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PAGE 12

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The play's the thing

By David Melsome

Actor Benjamin Victor is passionate about bringing attention to the plight of his industry. Outdoor performances are back in the calendar but indoor theatre venues have not yet worked out how they can reopen safely and still survive financially.

Benjamin said: "On 11 July, UK theatre was officially allowed to resume outdoor performances. Little to zero notice was given by the government, making rehearsal and preparation of work impossible. What is most sad about this is it indicates a fundamental lack of understanding of how the sector truly functions."

So Benjamin, who has worked in theatres including Greenwich Theatre and the Park Theatre in Finsbury as well as running theatre workshops,

works of drama, all carefully sanitised in between visitors.

"Following a discussion with a friend and colleague, we chose to make small pieces of community theatre with zero notice," he said. "Some colleagues performed in public spaces at a safe distance from the public. I chose to donate every single play on my shelf to a temporary, pop-up play library."

"People from my local community came out in the sun to flick through plays, sit and



Drama in a crisis: Benjamin Victor with his pop-up library of plays

chose to run his own small-scale event at short notice. He set up a play library outside his home in Sedgemere Avenue, N2, and invited neighbours and passers-by to peruse some of the greatest

read, and discuss the state of the arts in the UK. It was a truly beautiful experience for me and I hope it sparked some positive connections for members of my community."



Matey python: Fashion models and their reptile friend in Coldfall Wood. Photo Mike Coles

Slither my timbers!

Birds, squirrels and the occasional fox we can probably all cope with, but a snake in Coldfall Wood could be stretching it too far. Well, just one appeared during a video shoot for fashion brand Plan in Motion in late July.

The one-year-old albino granite python was filmed as it slid over tree trunks and then over the shoulders of two human fashion models. Borrowed from a snake collector in Muswell Hill, the python is completely harmless at the moment but could grow to be 10ft long in five years' time. Watch the results of the fashion shoot at www.planinmotion.co.uk

Civic award for young people's volunteer

Congratulations to East Finchley resident Doreen Ball, winner of a London Borough of Barnet Civic Award, presented at her front door by the Mayor Cllr Caroline Stock.

Doreen is the longest standing Home Start volunteer, having started in 2004. She was Brown Owl for 10 years for Holy Trinity Brownie Pack, and, before retiring, was a speech and language therapist, helping with child/parent relationships and improving the life chances of young children. Doreen also helps with volunteer reading in a local school.



The Mayor presents Doreen Ball's award. Photo Simon O'Conner



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