



Alice Gill-Carey and Michael Reffold who are playing Florence and her son Nicky in the Garden Suburb Theatre's production of *The Vortex* (Photo: Colin Gregory)

GST's The Vortex

STEVEN ROWE

First produced in 1924, Noel Coward's *The Vortex* – to be revived in April by Garden Suburb Theatre (GST) – depicts the sexual vanity of a rich, ageing beauty, her troubled relationship with her adult son, and drug abuse in British society circles.

The Garden Suburb Theatre's production will be performed at the King Alfred Phoenix Theatre, April 7-9th.

Directed by longstanding GST member and Suburb resident Colin Gregory, *The Vortex* was Noel Coward's first commercial success and speedily made him – at the age of 25 – into a highly regarded and commercially successful actor, playwright and singer.

"It's a play for the 1920s which is very relevant for the 2020s," says Colin. "A vain society beauty having affairs with men her son's age – is that still taboo in an era in which we are supposed to be

moving beyond all forms of discrimination? Homosexuality? Drugs? They are all there." In 1924 the play had great difficulty getting the Lord Chamberlain's approval.

It glitters with the sharp repartee which Coward does so well and also deals with controversial themes, and it lets us see the bitter truth that underlies the characters' struggles to come to terms with the emptiness of society after the trauma of the First World War.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON TALKS AT FELLOWSHIP HOUSE

(2.30pm start. All welcome. Entrance £3 or members £1. Tea and biscuits included)

March 1st
Celebrating Wales Elinor Delaney

March 8th
Coping With Covid: Swimming With Sharks In The Dark Whilst Keeping The UK On The Road
Dr Barbara Bannister

March 15th
The Frenchness Of French Art
Laurence Wolff, Artist and Art Historian

March 22nd
Trees And The Environment
Peter Falk

March 29th
The Story Behind London's Foundling Hospital And The Children Who Grew Up There
Roy Sloan

April 5th
Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata
Talk followed by a performance.
Angela Zanders, Pianist, Accompanist and Lecturer

April 12th
How Did We Get To Mr Putin?
Sir Roderick Braithwaite, former UK Ambassador to Moscow

April 19th
Fellowship House Closed

April 26th
Edgar Julius Jung : Right Wing Enemy Of The Nazis
Roshan Magub

100 Ways to Write a Book by Alex Pearl

ELEANOR LEVY

The task of reviewing this book by Suburb resident, Alex Pearl, is not an easy one as its scope is so extensive.

During lockdown Alex, himself a published author, contacted one hundred authors in order to discover how they approach their writing, what the salient influences were within their own lives and whether they write their stories 'by the seat of their pants' or were plotters who use outlines to help plot out their novels. He also asked them

how much research, if any, they carried out, to what extent their fictional characters were based on people well known to them and of course the vital issue of how they marketed their work.

Pearl has provided his readers with a good amount of background information about the individuals he interviewed: where they grew up, how they came to be writers, their own literary influences and how they would describe their individual genre.

The writers are fairly evenly divided between male and female and whilst the majority are British, there are also plenty of international contributors, some with their own fascinating story such as Sophy Layzell who was adopted from Laos, and Emily Naymark who was born in Russia, emigrated as a child, was stateless for five months, lived as a refugee in Italy before ending up in the US.

The international breadth of contributors is reflected in their widely differing approaches and achievements. They are all acclaimed authors and some are also award winners such as Tessa Harris whose latest novel 'Beneath a Starless Sky' was the winner of the 2021 International Book Awards' Historical Fiction Category.

Alex Pearl himself has good literary credit. His 2014 short story, 'Scared to Death' the fictionalised account of the first British serviceman to be executed for cowardice during the First World War, was published in an anthology by Mardibooks along with twenty two other short stories to mark the centenary of the Great War.

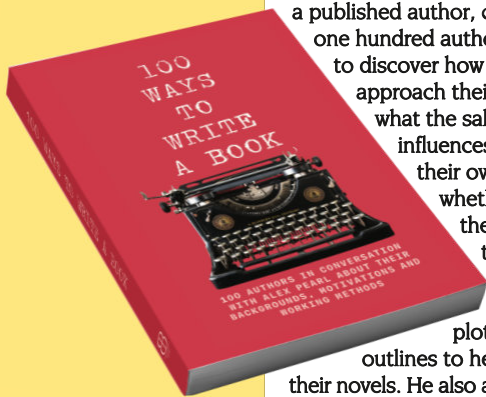
This review can only give a small taste of this excellent and comprehensive hand book for those keen to improve their writing skills. Equally fascinating is the

insight provided by the contributors of how, despite their differences, they faced similar challenges in to the creative art of writing.

The short entries can be read piecemeal as Pearl has paid keen attention to the indexing of

authors and has also provided an accessible page directory. I feel that this volume should have a place on every writer's bookcase.

All proceeds from this book will be donated to PEN international writers' association.



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