

EVENTS & LEISURE

COMMUNITY

Borough's heritage explored on foot

Take a walk through history from the warehouses of Fish Island to the dazzling London Aquatic Centre.

Newham Heritage Walks offers two distinct routes for walkers this month.

Up first is a walk from E15 to E20: Stratford and the Olympic Park on Saturday, 11am, running from Stratford station to Pudding Lane DLR station.

It takes about two to three hours, £5 entry. Email info@londonpersonally.co.uk to book.

FILM

Watch an historic cult classic film

Travel back in time to watch some of the greatest films ever made.

Showcase Cinemas, based in Beckton, is giving moviegoers the opportunity to relive the most memorable moments from film history on the big screen, as part of its new initiative Flashback.

The initiative will launch with a showing of cult classic *Labyrinth*.

Labyrinth shows at 7.30pm on Tuesday. Call 0871 220 1000.

FESTIVAL

Enjoy a fun night and donate cash

Enjoy a night of musical bingo and live singing to help fundraise money for Forest Gate Festival.

The Forest Tavern, based in Forest Lane, Forest Gate, is hosting the fundraising night tomorrow (Thursday).

The event starts at 8pm, with musical bingo from 8.30pm. Entry costs £5.

All money on the night will go towards the festival.

Call 020 8503 0868 for more details.

MUSIC

Dance your way into the weekend

Dust off your dancing shoes and end the week on a high note at the Goose.

The Stratford Broadway pub is hosting a DJ to get everyone up dancing to some classics from over the years on Friday evening.

They will also be offering special offers on drinks throughout the night.

Call 0208 221 0761 for more information.

RICH MIX

Jungle camp refugees lesson in art to highlight 'shocking' plight

An exhibition of art by refugees aims to "start a conversation" about the controversial subject of migration. Petra Hilgers visited the Jungle camp in Calais in February with deep:black community art organisation to meet migrants and hand-deliver 1,000 pictures of birds drawn by six different London artists for *Birds Crossing Borders*, now running at Bethnal Green's Rich Mix.

Despite her experiences working with migrants, Petra said she found the trip to Calais "quite shocking."

"I have experienced slums in India and deprived regions but it was shocking to see something like that on our doorstep," she said.

"People didn't want them there, the authorities didn't want to have them there, but there's no way out. There was a frantic energy. It's difficult not being able to do anything, just witnessing it."

"What we offered was what we could offer – the gift of art."

Postcards, designed by the artists Carla Ferrari, Julia Miranda, Lauren Curl, Marie-Noëlle Wurm, Nick Cowell, Rani Khanna and Laura Yates, were filled in with messages of solidarity and hope from the British public.

They were delivered to the migrant camp and decorated by the residents in art workshops.

"The most successful thing, which was surprising, was colouring in," Petra added. "Adult men from countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan would spend hours



Refugees take a break from the harsh reality of the Jungle Camp in Calais and carry out art sessions. Pictures: TRUPTI PATEL

colouring in these pictures of birds. It was very peaceful.

"It was very wet, muddy – we couldn't change that – but we could give them a moment of peace."

Petra's involvement in the project is informed by her own experience.

The 43-year-old lives in Mornington Grove, Tower Hamlets, but was born in Germany.

"I worked with refugees in Germany during the wars in the former Yugoslavia, then I lived in east Africa, where the experience of being a migrant was much stronger than it is in the UK," she explained.

Petra and deep:black acknowledge that migration is not a straightforward or neutral issue, and describe *Birds Crossing*

Borders as an attempt to open the "very narrow discussion around refugees. We would like people to come see the exhibition and become part of the dialogue".

■ Birds Crossing Borders runs at Rich Mix, Bethnal Green Road, until Friday. A free drop-in art workshop runs from 6pm to 8pm tomorrow.

THEATRE

Review: Counting Stars shines

This thought-provoking play manages to both startle and amuse, writes *Janine Rasiah*.

Set in a Woolwich nightclub on Valentine's Day, *Counting Stars* tells the story of Nigerian toilet attendants Abiodun (Lanre Malaolu) and Sophie (Estella Daniels) and their never-ending struggle to make ends meet.

The pair are determined to celebrate their one year anniversary together but are at the mercy of their self-serving boss, also played by Malaolu, who perfectly captures his predatory nature.

Sophie and Abiodun are treated like the dirt on the bottom of someone's shoe in return for just tips – and are expected to be grateful for the opportunity.

It's real life and, with that in mind, it's maddening to watch, particularly as the play builds towards its uncomfortable ending.

The production at Theatre Royal Stratford East attempts to immerse the audience in the nightclub spirit – a stamp on the hand on entry along with a shot of neon juice and much too loud club music, plus seating includes stools clustered around tables, complete with beer mats.

It's a nice nod to the setting but it's a credit to the strength of Atiha Sen Gupta's tight script that this is immaterial as soon as the compelling play starts.

■ The show runs until September 17. Tickets cost £15. To book, visit stratfordeast.com



Sophie (Estella Daniels) and Abiodun (Lanre Malaolu) onstage. Picture: SCOTT RYLANDER