

## Flowers in season at the Gallery



Everyone's favourites at this time of year, botanical paintings that are accurate but attractive compositions make the perfect



companion to hang anywhere in the home. Shirley Talerman is a master at making plants come to life in watercolour. Her



exhibition at the Garden Suburb Gallery starts on May 6. Don't miss it.

### OLD FRIENDS WELCOME AT THE GALLERY

Avril Elizabeth (Beth) Zanders arrived in HGS in 1954 with her pianist husband Douglas and son Edward; her daughter Angela was born here. Many piano students visiting 1 Hurst Close

will have fond memories of her gingerbread men served up at the annual pupils' concerts. Her talents, however, stretched to more than cooking; she was a trained artist. She painted (or drew) pictures of Suburb houses and portraits of residents, most of these being given as gifts. Beth worshipped at St Jude's and produced portraits of two incumbents (Bill Masters and Robin Dunhill) as well as scenes from the interior and exterior of the church.



Beth left HGS in 1985 with Douglas and died in 2009. Her children Edward and Angela have decided to organise an exhibition of her pictures in her memory; they hope that some of those who remember Beth and Douglas during their thirty years in the Suburb will visit the Garden Suburb Gallery in Fellowship House during the week beginning 23 June.



## An enjoyable 'Oliver'

The Garden Suburb Theatre presented a very enjoyable 'Oliver' at the end of February.

In a serviceable set designed by Andy Farrer (he is getting rather good at this) with some good singing, lovely costumes, and a very enthusiastic chorus of 'tavern ladies' the whole thing went with a good swing.

Gideon Leibowitz made an appealing Oliver partnered by Elisa Daeschner, really splendid as the Artful Dodger. Tim Solomans made an almost likeable Fagin and put over his songs with verve.

Carl Underhill was a brutish Bill Sykes while Fran Trewin, in a stunning red dress, was a touching Nancy. Indeed all the players were excellent. Nancy and the chorus were gloriously uninhibited in "om-pah-paha" and obviously enjoyed swishing their skirts in the air.

Diana Bromley directed, John Musker was in charge of music and Emma Pleass choreographed some lively dances. One of the good things about this production was that everyone, especially the children, enjoyed themselves.

LEONIE STEPHEN

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Diana Athill

PHOTO MARK CRICK



## The Food of Spain: a celebration

In an era of ghost-written celebrity chef cookbooks, Claudia Roden's The Food of Spain is a welcome throwback to the days when food writers researched, tested and refined their own recipes. If you flick through its copiously illustrated pages, you'll find no foams, towers or drizzles – just recognizable, appetizing food. Nor do most of the recipes demand time-consuming procedures or unobtainable ingredients. Food processors and stick blenders are as OK as sieves and food mills. As for ingredients, though Claudia's starting point is authenticity, she gives acceptable substitutes: for instance, Italian risotto rice for Spanish rice or "large white beans" for judiones de la Granja.

Some festive recipes, such as arroz a la marinera (seafood paella), require several stages and careful attention, but there are lots of simple everyday recipes as well. The first one I tried was arroz al horno con pasa y garbanzos (baked rice with currants and chickpeas). Preparation and assembly were quick and easy, the cooking times were accurate and the result came out of the oven looking just like the photo. Most important, it was delicious,

ample and, like so many casseroles, even better the second day. Full marks.

Spain's Michelin-starred meccas of avant-garde gastronomy such as Ferran Adria's El Bulli are what make the headlines, but Claudia spent five years exploring remote corners of the country's traditional regions. "I asked everyone I met for their favourite recipes," she writes, "what their parents and grandparents cooked, how they lived and what region they were from. Their recipes mostly belonged to a rural world."

Her task was made easier by the fact that "there was throughout the country a sense of nostalgia for the old rural life, too quickly swept away by the booming tourist and building trades... Organizations were formed to preserve their cultural heritage." These organizations collected hundreds and hundreds of local and regional recipes. With the collapse of the Spanish economy and its concomitant social unrest, Claudia may have carried out her own research just in time.

The Food Of Spain is not just a cookery book. It is also a detailed and fascinating cultural

history – indeed, as the subtitle says, a celebration. But here, alas, is where the fashions of modern publishing get in the way of both pleasure and utility. There are lots of photos but no captions. The beautiful places and buildings, which we might want to relate to the text or even to visit, are sadly unidentified.

As for the text itself, the print is so small and the pages so wide that it's difficult to read. It's even harder to work from – in fact, with its monumental size and weight and its stiff unyielding pages, the book can't easily be used in the kitchen at all. (I left it safely out of harm's way, going back to scribble an occasional note.) But that's par for the course. Now that cooking has become a spectator sport, publishers assume that such massive and unwieldy volumes will remain pristinely on the coffee table.

Nevertheless, Claudia's text overcomes all obstacles. There are lots of recipes I want to try, so I'll probably end up scanning and enlarging them, then printing them out on single sheets that can be harmlessly splashed with salsa de tomate and aceite de oliva.

JOHN WHITING

## LitFest on the Suburb



Michael Parkinson

The first-ever Proms literary festival takes place on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 June, with a galaxy of authorial stars.

Suburb resident and food-writer extraordinaire, Claudia Roden, is being interviewed by

Yotam Ottolenghi, founder of the eponymous restaurant and himself author of best-selling cookery books, in what promises to be a mouth-watering meeting at lunchtime on Sunday.

Another inspired pairing finds Proms Patron Sir Rodric Braithwaite, former UK ambassador to the USSR and Russia, interviewing AD Miller on his thriller Snowdrops, set in Moscow. The novel was shortlisted for the Man Booker prize in 2011.

Move to the London and Khartoum of 1884-85, as General Gordon faces an ever-more-

hopeless defence and defeat, and that is the setting for An Honourable Man, the new historical novel by South African-born Gillian Slovo. The author will be interviewed by Sue MacGregor, former chair of Radio 4's 'A Good Read', who began her broadcasting career in South Africa.

Addressing a very different genre of literature, John Mullan, Professor of English Literature at University College, London, will talk about his new book, What Matters in Jane Austen? Since this will cover topics such as 'is there any sex in Jane Austen?' and 'what are the right and wrong ways to propose marriage?', no-one should expect this academic to be dusty.

Mihir Bose, former BBC News Sports Editor, has unpicked the interplay of politics and sport in his latest book, The Spirit of the Game. He will be interviewed by Proms Patron and broadcaster, Henry Kelly, who describes himself as 'loving golf, being fanatical about horse-racing and passionate about cricket'.

Those passionate about music can look forward to hearing Guardian music writer and BBC Radio 3 presenter, Tom Service, talk about his new book, Music as Alchemy, to be published in June. The book explores conductors and conducting, going behind the scenes with greats such as Simon Rattle and Claudio Abbado.

What does it mean to be old in modern Britain? While many





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