, a thinker by nature, and an author by passion, Yona Bouskila has a particular fascination with the human mind in all its aspects. This enduring passion, together with his penchant for thrillers, served as the driving force behind his novel, *The Unthinkable Truth*, which he describes as a thought-provoking thriller that culminates in an eye-opening revelation on the mind and humanity. He studied biology (with philosophy) and received a PhD in neuroscience from UCLA.

He is involved in medical research and development. Before that, he conducted brain research at several institutions in the US and Europe. He writes short stories, often with a humorous slant, and his debut novel will be published in May 2024. He lives in Epsom with his wife and pets, where he enjoys the Surrey countryside and contemplating life.

A book promotion will end on 10th June (<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Unthinkable-Truth-Yona-Bouskila-ebook/dp/B0CW1N2JTJ>)