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Welcome to the 2015 Rugby World Cup

The 2015 Rugby World Cup is the eighth quadrennial rugby union world championship, currently being hosted by England.

With the tournament now well under way and nearing the end of the pool stages, the excitement is building for the finals. Knock out matches will be taking place over the next few weeks, with the Final at Twickenham Stadium on 31 October. Rugby Fanzones are located throughout London, and are a good place to mix with fellow fans, and take part in some fun sporting activities – matches will also be shown on a big screen.

Twickenham is etched into rugby’s DNA. The biggest dedicated rugby ground in the world, it staged its first game between two local sides, Harlequins and Richmond in 1909. More than a century has passed and with it thousands of great sporting battles. Every rugby fan has a memory of Twickenham.

Welcome to London and enjoy the 2015 Rugby World Cup.
THE WORLD RUGBY MUSEUM AND TWICKENHAM STADIUM TOURS

As the highly anticipated Rugby World Cup 2015 continues in London, international focus is on Twickenham, the largest stadium in the world purely devoted to rugby.

The World Rugby Museum, in the East Stand of Twickenham Stadium, formerly opened as ‘The Museum of Rugby’ in 1996. It became the World Rugby Museum in 2007 and welcomes over 25,000 visitors annually. The collection of over 25,000 objects are displayed within the permanent galleries and supplement a regular programme of special exhibitions.

The Twickenham Tour takes visitors behind the scenes to explore some of the most exciting and select areas of the Stadium including the royal box, hospitality suites, medical room, players’ tunnel, a breathtaking view of the arena from the top of the stand and finally a pitchside walk.

Highlight of the trip is a visit to the England dressing room where you will learn about the match-day preparations and routines of international rugby players. Visitors are advised to book Stadium Tours in advance, as there are limited spaces, especially during the Rugby World Cup tournament. For information about Twickenham Tours telephone 020 8892 8877 or visit www.englandrugby.com/museum

MADE LONDON – THE DESIGN AND CRAFT FAIR

MADE LONDON – The Design and Craft Fair is fast becoming one of the top selling events for contemporary designer makers in Europe. The show presents the very best and most original designer makers in this country and beyond, exhibiting and selling their work direct to the public. Unique and innovative creations from ceramicists, silversmiths, wood workers, mosaic artists, textile designers, furniture makers, glass blowers and many more are showcased at One Marylebone.

Visitors to MADE LONDON are always impressed by the variety, quality and originality of the craft and design on show and love exploring each of the four levels of the dramatic and beautiful building. It is a relaxed and friendly event with an informal atmosphere.

Once again, R&A Collaborations will be screening their craft collection of short films in the ‘Cinema of Making’. These films celebrate a wide range of designers, across all media, sharing their personal insights and affording the viewer an understanding of the making process.

MADE LONDON takes place at One Marylebone, a stunning Sir John Soane Church in central London. Directly opposite Great Portland Street underground station and next door to Regents Park, the building brings its own attraction as each level has its own particular feel. The moody and atmospheric crypt, the majestic Soane Hall and the light filled gallery spaces all add to the interest of the show. A café serving drinks and light meals is situated in the double height crypt.

MADE LONDON will be at One Marylebone, NW1, from 22-25 October. www.madelondon.org
During Rugby World Cup 2015 the World Rugby Museum is running a limited programme of stadium tours.

Don’t miss this unique opportunity to get behind the scenes of the world’s most famous rugby Stadium.

t 020 8892 8877
e museum@rfu.com
w englandrugby.com
/museum

VISIT the HOME of RUGBY
STOUR SPACE OPENS AS EVENING BAR IN HACKNEY WICK

From October, Stour Space, the focal hub for the creative community of Hackney Wick, will be opening as an evening bar and events venue. Over the next 12 months, the aim is to provide a platform for the best unknown, unseen and unheard local artists to showcase their work, alongside talented established acts whilst allowing visitors to relax, enjoy a drink and view the gallery.

Stour is to present photographer Cydney Cosette Holm’s debut solo exhibition, ‘These Small Things’ in October which takes a closer look at details that make up much larger scenes and memories. Each single object exists on its own as a complex form and was removed from a multiplex mechanism that was its original setting.

‘By isolating and flattening these fragments, I am attempting to digest my surroundings and understand where I fit within them. Each ‘small thing’ was extracted from a mixture of significant and mundane situations that captured my intrigue. The mundane has become more significant because of the attention paid to the details, and the significant has become more mundane because it’s surrounding story has been erased. I’m not sure this is a project that could ever end, but it has lead me to realise that even the smallest detail is much bigger than I’ll ever know, and I’m so much smaller than I’ll ever realise.’ – Cydney Cosette Holm.

Stour Space is situated on the River Lee overlooking the Olympic Stadium – the delights of urban London at its best.

CREED BOUTIQUE LAUNCHES IN MOUNT STREET

To celebrate the launch of the Creed Boutique on London’s Mount Street this autumn, the House of Creed is presenting Royal Mayfair, a scent that celebrates one of history’s most fashioned royals. Honouring the Duke of Windsor – the British royal synonymous with taking risks in life, love and style, who left a lasting impression on men’s fashion – Royal Mayfair is an homage to sartorial icons who push traditional fashion boundaries and captures the spirit of these trend setters.

Royal Mayfair is a masterful creation of Fourth Generation Perfumer Henry Creed III, touted as the skilful nose who paved the House’s first inroads in servicing the political elite and continued tradition of royalty commissions. At the time, Henry mirrored the Duke’s heralded flair – unconventional, yet stately and fuelled with individuality – with a bespoke scent to reflect his distinguished style. Now, nearly 80 years after its original commission, the aptly named Royal Mayfair debuts in the UK at a time when men’s style is more prominent than ever and Mayfair continues to thrive as one of the globe’s most desirable fashion hubs for the super stylish.

Available exclusively in Harrods and the Creed Boutique from 11-29 October. www.creedfragrances.co.uk

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Blue Badge Tourist Guides are the gold standard of British professional guiding. They offer a vast array of tours in London, in over 30 languages. Walking tours, coach tours, themed tours, visits to museums and galleries, guides for conferences and incentives, tours by private car or bicycle, bespoke tours for specialist interests: all these and more are offered every day of the year in one of the world’s most vibrant capital cities.

They can take you shopping, cycling along canal towpaths, or on a pub crawl at any time of day in a wide range of languages. Many of the guides are qualified lawyers, doctors, architects and historians, which add a whole new dimension to a tour of London.

And, if you want to venture out of the city for a day or two, London Blue Badge Tourist Guides are also accredited to guide in destinations such as Bath, Canterbury, the Cotswolds, Oxford, Salisbury, Stonehenge, Stratford-upon-Avon and Windsor.

To find a Blue Badge Tourist Guide to suit your particular needs, visit the website www.britainsbestguides.org or www.guidelondon.org.uk

Either website gives year-round rapid access to London Blue Badge Tourist Guides, while the first also provides access to guides throughout the United Kingdom.
500 YEARS OF FEAR: GHOST TOURS AT HAMPTON COURT PALACE

As the nights draw in this winter, discover the terrifying tales of Hampton Court Palace’s past, brought to life on a spine-chilling after-hours Ghost Tour. Held in the atmospheric palace after nightfall, when all of the visitors have gone home, the tours conjure up supernatural stories spanning five centuries of royal tragedy and drama.

Beginning on Halloween (when else?!), and continuing throughout the winter season, you can join a tour and explore the palace’s deserted courtyards and eerie state apartments after dark. Hear tales of countless spooky sightings across the centuries, guided by the State Apartment Warders, keepers of Hampton Court Palace’s darkest and most mysterious secrets.

Keep your eyes peeled for the elusive ‘Skeletor’ who was captured on CCTV in 2003, see if you encounter the spirit of Jane Seymour in Clock Court and visit the site of a mysterious shallow grave that was uncovered in the 1870s – if you dare. As the palace’s 500th birthday is celebrated, there’s no shortage of horrible history to uncover.

For one night only, on Halloween, a special late night tour will delve even further into the most gruesome and grisly tales of residents past, on a route taking in areas of the palace usually closed to visitors. From empty former Grace and Favour apartments to disused stairwells, where will you find yourself when the clock strikes twelve?

A number of family ghost tours will also take place on selected dates from Halloween, offering a chance to experience some of the spooky goings-on of the adult tours, but tailored to a family audience.

For more information about the Ghost Tours and Family Ghost Tours, telephone 0844 482 7777 or visit Historic Royal Palaces website at www.hrp.org.uk

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AMATIS PIANO TRIO RECITAL

Glorious music in an evocative setting, that is what the audience will enjoy on 28 October at St John's Smith Square in London.

The brilliant young ensemble, the Amatis Piano Trio, winners of the 2015 Parkhouse Award, will perform trios for piano, violin and cello by Beethoven, Shostakovitch, Suk and Mendelssohn. Based in Amsterdam, each member of the trio is a prizewinner in his or her own right: Mengjie Han, piano; Lea Hausmann, violin and Samuel Shepherd, cello and they are visiting the UK for this one performance only.

St John's has an excellent restaurant in the crypt where concert-goers can enjoy a meal or drinks before the performance, and drinks in the interval. NB: the crypt is closed after the concert.

Daniel Hope of the internationally renowned Beaux Arts Trio, has said 'The Amatis Piano Trio is an outstanding ensembles on their way to establishing a great international career'. They have also worked with Miguel da Silva of the Ysaye Quartet and Hatto Beyerle of the Alban Berg Quartet. They are currently 'Dutch Classical Talent 2015/16' and are part of the European Chamber Music Academy.

The Parkhouse Award was founded in 1990 to celebrate the life and work of the pianist David Parkhouse who made an outstanding contribution to the performance of chamber music in Britain and abroad both as a teacher and as founder member of the Music Group of London with Eileen Croxford and Hugh Bean. This biennial Award chooses one ensemble of piano with strings from an international entry and promotes it through presentation concerts in prestigious London concert halls during the following two years.

Previous winners of the Parkhouse Award include the Grieg Trio, Faure Quartett, Notos Quartett and the Fournier Trio.

Box Office telephone 020 7222 1061.

LESLE BRICUSSE WRITING SAMMY DAVIS JR MUSICAL

In time with his new musical, 'Pure Imagination: The Songs of Leslie Bricusse', at St James Theatre, the prolific British composer has revealed he's working on a major new musical about the life of his close friend, legendary entertainer, Sammy Davis Jr.

Sammy Davis Jr had hits with many of Leslie's songs, including 'What Kind of Fool Am I' and 'Candy Man'.

'He was a lifelong friend and I wanted his story told properly,' Leslie revealed. 'It's called 'Sammy' and the man I want to play him is in 'Pure Imagination'. He's Giles Terera and he even looks like Sammy. He played Sammy in 'The Rat Pack Live from Las Vegas' and he’s absolutely marvellous.'

Leslie will next week release a book about his life, 'Pure Imagination: A Sorta–Biography'.
MACK AND MABEL WORKS A TREAT
Chichester Festival Theatre

There aren't too many Broadway musicals that flop despite having a truly great score. Epitomising this phenomenon is Mack and Mabel.

First seen in 1974, and with music and lyrics by Jerry Herman, the show closed after a mere 65 performances with a loss of its entire investment. Its failure was blamed on the subject matter — the tortured relationship between the slapstick silent-screen director Mack Sennett and his popular leading lady Mabel Normand. Michael Stewart’s book was the stumbling block, failing, as it did, to give its eponymous hero and heroine audience appeal.

Mack, by his own admission, emerged as a self-absorbed, insensitive and uncaring despot, incapable of love; while Mabel, forever and frustratingly in his thrall, turned to others for affection, in the process of which she became a drug-addict and one of the suspects in the unsolved murder of director William Desmond Taylor, with whom she was having an affair.

With no one to root for, audiences remained unmoved and uninvolved, and even alienated. Over the years, numerous reworkings of the text have tried to make the material more user friendly, but with little success. It’s enduring score notwithstanding, the show was deemed too fatally flawed ever to work commercially.

I’m delighted to report, therefore, that the latest incarnation of this notoriously troubled show works a treat. Revised by Francine Pascal, the sister of the late Michael Stewart, and as directed by Jonathan Church and inventively designed Robert Jones, it has skill, expertise and Broadway know-how. Most important, it has found its heart.

As Mack Sennett, Michael Ball, fresh from his recent triumph as Sweeney Todd, sings superbly and somehow even excavates sufficient pathos to make you care. His leading lady is the American actress Rebecca LaChance, and even though, on the first night, she didn’t quite nail her big second act number Time Heals Everything, she brings a perky, engaging presence to the role of Mabel Normand. Both she and Ball do yeoman work in fleshing out characters that, on paper, still remain fairly two-dimensional.

The other standout performances are from Anna Jane-Casey — wonderfully vivacious in Tap Your Troubles Away, and Gunnar Cauthery (called Frank Wyman, but referenced as Frank Capra, one of the great Hollywood directors of the 30’s and 40’s.)

This bracing revival has two other indispensable assets: its orchestra and its choreographer. Under Robert Scott, fourteen musicians thrillingly bring Herman’s catchy score to life (the overture, made famous by Torvill and Dean) raised the roof, while Stephen Mear’s brilliant Keystone Kops routine (Hit ’Em on the Head) and the infectious Hundreds of Girls routine, which uses witty film projections to create an appropriate sense of spectacle, are both exhilarating.

At long last, Mack and Mabel has landed.

CLIVE HIRSCHHORN

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The Amatis Piano Trio is an outstanding ensemble on their way to establishing a great international career.”

Daniel Hope (Beaux Arts Trio)

Wednesday
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7.30pm

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Lea Hausmann violin
Samuel Shepherd cello

Beethoven
Shostakovich
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Box Office 020 7222 1061
SUNNY AFTERNOON NEW CAST

The multi-Olivier Award-winning hit British musical Sunny Afternoon, which tells the story of the rise to fame of The Kinks, has announced the actors taking over this week from its award-winning original cast.

Danny Horn (Doctor Who; The Dead Dogs) will play Ray Davies, with Oliver Hoare (Antony and Cleopatra, Chichester) as Dave Davies, Tom Whitelock (Times Square Angel, Union) as bassist Pete Quaife and Damien Walsh (Dreamboats and Petticoats) as drummer Mick Avory.

With a book by Joe Penhall, music and lyrics and original story by Ray Davies, and directed by Edward Hall, Sunny Afternoon is established as a firm favourite with audiences and critics alike since it opened at the Harold Pinter Theatre in October 2014.

Sunny Afternoon was the best performing show at this year’s Olivier Awards, winning four awards. The production won Best New Musical, John Dagleish won Best Actor in a Musical, George Maguire won Best Supporting Actor in a Musical, and Ray Davies of The Kinks won for Outstanding Achievement in Music.

Forty-nine years ago this year, The Kinks were sitting at Number One in the UK charts with their single ‘Sunny Afternoon’. The band’s popularity has not faded since the 1960s, with crowds of all ages filling the Harold Pinter Theatre night after night.

Featuring some of The Kinks’ best-loved songs, including You Really Got Me, Waterloo Sunset and Lola, Sunny Afternoon shows the music of The Kinks is still as popular as ever, more than 50 years since the band’s rise to fame.

Sonia Friedman Productions commissioned Joe Penhall in 2011 to write the book based on Ray Davies’s original story. The company developed the production over the next four years, assembling the creative team and cast that presented Sunny Afternoon last year at Hampstead Theatre under the direction of Edward Hall, and now at the Harold Pinter Theatre.

Ray Davies is an influential and prolific rock musician and was co-founder and lead singer and songwriter for rock band The Kinks, and later a solo artist. He has an outstanding catalogue of hits from the earliest 1960s to the present day with estimated record sales in excess of 50 million. He has also acted, directed and produced shows for theatre and television.

Box Office telephone 0844 871 7622. www.sunnyafternoonthemusical.com

Conceal Reveal – Dana Fouras. Photo: Johan Persson.

Conceal Reveal and Sunny Afternoon are co-productions with Sonia Friedman Productions. The companies are represented by David breasts MCAS.

RUSSELL MALIPHANT COMPANY: CONCEAL REVEAL

Sadler’s Wells are to present the world premiere and tour of Conceal Reveal around the UK from Friday 2 October to Saturday 28 November, a celebration of the 20th anniversary of one of the most prolific and highly acclaimed artistic collaborations, between contemporary dance choreographer Russell Maliphant and lighting designer Michael Hulls.

This major new co-production, which tours across the UK and internationally, honours the unique and unparalleled language between light and movement that these two award-winning Sadler’s Wells Associate Artists have developed over the past two decades.

The company presents both new and classic work, including the iconic trio Broken Fall, performed by Carys Staton, Adam Kirkham and Nathan Young and accompanied by the original music from Barry Adamson.

The evening also sees the return to dance of former Royal Ballet dancer Dana Fouras, after almost 15 years, who performs a new solo created specially for the occasion by Maliphant. The other new creation in the programme is a quintet for the new line-up of Russell Maliphant Company dancers, which sees Maliphant’s continued fascination with the bridge between classical and contemporary movement.

The production features newly commissioned music by cutting edge composer Mukul and costume design by iconic fashion designer Stevie Stewart.
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A MODERN MOVE FOR A ROYAL TRADITION

The internet has made our world much smaller, but now you can see the world in miniature online as well. The Royal Society of Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Gravers Annual Exhibition will open its doors on Tuesday 13 October (14.00-20.00) running every day thereafter from 10.00-17.00 until 25 October at the Mall Galleries. Those unable to visit will be able to view and buy these exquisite works online for the first time. From 26 October, works will be posted on the new online gallery where you can enjoy the exhibition for the rest of the year and purchase works.

There must be few, if any, exhibitions which can display over 600 paintings and sculptures in an area which the viewer could walk round in less than a minute, but to truly appreciate the quality and detail of work at the Royal Miniature Society’s annual exhibition, the visitor will be absorbed for many hours. As the world’s oldest and most prestigious miniature art society, it attracts entries from around the world and while traditional portrait miniatures are still very much part of the exhibition, the wide variety of subjects and media are evidence of the spread and popularity of the miniature form in the 21st century. Indeed, the recipient last year of the Society’s highest Award, the Gold Memorial Bowl, was from Tasmania.

The most frequently asked question is what size is a miniature. For the RMS exhibition the maximum permitted size for paintings is 4.5” x 6” including the frame and for sculpture, which is an important section of the exhibition, the maximum length in any direction is just 8”. It is a revelation to see some of the paintings, which have on occasion been enlarged to two or three feet, still showing the crisp intricate detail contained within their diminutive size.

In 2012, the Society’s patron HRH The Prince of Wales honoured the Society by granting an award to be given in his name, for Outstanding Miniature Painting. Where the pursuit of perfection and attention to the finest detail is paramount within the Society’s exhibition, there will always be many paintings worthy of the title.

The Society and its patrons will award a variety of accolades to artists who have demonstrated the highest standards in miniature techniques.

Another first for this year is the People’s Choice Award, so if you fancy being an art critic for the day, why not go along and vote for your favourite. Votes will be gathered throughout the exhibition and the winner posted online and featured in next year’s catalogue.

Don’t miss the exhibition while you are in London.

Further information and online details at www.royal-miniature-society.org.uk
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**EERIE EVENING TOURS AT KENSINGTON PALACE**

Death, disease, love and loss – visitors can explore 300 years of secrets on a spooky tour through the shadowy world of Kensington Palace after dark on selected dates from 29 October.

When all the gates are locked and the lights are out, are the memories of royal heartbreak and tragedy still echoing through the empty rooms of Kensington Palace? Find out for yourself this winter on an Eerie Evening Tour and uncover the dark tales that lurk behind the palace’s regal exterior...

Guided by an expert Explainer, visitors can explore the historic palace by lamplight, from empty staircases and hidden passageways to the gloomy splendour of the shadowy State Apartments where former monarchs lived, died and – some say – haunt.

Hear about the gruesome medical maladies of residents past, from William III’s fatal horse-riding accident to Queen Caroline’s horrific final hours, and see the Privy Chamber where, on blustery October nights, it is said George II can be seen staring out at the weathervane as he did in the lonely days just before his death, waiting for the wind to change and bring news of his beloved German homeland. Elsewhere in the palace, the gentle rhythmic creaking of thread and wool is often heard echoing through the courtyards and corridors after dark, reputedly the sound of Princess Sophia’s spinning wheel, the Georgian princess banished to Kensington in disgrace following an illicit pregnancy, and spent the rest of her life in solitude with just her spinning wheel for company.

As well as these sorrowful tales, delve into the Victorian obsession with life after death and discover how so many people of all ranks and backgrounds became convinced that conversing with the dead was possible. Did Queen Victoria herself attempt to contact the spirit of her beloved husband Albert? You’ll have to join the tour to find out!

Advance booking is essential, on 0844 482 7777. For further information, visit www.hrp.org

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**THE CURIOUS NIGHT SHIFT – LONDON AFTER DARK**

In collaboration with the National Theatre’s production of The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, artist Marc Hagan-Guirey (AKA Paper Dandy) has created a unique piece of art using Kirigami (a variation of origami that includes the cutting of a single piece of A3 paper). The artwork, called The Curious Night Shift, has been specially made to be part of London Transport Museum’s Night Shift – London After Dark exhibition which includes key moments from The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, including Christopher Boone’s thrilling journey on the London Underground.

The finished artwork took five days and nights to complete and is encased in a specially lit shadow box, approx. 40cm wide, and 50cm tall. The intricate design is made using a precision knife.

The National Theatre’s Olivier and Tony Award winning production of The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time is running at the Gielgud Theatre in London’s West End, on a tour of the UK and Ireland and on Broadway. Curious is adapted by Simon Stephens from Mark Haddon’s best-selling book and directed by Marianne Elliott.

The story revolves around Christopher, fifteen years old, who stands besides Mrs Shears’ dead dog. It has been speared with a garden fork, it is seven minutes after midnight and Christopher is under suspicion. He records each fact in a book he is writing to solve the mystery of who murdered Wellington. He has an extraordinary brain, and is exceptional at maths while ill-equipped to interpret everyday life. He has never ventured alone beyond the end of his road, he detests being touched and distrusts strangers. But his detective work, forbidden by his father, takes him on a frightening journey that upturns his world.

The National Theatre Box Office telephone 020 7452 3000 or tickets online at www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

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Open daily from 10am at Horse Guards, Whitehall
museum@householdcavalry.co.uk or call 020 7930 3070
www.householdcavalrymuseum.co.uk
FIRST UK PUBLIC DISPLAY OF BANKSY’S ‘DONKEY DOCUMENTS’

The owner of the original building was bemused when people crowded round his wall. But art aficionados had spotted Banksy’s signature alert on his website of his latest work, ‘Donkey Documents’.

Banksy created it in 2007 with an aerosol can, as part of a series of works of art along the concrete barrier separating the Palestinian West Bank and Israel. It is the largest, most significant intact mural from the artist’s visit to Israel.

Banksy’s poignant ‘Donkey Documents’ is reflective of modern times and is estimated to sell for $600,000 at auction in Beverly Hills.

It may well be bought by a private collector making the current exhibition at the Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour, a unique and rare opportunity for the British public to see this work of art.

‘Sperm Alarm’, a witty smaller-scale work of art by Banksy, will be shown alongside ‘Donkey Documents’. It was originally sprayed onto the wall of the Hesperia Hotel, in Victoria, SW1.

NATURE’S BOUNTY AT KEW

A series of vibrant and meticulously detailed paintings of fruits, vegetables and edible plants from across the world will fill The Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art at Kew Gardens until 31 January. Alongside these varied works from both the Shirley Sherwood Collection and the Kew Collection will be a number of intriguingly diverse 18th and 19th century volumes, including a charming book dedicated purely to celebrating apples and pears.

Another of these volumes, a magnificent first edition volume from 1863 acquired by Dr Sherwood in poor condition, filled with extraordinarily vibrant chromolithographs of tropical plants and fruits, has been temporarily dismantled, with the stunning plates detached, cleaned and framed.

Further information at www.kew.org
Hangmen

It is sad but true that there are very few playwrights in Britain today (or in America for that matter) whose work is sufficiently accomplished to guarantee bums on seats even before the reviews appear and whose openings are awaited with great expectations.

Tom Stoppard, David Hare and Caryl Churchill fall into that category, and so does Martin McDonagh who, with his first new indigenous play in over a decade, continues to be the most exciting and entertaining dramatist we have.

The brilliantly written and constructed Hangmen finds him at the very top of his game with all his characteristic trademarks flashing like welcoming beacons in a very black night – black, of course, being the defining colour of his outrageous sense of humour. His in-your-face ability to shock has lost none of its impact and, from start to finish, the dialogue is outrageously funny, his turns of phrase bracingly Ortonesque. With the exception of The Play That Goes Wrong, it’s the funniest play in town.

Unusually for McDonagh, all of whose plays have been set in Ireland, Hangmen takes place in England. It’s 1963 and the brief opening scene is set in a grim, airless prison cell. Harry Wade (David Morrissey), deputy to real-life Albert Pierrepoint (John Hodgkinson), the country’s official hangman, is overseeing the hanging of a prisoner called Hennessy (Josef Davies). As Wade slips the noose and hood over the convict’s head, he’s deaf to the man’s vigorous pleas that he’s innocent. Routinely Wade pulls the lever that sends Hennessy to his death.

The scene then moves to Oldham – to a typical male-orientated pub owned by Wade and his wife Alice (Sally Rogers). It’s 1965, or, to be more specific, the very day that hanging was abolished in England. Although forever in the shadow of Pierrepoint, Wade is, in his own way, something of a small-time celebrity and his clientele includes a faithful albeit oafish gathering of locals who would appear to enjoy the macabre frisson of death-by-association exuded by the self-important executioner publican.

Pivotal to the plot, however, is the appearance of a decidedly Pinteresque stranger called Mooney (Johnny Flynn). Blonde, youthful in appearance, calculatingly engaging while at times vaguely reminiscent of Michael Crawford’s Frank Spencer, he exudes a strong sense of quiet menace as he becomes the fulcrum on which is balanced a sinister plot involving the disappearance of Harry and Alice Wade’s over-weight sixteen year-old daughter Shirley (Bronwyn James). Also part of this beguiling mix of mischief and mayhem is Syd (Reece Shearsmith), Wade’s resentful, decidedly weird, possibly pervy, assistant.

Weaving its way through the heart and soul of this black and cynical comedy is a serious issue relating to crime and punishment and the irrevocable miscarriages of justice during the hanging years. McDonagh is never preachy, but his views involving capital punishment, while hardly definitive, come across loud and clear.

The play is flawlessly directed by Matthew Dunster whose deft, unsqueamish approach to material that could easily be considered unedifying, makes for exhilarating theatre. There’s a jaw-dropping sight-gag towards the end of the play involving Syd and an onstage corpse that gets the biggest laugh in a play that positively bristles with them.

All the performances are terrific – notably David Morrissey’s Wade, Johnny Flynn’s Mooney, Reece Shearsmith’s Syd and John Hodgkinson’s brief but impact-making appearance as Pierrepoint. Also contributing immeasurably to this unqualified, not to be missed success is Anna Fleischle’s set whose transition from the first scene in the prison cell to the pub in Oldham is a coup d’theatre in itself.

My play of the year so far.

Clive Hirschhorn

Hangmen will transfer to Wyndham’s Theatre for a limited season from 7 Dec.
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Olivier Theatre

In keeping with its status as a modern classic, Timberlake Wertenbaker’s Our Country’s Good, based on Thomas Keneally’s factual novel The Playmaker, has been boosted to CinemaScope proportions in director Nadia Fall’s visually striking National Theatre revival.

Originally staged in 1988 at the Royal Court, the play’s 23 characters were shared by a cast of 11 who, with the aid of subtle costume changes, played multiple roles.

No such stinting at the Olivier. Each part is individually cast and, aided by the addition of three musicians as well as the theatre’s enormous drum-revolve, a compelling story unfolds of how a motley group of barely literate convicts, transported from Britain for a variety of crimes to a penal colony in Australia in 1789, agree to appear in Farquhar’s comedy The Recruiting Officer.

The brainchild of Captain Arthur Philip (Curil Nri), it falls to then willing Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark (Jason Hughes) to stage the play exclusively with convicts.

Faced with vehement opposition by several fellow officers, a vote is taken in Clarke’s favour and auditions and rehearsal begin. It’s a laboriously slow process, and after months of setbacks and numerous clashes, Clarke’s patience is vindicated and Farquhar’s play becomes the first ever to be performed in a penal colony.

So much for the plot. Underlying this unlikely but true story, however, are such major issues as man’s on-going inhumanity to man (the brutal floggings and the starvation diet endured by the convicts en route to Sydney Cove beggar belief), the rampant class divide between the Royal Marines and the human detritus in their possession, the blatant discrepancy between the crimes committed and the punishments meted out for them and, above all, the restorative and transformative power of theatre and the written word.

Though the irony at the core of the original Royal Court staging, in which the cast doubled as both the officers and their captors, is lost in this more expansive version, the epic sweep achieved in designer Peter McKintosh’s colour-strewn backdrop, the spatial use of the revolve, the (perhaps too) assertive deployment of Cerys Matthews’ eclectic musical score, the impact created by Gary Wood’s omnipresent aborigine and the colour-blind casting, are bold and striking assets.

As befits a play in which the play’s the thing, there are no star performances. It’s an ensemble piece with fine work from Ashley McGuire as the unflappable Dabby Bryant forever yearning to return to her home in Dorset, Josie McNee as cynical, barely human Scouser Liz Morden, Lee Ross as a thieving, would-be actor and Caoilfhionn Dunne as Mary Brenham, whose transformation during the lengthy rehearsal period of the play-within-the-play most embodies Wertenbaker’s potent central message.

A first rate revival.

CLIVE HIRSCHHORN

KENNETH BRANAGH THEATRE COMPANY PLAYS AT THE GARRICK

Rehearsals are now underway for the Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company’s Plays at the Garrick season. The Winter’s Tale will play in repertory alongside the Rattigan double-bill of Harlequinade/All On Her Own from 17 October until 16 January.

Shakespeare’s timeless tragicomedy of obsession and redemption, The Winter’s Tale is reimagined in a new production co-directed by Rob Ashford and Kenneth Branagh following their triumphant staging of Macbeth in Manchester and Manhattan. Judi Dench will play Paulina opposite Kenneth Branagh as Leontes.

In addition to playing Dame Maud in Harlequinade, Zoë Wanamaker will also perform Terence Rattigan’s dramatic monologue All On Her Own, which has never before played in the West End. In this brief but powerfully atmospheric play, which will be staged every evening prior to Harlequinade, a woman with a secret, alone at midnight in London has a burden to share that is at times both heart-breaking and sinister.

In the rarely seen comic gem Harlequinade, a classical theatre company attempts to produce The Winter’s Tale and Romeo and Juliet, while the intrigues and dalliances of the company members are accidently revealed with increasingly chaotic and hysterical consequences. Kenneth Branagh will play Harlequinade’s actor-manager Arthur Gosport in addition to co-directing with Rob Ashford.
MIX WITH THE GLAMOUR OF THE 1930s
Immerse yourself in the Art Deco era, taste the spirit of the past.

ENGLISH HERITAGE
ELTHAM PALACE & GARDENS
Step into England’s story

The English Heritage Trust is a charity, no. 1140351, and a company, no. 07447221, registered in England.
PLAYS

SHOWSTOPPER!
Fast, funny and entertaining, the team nightly create a real musical from scratch, with a live band and spontaneous but seamless choreography.
APOLLO THEATRE
Shaftesbury Avenue, W1 (0844 482 9671)

THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG
A Polytechnic amateur drama group are putting on a 1920s murder mystery and everything that can go wrong... does!
DUCHESS THEATRE
Catherine Street, WC2 (0844 482 9672)

FARINELLI AND THE KING
Shakespeare's Globe brings this inspiring true story to London, featuring many of the arias first sung by Farinelli in the 1730s and live music played on Baroque instruments.
DUKE OF YORK'S THEATRE
St Martin's Lane, WC2 (020 7492 1552)

THE WOMAN IN BLACK
An innocent outsider, a suspicious rural community, a gothic house and a misty marsh are the ingredients of this Victorian ghost story.
FORTUNE THEATRE
Russell Street, WC2 (0844 871 7626)

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME
Based on Mark Haddon's best-selling novel, the play follows a 15 year-old maths genius who tries to unravel the mystery of his neighbour's murdered dog.
GIELGUD THEATRE
Shaftesbury Ave, W1 (020 7452 3000)

Royal National Theatre  Plays in repertory
OLIVIER THEATRE

OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD
A profoundly humane piece of theatre, steeped in suffering yet charged with hope, Timberlake Wertenbaker's play (based on a true story), celebrates the redemptive power of art.

AS YOU LIKE IT
Shakespeare's glorious comedy of love and change comes to the National Theatre for the first time in over 30 year, with Rosalie Craig playing Rosalind. From 26 October.
LYTTELTON THEATRE

JANE EYRE
Almost 170 years on, Charlotte Brontë's story of the trailblazing Jane is as inspiring as ever.

THREE DAYS IN THE COUNTRY
Ivan Turgenev's passionate, moving comedy, A Month in the Country is presented in a new version by Patrick Marber. Until 21 Oct.

WASTE
Famously banned by the censors in 1907, Harley Granville Barker's controversial masterpiece gathers a large ensemble to expose a cut-throat, cynical world of sex, sleaze and suicide amongst the political elite of Edwardian England. From 3 November.

DORFMAN THEATRE

HUSBANDS & SONS
The play interweaves three of D H Lawrence's greatest dramas and plays them simultaneously. Describing the world he came from with fierce tenderness, Lawrence evokes a now-vanished world of manual labour and working class pride. From 19 October.

PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS
The latest collaboration between Headlong and the National, following the acclaimed Earthquakes in London and The Effect.

NATIONAL THEATRE
South Bank, SE1 (020 7452 3000)
WAR HORSE
The National Theatre's epic based on the celebrated novel by Children's Laureate, Michael Morpurgo. Actors work with magnificent life-size puppets on a gruelling journey at the time of the First World War.
NEW LONDON THEATRE
Drury Lane, WC2 (0844 412 4654)

PHOTOGRAPH 51
Nicole Kidman returns to the London stage in the UK premiere of Anna Ziegler's award-winning play. Directed by Michael Grandage, it asks what is sacrificed in the pursuit of science, love and a place in history.
NOEL COWARD THEATRE
St Martin's Lane, WC2 (0844 482 5141)

THE HAIRY APE
A classic expressionist masterpiece by Nobel prize-winner Eugene O'Neill tells the story of Yank as he experiences an awakening of consciousness leading him on a journey through the wealthy neighbourhoods and disenfranchised underbelly of New York society.
OLD VIC THEATRE
The Cut, SE1 (0844 871 7628)

MCQUEEN
A beautiful and haunting voyage into the visionary imagination and dark dream world of the late Alexander McQueen, fashion's greatest contemporary artist.
THEATRE ROYAL HAYMARKET
Haymarket, SW1 (0845 481 1870)

THE MOUSETRAP
Agatha Christie's whodunnit is the longest running play of its kind in the history of the British theatre.
ST MARTIN'S THEATRE
West Street, WC2 (0844 499 1515)

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST
David Suchet stars as Lady Bracknell in Oscar Wilde's much loved masterpiece – superb satire on Victorian manners, one of the funniest plays in the English language. Until 7 November.
VAUDEVILLE THEATRE
The Strand, WC2 (0844 412 4663)

THE FATHER
James Macdonald's acclaimed production starring Kenneth Cranham and Claire Skinner, brings its dark comic tale to the West End.
WYNDHAMS THEATRE
Charing Cross Road, WC2 (0844 482 5120)

MUSICALS

KINKY BOOTS
Inspired by a true story and based on the Miramax film written by Geoff Deane and Tim Firth, the show tells the story of Charlie Price who has reluctantly inherited his father's Northampton shoe factory.
ADELPHI THEATRE
Strand, WC2 (020 3725 7060)

WICKED
Hit Broadway story of how a clever, misunderstood girl with emerald green skin and a girl who is beautiful and popular turn into the Wicked Witch of the West and Glinda the Good Witch in the Land of Oz.
APOLLO VICTORIA THEATRE
Wilton Road, SW1 (0844 826 8000)

BEAUTIFUL - THE CAROLE KING MUSICAL
This new musical is the untold story of her journey from school girl to superstar, featuring the Carole King classics including So Far Away and Take Good Care of My Baby.
ALDWYCH THEATRE
Aldwych, WC2 (0845 200 7981)

MATILDA
Critically acclaimed Royal Shakespeare Company production of Roald Dahl's Matilda, directed by Matthew Warchus.
CAMBRIDGE THEATRE
Earlham Street, WC2 (0844 800 1110)

CLOSE TO YOU: BACHARACH REIMAGINED
Performed by a young cast, led by musician Kyle Riabko, the show features new yet faithful interpretations of Bacharach's classics.
CRITERION THEATRE
Piccadilly Circus, W1 (0844 8471778)
ELF
Based on the 2003 New Line Cinema film, ELF is the tale of Buddy, a young orphan child who mistakenly crawls into Santa’s bag of gifts and is transported back to the North Pole. Starring Kimberley Walsh. From 3 November.

DOMINION THEATRE
Tottenham Court Road, W1 (0845 200 7982)

SUNNY AFTERNOON
The Kinks exploded onto the 60’s music scene with a raw, energetic new sound that rocked a nation. With music and lyrics by Ray Davies.

HAROLD PINTER THEATRE
Panton Street, SW1 (0844 871 7627)

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Long running epic romance by Andrew Lloyd Webber, set behind the scenes of a Paris opera house where a deformed phantom stalks his prey. HER MAJESTY’S THEATRE
Haymarket, SW1 (0844 412 2707)

CATS
Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical returns for a strictly limited 10 week final season, starring the Queen of British Soul Beverley Knight as Grizabella. From 23 October.

LONDON PALLADIUM
Argyll Street, WC2 (0844 412 2704)

THE LION KING
Disney’s phenomenally successful animated film is transformed into a spectacular stage musical, a superb evening of visual delight.

LYCEUM THEATRE
Wellington Street, W1 (0844 871 3000)

THRILLER – LIVE
High octane show celebrating the career of the King of Pop, Michael Jackson. Over two hours of the non-stop hit songs that marked his legendary live performances.

LONDON PALLADIUM
Argyll Street, WC2 (0844 871 3000)

MAMMA MIA!
Hit musical based on the songs of ABBA, set around the story of a mother and daughter on the eve of the daughter’s wedding.

NOVELLO THEATRE
Aldwych, WC2 (0844 482 5170)

THE COMMITMENTS
Roddy Doyle’s classic story about an assorted bunch of Irish kids who find salvation through soul music comes to the stage for the first time. Until 1 November.

PALACE THEATRE
Shaftesbury Avenue, W1 (0844 412 4656)

BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM THE MUSICAL
New British musical comedy featuring an original score with an Indian kick, brings a unique cultural fusion of musical theatre to the stage for the first time.

PHOENIX THEATRE
Charing Cross Rd, WC2 (0843 316 1082)

JERSEY BOYS
Rags to riches tale of four blue collar kids working their way to the heights of stardom as Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons.

PICCADILLY THEATRE
Denman Street, W1 (0844 871 3055)

LORD OF THE DANCE DANGEROUS GAMES
Based on Irish folklore, Michael Flatley’s version of the classic tale of Good vs. Evil expressed through the language of dance.

PLAYHOUSE THEATRE
Northumberland Ave, WC2 (0844 871 7631)

MISS SAIGON
Set in the final days of the American occupation of Saigon at the end of the Vietnam War, the legendary musical returns to the West End.

PRINCE EDWARD THEATRE
Old Compton Street, W1 (0844 482 5155)

THE BOOK OF MORMON
Broadway musical takes shots at everything from organised religion to consumerism, state of the economy and the musical theatre genre.

PRINCE OF WALES THEATRE
Coventry Street, W1 (0844 482 5115)

LES MISERABLES
A spectacularly staged version of Victor Hugo’s epic novel about an escaped convict’s search for redemption in Revolutionary France.

QUEEN’S THEATRE
Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2 (0844 482 5160)

GYPSY
Major revival of the Stephen Sondheim and Jule Styne musical, starring Imelda Staunton, transferred from a sold out run at Chichester.

SAVOY THEATRE
Strand, WC2 (0844 871 7687)

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY
Roald Dahl’s story of young Charlie Bucket and the mysterious confectioner Willy Wonka is brought brilliantly to life in a new West End musical directed by Sam Mendes.

THEATRE ROYAL
Drury Lane, WC2 (0844 871 8810)

BILLY ELLIOT – THE MUSICAL
Hit British film transformed into a thrilling stage musical by its original director, Stephen Daldry, with music by Elton John.

VICTORIA PALACE
Victoria Street, SW1 (0844 811 0055)

STOMP CELEBRATES 8 YEARS AT AMBASSADORS THEATRE
On Sunday 27 September, STOMP celebrated eight years at the Ambassadors Theatre, where it has broken all previous box office records.

Created by Luke Cresswell and Steve McNicholas, it was first performed in 1991 in Edinburgh. The show played Sadler’s Wells Theatre in 1994 and won the Olivier Award for Best Choreography, before opening in New York, where it is now celebrating its 21st birthday. The European company was created in 1997 and began its London run at the Vaudeville Theatre in 2002, transferring to the Ambassadors Theatre in 2007.

Omari Carter STOMP London.

One of Britain’s greatest exports, Stomp has toured the globe for 22 years, playing over 20 thousand performances to more than 12 million people in 53 countries on 6 continents.

In its 13 years in London’s West End, the show has consumed over 10,000 boxes of matches, over 13,500 brooms, almost 9,000 bin lids, over 18,000 drumsticks, over 8,000 wooden poles, over 35,000 newspapers, over 6,500kg of sand, almost 260,000 litres of water and 676 gallons of floor paint.

Stomp performed live at the 1996 Academy Awards (the Oscars) to an estimated audience of almost 1 billion worldwide. The largest assembly of cast performers ever was brought together for a specially choreographed appearance at the closing ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Photo: Steve McNicholas.
PENNY AT THE OLD VIC

This summer, The Old Vic theatre has undergone a front of house refresh and total transformation of The Pit Bar into Penny: a place to engage with and experience new thoughts in food and art.

The much loved Pit Bar space has been converted into an all-day café imagined by Julian Porter and Lauren Johns, the team behind Milk, Balham, and Fields, Clapham Common. The renovation utilises the space and creates an environment in which non-theatre goers and theatre lovers alike can while away the hours, away from the hustle and bustle of Waterloo and Southwark.

Inspiration for the name comes from the Penny Lectures: a series of talks hosted in the halls of The Old Vic in 1882, designed to encourage new thinking and ideas amongst the people of London.

During the day, it will be a place to meet, have good coffee and/or brunch over a meeting, but then seamlessly transition into a place to drink modern and engaging wines and grab something delicious to eat. Penny serves creatively driven food and drink from local products and like-minded producers, with simplicity and provenance at the heart of the offering. Speciality coffee from Workshop Coffee, Clerkenwell is served alongside an all day menu flowing from breakfast into a relaxed evening service.

Dishes range from morning pastries from Little Bread Peddler in Bermondsey, to ‘smashed avocado, Sussex ricotta, garden herbs on Brixton sourdough’ and ‘poached organic Oxfordshire eggs with herb salt.’ Seasonal salads and small plates such as ‘beechwood smoked anchovies on toast, chilli salt’ and a selection of cured meats and cheeses from the British Isles are served with acorn flour crisps.

Penny also features an exciting selection of natural wines from biodynamic producers across the continent and craft beers from London and abroad. Fresh juices are available throughout the day and draw from seasonal fruit from New Covent Garden Market such as ‘blood orange, watermelon and wild ginger’.

NY-LON LOUNGE BAR TAKES OFF AT THE 02

The newly launched NY-LON lounge bar brings the best of New York and London style, design, glamour and mixology to London’s O2 wrapped up in the undeniable buzz of checking in to a first class lounge. NY-LON is the ‘turn left’ feeling – sleek, chic and designed to make guests feel like they’re flying high in London. Honouring the airlines’ important New York – London route, the aviation-themed lounge bar will combine the best of both brands to deliver a unique experience to The O2 visitors.

NY-LON features dishes such as a New York inspired cured meats sharing board as well as small plates like the Billingsgate fish pie, paying homage to New York and London.

The bar’s head mixologist has created a unique collection of cocktails – true blue sky thinking, the collection is a creative twist of classic cocktails such as Manhattan, Whiskey Sour and Tom Collins served alongside an innovative range of aviation themed cocktails such as Aviation, Transatlantic, Flying Lady, Maiden Voyager, Atlanta and Cropduster.
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