



Poppy the Pea breaks free at book launch

By Diana Cormack

Apart from *The Princess and the Pea* you might be hard-pressed to think of many other stories about this humble little legume. However, Farzad Sharifi-Yazdi of North Finchley has recently written, illustrated and self-published a rhyming picture book all about one particular pea named Poppy.

Intriguingly the story is a reflection of Farzad's own. He faced a challenging time after coming to the UK from Iran at the age of five and had particular problems to overcome during his school days. However, he went on to obtain a PhD in geopolitics at Kings College, University of London, and has written about Middle Eastern politics for adults. But writing for

up to her fears and anxieties, overcoming setbacks and being helped along the way by others to fulfill her dreams of freedom.

It is made for small hands with child-friendly illustrations and relevant refrains at the end of every page designed to promote discussion and teaching points. The book is now recommended on The School Reading List and is



Self-published: Farzad Sharifi-Yazdi with his children's book.

Photo Mike Coles

children has been Farzad's long-held ambition, so the title he launched at Black Gull Books in the High Road, East Finchley, is the first of a series published by his own Fuzz Books, taken from the nickname he was given at school.

Youngsters will be able to empathise with this rhyming short story, where Poppy faces

available as an ebook and audiobook with future workbook activities planned.

Farzad describes his own story as one "of ups and downs, fear and adversity, friendship and support, resilience and courage and, above all, hope". Visit www.poppythepea.com to learn more about Poppy's progress.

Light in the depths of winter

By Diana Cormack

A large crowd braved the cold for the annual Christmas tree lighting-up on Saturday 2 December. Greeted with festive music played by the Metropolitan Brass Band, there was great delight when the lights on the tree, which was kindly supplied by Budgens, with decorations courtesy East Finchley Town Team, were switched on at five o'clock.

This was followed by children from Brookland School choir and the Fixation Academy singing carols and seasonal songs. At the very end some football shirts were handed out by members of the East Finchley football team.

Many of the onlookers enjoyed the mulled wine and

hot drinks generously supplied by Budgens. Inside the shop a long queue formed for these as well as the free mince pies and delicious gateaux on offer. Thanks are due to the store for all this and also for providing the Christmas tree outside with its electric power lighting up our High Road for the festive season.



Tranquility: Carolyn Pickles and Tark Butler in their garden with his painting *Reciting Vermeer*

Actor and artist review each other

By Jessica Holt

Actress Carolyn Pickles has had a long career in theatre, television and film, most recently in *Broadchurch*, with David Tennant and Olivia Coleman, and *Beyond Paradise*. Tark Butler took up painting at the age of 43 as more of a hobby than work. He attended short courses at Central Saint Martins and became inspired by the work of artists such as Paul Klee.

The couple met through a mutual friend and moved to East Finchley in 1988. In the garden of their home, I asked Carolyn and Tark to talk about each other's work.

Reciting Vermeer

by Tark Butler

Carolyn: "I love the tranquillity as represented by the milkmaid as she pours the milk from a jug. Unaware of being watched, the canvas opens through not just one door but infinite doorways. Curtains edge the painting, and the floor is richly tiled and reflect the drapes. I see something different every time."

Tark: "I always struggle with my work. [Carolyn nods vigorously] This one gave me no opposition, it only took two and a half days, a twin perspective, creating the room in blues (an easier colour to work with, also an emotional colour) and yellow ochre. I gave the Delft interior a modern feel. I'm still okay with this painting, no changes required."

Carolyn asked Tark to categorise the painting's style. He called it semi-abstract. Carolyn added that the blues are wonderful and finished by saying she loves all his paintings and if she had criticisms, she would express them "loud and clear".

Broadchurch and *Emilia*, starring Carolyn Pickles

I asked Tark to talk about his favourite role Carolyn has played. He spoke about two, one on TV where she played the journalist in *Broadchurch*, and a contrasting role in the theatre where she played a man in *Emilia* by Morgan Lloyd Malcolm.

Tark: "In *Broadchurch*, Carolyn played a lesbian who kisses Charlotte Rampling, which is something I've always

wanted to do. [Carolyn laughs as Tark adds: "When I was 21."] In *Emilia*, her role was to convey a macho male in 17th century England in a feminist play about the lack of recognition for the female poet Emilia Bassano and the poor treatment of women more generally both then and now."

Carolyn: "Once I conquered how men walk and talk with power, the part worked for me. The audience became so involved; they understood the oppression of women. Being a journalist in *Broadchurch* was a wonderful role and at my audition, I used a pretend cigarette

as a prop and spoke with it in my mouth which they rather liked. The script was great, and we were never told throughout the first series who the murderer was. This helped the actor playing the killer to give a nuanced performance."

Tark helps Carolyn with learning her lines and suggests ideas that she often takes on, but as Tark puts it, "She turns them into her own." He continued by saying how, when listening to radio plays, he often only realises Carolyn is in the play once the cast's names are read out. For Tark, this is definitive proof of how talented she is.



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