

Entertainment & Leisure

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Living memory: Helen Mirren narrates *Anne Frank: Parallel Stories*, which marks Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27

Telling Anne's story is a timely reminder

WERE Anne Frank still alive today, she would be 90 years old.

Born on June 12, 1929, she died in February or March 1945, aged just 15.

The reason we do not know exactly when she died is that she and her older sister Margot perished in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, having previously passed through Auschwitz.

It is thought likely that the sisters died of typhus, but we do not know because the Nazis — although meticulous record-keepers in all other respects — did not want the wider world to know about the death camps' existence.

Fortunately for our knowledge of the sisters, it later emerged that Anne had kept a diary, which had been saved by her father's secretary, Miep Gies, who

CINEMA PREVIEW

Film: *Anne Frank: Parallel Stories*

Certificate: 15

Director: Sabina Fadel

Stars: Helen Mirren, Martina Gatti

was one of the Dutch citizens who had previously helped hide the family and four other Jews in an annexe above Otto Frank's business premises in Amsterdam.

As people around the world prepare to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27 — the date in 1945 that Auschwitz was liberated — we are left to reflect that these events took place within what is still living memory. We are also left with questions such

as what would Anne's life have been like had she survived Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen?

What would have happened to the hopes and dreams she wrote about in her diaries? What could she have told us about persecution, about the concentration camps? How would she have interpreted the reality of today, the rekindling of antisemitism and new racism?

While these questions are in a sense unanswerable, a new documentary starring Oscar winner Helen Mirren, *Anne Frank: Parallel Stories*, sets out to tell the story of Anne's life with readings from her diary.

This emotive telling is entwined with the stories of five Holocaust survivors — Arianna Szörenyi, Sarah Lichtsztejn-Montard, Helga Weiss and sisters Andra and

Tatiana Bucci — who shared Anne's same fate of deportation, suffering and were denied their childhood and adolescence, but were fortunately able to go on and live the life that Anne was denied.

In addition to insight from historians and professors, Martina Gatti, one of the thousands of today's teenagers who feel close to Anne, guides the audience through some of the key places in Anne's short life, as well as those of the survivors.

She wants to know about the story of the Jewish teenager who became a symbol of the greatest and most appalling tragedy to befall the 20th century.

The film is showing at Henley's Regal Picturehouse cinema on January 27, 28 and 30.

Matthew Wilson

'Inspector Dalglish' star is as keen on directing as detecting

By PETER ANDERSON

A NEW stage adaptation of a murder mystery that was made into three classic films starring the likes of Bob Hope, Edward Fox and Honor Blackman has just opened at the Theatre Royal Windsor.

The Cat and the Canary by John Willard dates from 1922 and was first adapted for the silver screen in 1927 — on that occasion as a silent movie.

But with the play's centenary just two years away, it is embarking on a nationwide theatre tour directed by Adam Dalglish star Roy Marsden.

This saw it open at the Theatre Royal Windsor on Wednesday — where it is running until next Saturday (January 25).

A spokesman for the show said: "Twenty years after the death of Mr West, his descendants gather at a remote mansion to learn who will inherit his vast wealth and the hidden family jewels. When the heir is revealed, the heritage hunters turn into prey and a chain of macabre events is set in motion — walls crack open, shadows loom and dark secrets are revealed. Will the heirs dare to face the haunting presence toying with them?"

The Cat and the Canary is director Roy Marsden's fifth production for the Classic Thriller Theatre Company.

His previous directorial credits include the West End premieres of *A Daughter's a Daughter* by Agatha Christie and *Volcano* by Noël Coward.

As an actor he is well known to TV audiences as Inspector Dalglish in ITV's long-running series of PD James adaptations.

Now 78, he is as busy with theatre work as ever. But when did he discover his love for acting?

"I grew up in the East End of London and was



Famous faces: the cast of *The Cat and the Canary* includes former Bond girl Britt Ekland. Below, director Roy Marsden



around eight years old when I realised that at that age you could easily travel on the underground and nobody asked for tickets.

"I also found I could sneak into the gallery of the Victoria Palace Theatre. I watched the Crazy Gang, Flanagan and Allen and the rest of them every night. I was hooked.

"When my parents realised where I was going and what my interest was, they sorted out a drama school for me."

How easy was it switching from being an actor to a director?

"I have never switched as such," he laughs. "I have always directed from about the age of 15. I probably direct two or three plays a year and I would not have minded if my career had

just been as a director." As a director, does he enjoy working with the actors to develop their characters and backstory?

"Oh yes. Some characters in a play are mapped out in detail, where with others you have got to ask in your mind how did they get to this point and where are they going.

"I remember when I played the detective Adam Dalglish, I saw him as a very singular character and it was my idea, rather than something from the PD James books, that he took up sculling as a hobby to help show that.





"Though we did also make him a member of the Leander Club and some viewers question whether the club would have allowed a man like him in!"

Is there a dream play Roy would love to either appear in or direct?

"Rather than one play, it is a genre — I have always wanted to explore comedies more. As I have said, my influence growing up was the Crazy Gang, but somehow my career has taken me to the other end of the scale with thrillers."

● Tickets for *The Cat and the Canary* start at £19.50. For more information and to book, call 01753 853888 or visit www.theatreroyalwindsor.co.uk

Also showing this week:

| Title | Cast | Synopsis | Rating |
|--|---|--|---|
| Knives Out (12A)  | Daniel Craig, Chris Evans, Ana de Armas, Jamie Lee Curtis, Michael Shannon, Don Johnson, Toni Collette, LaKeith Stanfield, Katherine Langford, Jaeden Martell, M Emmet Walsh, Christopher Plummer, Frank Oz | A detective investigates the death of the patriarch of an eccentric, combative family. | <i>Knives Out</i> sharpens old murder-mystery tropes with a keenly assembled suspense outing that makes brilliant use of writer-director Rian Johnson's stellar ensemble. |
| Little Women (U)  | Saoirse Ronan, Emma Watson, Florence Pugh, Eliza Scanlen, Laura Dern, Timothée Chalamet, Meryl Streep | Four sisters come of age in America in the aftermath of the Civil War. | With a stellar cast and a smart, sensitive retelling of its classic source material, Greta Gerwig's <i>Little Women</i> proves some stories are truly timeless. |
| Jojo Rabbit (12A)  | Roman Griffin Davis, Thomasin McKenzie, Taika Waititi, Sam Rockwell, Rebel Wilson, Scarlett Johansson | A 10-year-old Hitler Youth member begins to question Nazi ideology after discovering a Jewish girl living in his home. | <i>Jojo Rabbit</i> 's blend of irreverent humour and serious ideas definitely won't be to everyone's taste — but either way, this anti-hate satire is audacious to a fault. |
| 1917 (15)  | George MacKay, Dean-Charles Chapman, Mark Strong, Andrew Scott, Richard Madden, Claire Duburcq, Daniel Mays, Jamie Parker, Benedict Cumberbatch, Colin Firth | Two young British soldiers during the First World War are given an impossible mission: deliver a message deep in enemy territory that will prevent 1,600 of their comrades from walking straight into a deadly trap. | Hard-hitting, immersive, and an impressive technical achievement, <i>1917</i> captures the trench warfare of the First World War with raw, startling immediacy. |

Pratchett's witches prove as superbly entertaining as ever

Review

Wyrd Sisters, Progress Theatre, Reading Tuesday, January 14

special effects show you how it's done — to great comic effect.

The power of words is central to the action: is it possible to change reality with magic words or made-up "truth"?

All cast members do a terrific job of delivering Stephen Briggs's script, with its witty wordplay, allusions to fairy tales and smatterings of Shakespeare.

Carroll and Sherwood are forceful and funny as the two older witches, their earthy attitudes set off by the more mystical approach to witchcraft of their new recruit Magrat; Newton offers a poised and charming foil to Ogg and Weatherwax.

At the core of the kingdom's troubles is the corrupt and duplicitous Duke Felmet. Jack Goodman is charmingly

insincere in his dealings with his shrewish wife Lady Felmet (Ali Carroll), but we see the Duke crumbling under the weight of his past misdeeds.

Echoing Lady Macbeth, he rubs and picks at his hands to remove imaginary blood, progressing to sandpaper and a cheese grater to do the job as his obsession takes hold.

Since a troupe of actors is important to the plotline, there is a cast within a cast. George Prové is deliciously "luvvie" as lead actor Tomjon — and also as the demon with the unpronounceable name.

Credit also to Dean Stephenson as the drippy fool who turns out to have some answers and also wins the lady of his dreams.

Wyrd Sisters under Chris Moran's creative direction is vibrant and polished — and very, very funny. This production makes for a thoroughly entertaining night out — it's a triumph!

The show is booking until Saturday, January 25.

Susan Creed