Showcase for young performers

By Caryn Becker Berlingieri

After the success of the Summer Soirée at the Coffee Bank on East Finchley High Road, the same venue held an autumn follow-up on Thursday 1 October. Tickets sold out for the event showcasing the talent of local musicians, singer-songwriters and poets.

Michael opened the show with an instrumental version of the theme music from the film The Odyssey. Minh and Ben, also known as Punk Roth, did a Donovan cover and original songs, with percussion touches and harmonies that got the crowd cheering for more.

Resident national poetry winner Elliot enchanted the crowd with the depth of his storytelling. New to the soirée stage was 15-year-old Eila, a singer-songwriter with an amazing voice and original songs. Rose, Alfie and Sas returned by popular demand to play new songs.

The soirée was even attended by local comedian and actor Sanjeev Bhaskar, whose son Shaan was performing his own very moving songs that evening. The Winter Soirée will take place Thursday 21 January. Follow on Instagram **@the_soiree_ef**



Singer-guitarist: Eila Zecevic John at the Soiree

Review: Island Tides

Young Actors Theatre, Islington

By Jessica Holt



Couples therapy: The cast of Island Tides

Written and directed by Jay Yu-chieh Chiu this interactive production was part of The Camden Fringe which lasts throughout August every year. As with The Edinburgh Fringe new writing is encouraged alongside new performers and innovative presentation styles.

This play uses the courtroom format to debate whether a married couple should divorce after the death of their child. The debate is between a female divorce lawyer played by Chia-Yi Chan and a male intimacy consultant played by Daniel Popescu.

The opening clash between these two is energetically performed but hard to follow at times. The audience must navigate many different ideas that the two opponents are debating such as love, gender, identity and how people make choices.

We are then shown a video of the couple in question, and it is revealed through scenes that though they still love each other they no longer communicate. It becomes clear at this stage that the action of the play is within a reality TV show and as the audience we must decide between the lawyer and the consultant who wins the debate using our mobile phones. This was an interesting way of thinking in more depth about the issues, but the couple were difficult to empathise with and maybe they should have been performing live on stage as the video created a distance between them and the audience.

The backdrop with the title in muted blues and pinks was beautiful to look at and as the writer explains: "An island can represent protection, autonomy and separation-qualities reflected in how we navigate relationships and communities."

This is an interesting piece of theatre and very enjoyable particularly when the two opponents have a conversation where they do communicate and this is perhaps the most important theme in this multi-themed play.

A response to the climate crisis putting our world on the brink

By Dave McCormick



Emergency briefing: The audience at the Phoenix screening. Photo Zalan Pall

Mix together a cinema, a film, concerned residents and representatives of local community groups and what do you get? Around 130 people came along to the Phoenix Cinema last month to watch a screening of The People's Emergency Briefing and discuss actions that we can individually and collectively take.

The film clearly summarises the climate and biodiversity challenges we face, why urgent action is both necessary and affordable, the solutions already available, and the barriers we must overcome.

While hearing about this urgent situation can create climate anxiety, many of the audience responses were cautiously positive: "It is essential viewing – we need to help everyone see the film;" "Everyone needs to understand that taking action will lead to a better world;" "A people-supported movement – wonderful and so necessary." Another said: "In an emergency I ring 999 and expect a rapid response. We need a rapid response from the Government and our Councils to the crises we face." Asking what actions we can take triggered great suggestions: "We need to get all our MPs to watch the film – write to them, talk to them, pester them, get them to realise that there are votes in taking action;" "Encourage more Cinemas to host screenings."

Yet a note of reality was introduced: "So far there have been a small number of screenings in Barnet, and we need to reach around four hundred thousand residents;" "The longer we delay just makes it harder."

By the end of the evening, people were signing a petition demanding a Televised Emergency Briefing by the Government, talking about joining local community groups and putting pressure on our councillors and MPs, and about how to organise further screenings at the Phoenix and across the community, Thanks to all those who helped organise and attended the event.

