

## **VISUALLY IMPAIRED IN CAMDEN**

c/o Somers Town Community Centre

150 Ossulston Street, NW1 1EE

Tel: 07980 328 959

Email: [Rosemary@somerstown.org.uk](mailto:Rosemary@somerstown.org.uk)

### **Newsletter – November / December 2018**

#### **Contents**

1. November members' event
2. VIC Christmas lunch
3. Esme's Umbrella announce new helpline for people with Charles Bonnet Syndrome
4. RP Fighting Blindness rebrands to Retina UK
5. Vital Tech from Thomas Pocklington Trust
6. University of Sheffield and Nystagmus Network: Nystagmus Information Pack
7. Nearly 1.5 million people in the UK are affected by macular disease
8. Hallucinations associated with brain hyperactivity
9. Diabetes medication may protect against AMD
10. Fight for Sight announces research into personalised glaucoma treatment
11. Revolutionary Gene Therapy Technique for Usher Syndrome
12. UK researchers find hearing aids and cataract surgery slow rates of cognitive decline
13. HeyCane: Ali Ismail's journey to help people with sight loss who 'lose' their cane
14. British Wireless for the Blind Fund
15. November's quick quiz

*...and finally* – Sir David makes voice heard above the rest

#### **1. November's Members' event**

##### **Tuesday 20 November**

Come and have some ending of year fun at a

##### **Sound and Rhythm Music Workshop**

led by VIC's very own Mark Pampel.

Please bring something with which to make a sound – it does not have to be a musical instrument – think pot, think pan, think something to shake!

**Time:** 2pm – 4pm  
**Venue:** Swiss Cottage Community Centre  
19 Winchester Road, NW3 3NR

And as usual, there will be tea & coffee and cake & biscuits and a chance to meet up with other VIC members to share news & views!

## **2. VIC Christmas lunch**

The arrangements for the Christmas lunch will be circulated separately to VIC members.

## **3. Esme's Umbrella announce new helpline for people with Charles Bonnet Syndrome**

Esme's Umbrella is the campaign group for everyone working towards a greater awareness of Charles Bonnet Syndrome which causes visual hallucinations in people with sight loss.

The **new helpline – 020 7391 3299** calls will be answered by the professional Eye Health Team at the RNIB and referrals for peer support will be made to RP Fighting Blindness whose Helpline is answered by people with personal experience of Charles Bonnet Syndrome.

## **4. RP Fighting Blindness rebrands to Retina UK**

In October, RP Fighting Blindness announced that it was rebranding to **Retina UK**. The new website can be found at [www.RetinaUK.org.uk](http://www.RetinaUK.org.uk).

Retina UK Chief Executive, Tina Houlihan, said: "While we have a new name, logo and brand, our aims remain unchanged. We simply want to do more of what we do best, which is funding and stimulating ground-breaking medical research and providing high quality support for those affected by inherited sight loss conditions.

"We believe our new Retina UK name and brand will enable our charity to grow and thrive as we will be more relevant, recognisable and accessible to the people who matter most - those affected by inherited sight loss."

The new blue logo features the strapline 'working for people with inherited sight loss'.

## **5. Vital Tech from Thomas Pocklington Trust**

The Tech Services Team at Thomas Pocklington Trust (TPT) has launched Vital Tech, a new online platform showcasing the latest developments and trends in Assistive and Inclusive Technology. Vital Tech is a website that expands on the Assistive and Inclusive Home Technology guide published by TPT in 2016 and aims to inform blind and partially sighted people and their support networks all about high and low-tech solutions in the home.

Vital Tech can be reached at [www.vitaltech.org.uk](http://www.vitaltech.org.uk).

Comments and suggestions about Vital Tech are welcome by email [contact@vitaltech.org.uk](mailto:contact@vitaltech.org.uk).

## **6. University of Sheffield and Nystagmus Network: Nystagmus Information Pack**

Information about Nystagmus has been developed into a 'Nystagmus Information Pack' by a team at Sheffield University's Academic Unit of Ophthalmology and Orthoptics.

This Nystagmus Information Pack is aimed at patients with nystagmus, families, teachers, other professionals and people who would like to find out more about nystagmus. The need for better information about the condition came from discussions with people living with nystagmus and their families at a Nystagmus Network event, particularly when they described struggling to explain nystagmus and their vision to others.

The Nystagmus Information Pack has been developed with funding from Nystagmus Network and the University of Sheffield. Numerous people affected by nystagmus and professionals with expertise in nystagmus have inputted into the development of the pack, which is now being made freely available to download. The pack will also be shared with Orthoptic Departments, the British and Irish Orthoptic Society and other professional groups.

For more information visit [www.sheffield.ac.uk](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk) or [www.nystagmusnetwork.org](http://www.nystagmusnetwork.org).

## **7. Nearly 1.5 million people in the UK are affected by macular disease**

New figures reveal that nearly 1.5 million people in the UK are affected by macular disease, the nation's biggest cause of sight loss.

The statistics revealed by the Macular Society were released on World Sight Day 2018 (11 October) to highlight the extent of what is now an urgent public health issue.

Macular disease is a progressive disease, which can have a devastating effect on people's lives, leaving them unable to drive, read or see faces. Many people affected describe losing their sight as being similar to bereavement. There is still no cure and most types of the disease are not treatable.

It has been widely stated that 600,000 people in the UK are affected by age-related macular degeneration (AMD). However, until now it was not known that as many as 700,000 were affected by other macular conditions and many more at risk.

The new figures account for a number of different types of macular disease including Stargardt, a genetic dystrophy often affecting younger people, diabetic macular edema, a complication of diabetic retinopathy, and myopic macular degeneration which can affect people who are severely short sighted.

In 2016 the Society released figures which projected that the number of people with AMD alone is expected to more than double by 2050 to 1.3 million, equivalent to 400 new cases every day. However, the Society is now calling for more work to be done to understand what the true extent of these figures is, once all other types of macular disease are considered.

Cathy Yelf, chief executive of the Macular Society, said: "This is an alarming figure. We know macular disease is the biggest cause of blindness in the UK, but it's the first time that the full extent of macular disease has been collated and the total number is shocking. No one should have to put up with the distressing and frightening impact of

macular disease without support – however young or old they are. When sight is lost, the things you love and enjoy are stolen from you, from reading to gardening, to be able to drive or recognise a loved one's face.

“This is a problem that is not going away and is only getting worse. There is currently no cure for macular disease and most types are not even treatable. It's time something is done.”

The Society previously highlighted its concerns with the lack of money being spent on medical research into eye disease. A report published in 2016 revealed that of the £22.7 million spent on eye disease medical research in 2014, just £6 million was spent on AMD. Yet the amount spent on macular disease as a whole is proportionately even less.

The Society has launched a new strategy with the aim of addressing this shortfall of research.

Cathy Yelf added: “Macular disease is as prevalent as dementia and represents a huge cost, care and societal burden, yet it does not receive a level of research funding proportionate to its impact.

“Unless strong action is taken right away we will be facing an epidemic in the decades to come. Alongside the devastating personal consequences of sight loss, AMD alone costs the UK £1.6 billion annually.”

## **8. Hallucinations associated with brain hyperactivity**

New research from the University of Queensland has shown for the first time that visual hallucinations in people with macular disease are associated with abnormally heightened activity in the visual cortex of the brain.

The findings, published in the journal ‘Current Biology’, could improve diagnosis of such hallucinations.

Up to half of people with macular disease experience visual hallucinations, known as Charles Bonnet Syndrome. Many worry unnecessarily that there is something wrong with their mind. But it is important to understand that these hallucinations are a natural experience, not a sign of mental illness.

Charles Bonnet hallucinations can be simple unformed flashes of light, colours or shapes. However, many people also report seeing disembodied heads, Edwardian people, snakes and other terrifying creatures.

Why some people with macular disease experience hallucinations and others do not has remained unclear, but there have been suggestions that the activity levels – or ‘excitability’ – of certain visual regions of the brain could play a role.

To address this, Professor Jason Mattingley and his team from The University’s Queensland Brain Institute and School of Psychology stimulated the peripheral visual fields of study participants and found that individuals with hallucinations do indeed show significantly heightened activity in particular parts of their visual system.

“We used electroencephalography (EEG) to measure brain electrical activity in three groups: a group with macular degeneration and Charles Bonnet hallucinations, a group with macular degeneration and no hallucinations, and a control group of visually-healthy elderly people,” Dr. David Painter, the paper’s first author, said.

“Their task was to look at letters appearing on the screen in their periphery, and we flashed checkerboards at unique frequencies on the screen.

“We found that these checkerboards produced unique oscillations in visual areas of the brain that we can measure using mathematical techniques.

“The main finding is that when we drive activity in the visual system of people with macular degeneration who report experiencing hallucinations, there is a huge visual response compared with participants who have the same visual loss but don’t have the hallucinations.”

Dr. Painter noted that while people with macular degeneration who experience hallucinations demonstrated visual hyperexcitability, the translation of this excitability into hallucinations was not automatic and is dependent on external triggers which are still not known.

“During the testing, none of our participants experienced hallucinations, so it’s not that heightened excitability of the brain produces hallucinations – it’s some other factor,” Dr. Painter said.

“Sometimes people have these hallucinations when they’re in periods of low sensory stimulation, such as in low-light or periods of inactivity, but for others it can be triggered by things such as car rides or television – it varies for the individual.

“What our results say is that the brains of those reporting hallucinations are more excitable, but it still remains unclear how that excitability is then translated into hallucinations – that’s a question for future research.”

The findings could help reduce misdiagnosis of hallucinations in people with macular disease.

“When people get older and they start having these unusual experiences, they are often worried that something is wrong with them, such as dementia or something similar, so they tend not to report the hallucinations for fear they may be treated differently,” Dr. Painter said.

“Doctors sometimes don’t recognise the disease either, and therefore can give people inappropriate medication; but our method potentially allows us to detect people who might have Charles Bonnet Syndrome by looking at their brain excitability in response to flickering stimuli.”

Meantime, the Macular Society is funding a study at Newcastle University, which is looking at treating visual hallucinations in people with macular degeneration. The project is aiming to determine whether non-invasive transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) can be used to treat Charles Bonnet Syndrome in people with macular degeneration.

### **Sources of support**

Visual hallucinations caused by sight loss can be very distressing.

Support is available from

**The Macular Society on 0300 3030 111**

and

**Esme’s Umbrella on 020 7391 3299**

## **9. Diabetes medication may protect against AMD**

Researchers from Taiwan have shown that people with type 2 diabetes who took a common diabetes medication, have a significantly lower rate of age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

The study suggests that the anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidative effects of the drug metformin can protect against AMD, while it controls diabetes. The research was presented at AAO 2018, the 122<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

Inflammation and oxidative stress have long been known to play a key role in the development of both diabetes and AMD. Because metformin suppresses inflammation and oxidative stress, researchers in Taiwan theorised that perhaps the diabetes drug may also protect against AMD.

Using the Taiwan National Health Insurance Research Database, they collected data on all patients recently diagnosed with type 2 diabetes from January 2001 to December 2013, dividing them into two groups: those who took metformin (45,524 patients) and those who did not (22,681 patients). After following both groups, the researchers found that patients in the metformin group had a significantly lower risk of developing AMD. Half as many patients in the metformin group had AMD compared to the control group.

Lead investigator, Dr. Yu-Yen Chen, said: “Our study is the first to reveal the protective effect of metformin on the development of AMD. While more study is required to determine just how metformin protects against the development of AMD, this is an exciting development for patients at risk.”

## **10. Fight for Sight announces research into personalised glaucoma treatment**

Fight for Sight chose World Sight Day 2018 (11 October) to announce funding for a research project that will develop personalised medicine for patients at risk of glaucoma from steroid use.

Professor Colin Willoughby from Ulster University has been awarded a £170,000 project grant over three years to better understand the genetic basis for steroid-induced eye pressure. The aim is to develop a genetic test that will predict how a patient will respond to steroids, which are widely used to treat a range of eye conditions.

The study will be the first of its kind because previous studies have not been able to analyse such a large sample size. The project will involve blood samples being taken from approximately 400 patients who have consistently been treated with steroids. The samples will then be analysed using a panel of genetic markers to understand the underlying genetic basis for the condition.

While steroids are one of the most common and widely used treatments for many eye conditions including inflammation, they can unfortunately cause an increase in eye pressure. This steroid response currently cannot be predicted so it is unknown which individuals will be at risk.

Dr Neil Ebenezer, Director of Research, Policy and Innovation at Fight for Sight, said: “Using genetics to better understand conditions as such as glaucoma and to develop a personalised approach for treatment is an exciting area that is being increasingly explored through pioneering scientific research. The ability to predict those patients that are likely to get steroid-induced glaucoma will make a real difference to the treatment that thousands of patients receive. Clinicians will be able to personalise therapies that are tailored to individual patients thereby reducing adverse events.”

Professor Willoughby from Ulster University, said: “I am delighted that Fight for Sight have funded this study which involves a network of ophthalmologists from all across the UK and Ireland contributing clinical data and DNA samples. This network and support from Fight for Sight will be a significant resource to study the genetics of the steroid response and develop genetic tests to personalise treatment and target NHS resources to patients at risk of complication. Understanding the genetic basis of steroid-induced eye pressure will provide knowledge about the development of glaucoma and potentially new therapeutic targets.”

## **11. Revolutionary Gene Therapy Technique for Usher Syndrome**

Retina UK (formerly RP Fighting Blindness) has committed funding to a three-year research project into potential gene therapy treatment for Usher syndrome, led by Dr Mariya Moosajee at UCL Institute of Ophthalmology.

Usher syndrome is the most common cause of deaf-blindness worldwide, with a significant proportion of cases being caused by mutations in the USH2A gene. USH2A is a large gene, too big to be carried by the viruses traditionally used to deliver gene therapy. Dr Moosajee and her team will therefore work on adapting a non-viral gene delivery system known as S/MAR for the potential treatment of the condition.

The researchers have generated a synthesised version of the instruction sections of the healthy USH2A gene, which can be inserted into the S/MAR vector delivery system. A person affected by Usher syndrome has also volunteered to donate some skin cells, which can then be converted into stem cells and used to create a “retina in a dish” model of the disease.

The team will be able to study the effects of USH2A mutations in this human cell model, as well as evaluate the impact of delivering healthy copies of the gene via S/MAR vectors. A zebrafish\* disease model will also be used to help the researchers investigate the effects of the treatment on visual function, toxicity and long-term gene expression.

The successful use of S/MAR vectors could revolutionise the treatment of a wide range of inherited retinal diseases, not just Usher syndrome, by providing a safer and more applicable form of gene therapy.

(\* Zebrafish research has considerably enhanced our understanding of the detailed roles of specific genes in human diseases, both rare and common. Zebrafish experiments are at times included in studies of human genetic disease, often providing independent verification of the activity of a gene implicated in a human disease.)

## **12. UK researchers find hearing aids and cataract surgery slow rates of cognitive decline**

Optometry Today reports UK researchers have highlighted the impact of hearing and visual aids on rates of age-related mental decline.

A study published in PLOS One found that the pace of cognitive decline was halved in individuals following cataract surgery, while research in the ‘Journal of the American Geriatrics Society’ found that mental deterioration lowered by 75 per cent following the adoption of hearing aids.

Dr Piers Dawes and Dr Asri Maharani, both from the University of Manchester, worked alongside each other on the two studies.

Dr Dawes said the results highlight the importance of ensuring that people can access visual and hearing aids. “It’s not really certain why hearing and visual problems have an impact on cognitive decline, but I’d guess that isolation, stigma and the resultant lack of physical activity that are linked to hearing and vision problems might have something to do with it,” he said.

Dr Maharani explained that age is one of the most important factors in cognitive decline. “We find that hearing and vision interventions may slow it down and perhaps prevent some cases of dementia, which is exciting – though we can’t say as yet that this is a causal relationship,” she highlighted.

### **13. HeyCane: Ali Ismail’s journey to help people with sight loss who ‘lose’ their cane**

“Many stories exist in this world. Some are so funny that you can barely conquer the first paragraph, and some are so scary that you cannot go to sleep. Then you have a story like that of HeyCane, but first let me introduce myself. My name is Ali Ismail, and I have been diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). This eye condition affects the retina, and an adequate signal cannot reach your retina. Hence, you cannot see. It is a condition that deteriorates your eye sight completely. I eventually entered the eternal darkness at the age of 9. A joyous boy, who would run around, play knock and run, and would always pick up an injury here and there because my failing eyes were telling me that “there is nothing in front of me”. The world had turned upside down. I say this figuratively!

Then I found it – my new friend, my new buddy, my new helper. I was introduced to my cane at the age of 11. I did not have to rely on my family anymore. I could move again on my own, and this time it was safer. I did not bump into objects and break my nose, because my cane taps the objects and textile paving to tell me what is in front of me. You could call it my third eye. So, we can say that every cloud has a silver lining.

Although my cane would provide me with this freedom and independence, I used to encounter a recurring problem. I found that I

would often put my cane down on the floor in a social situation or in a class room and I would fail to recall where I had placed it. I might have accidentally kicked it somewhere. So, if I cannot find my third eye, I am stuck. Consequently this caused anxiety. After conducting some market research, we found that more than 70 per cent of cane users also face the same problem.

According to the RNIB there are two million people registered with sight loss within the UK, and over a third are cane users. Hence HeyCane would have an impact on a local and national level. The cane is a vital instrument that gives people independence. Therefore, the ability to be in control of the cane could restore visually impaired people's confidence.

During my final year at Manchester Metropolitan University where I recently graduated with a BA (Hons) Business Management degree, I took part in a Young Enterprise unit. I wanted to use my experiences to come up with a solution to avoid the ordeal of losing the cane and this is how we created HeyCane. This is a sophisticated device that one places on their cane, and then they configure an application on their smartphone. Whenever one loses their cane, they just need to go into the app which sends a signal via Bluetooth to the device, and then one would hear the cane making a beeping noise. HeyCane means that I will never ever lose my cane and strengthens the bridge between me and my cane."

### **Haydar-Ali Ismail**

Co-Founder and Director of HeyCane

(Winner of the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs (IOEE)  
Enterprising Learner of the Year Award)

If you would like to know more about HeyCane follow us on Facebook  
[www.facebook.com/HeyCane18](http://www.facebook.com/HeyCane18) or email [heycane1@gmail.com](mailto:heycane1@gmail.com).

### **14. British Wireless for the Blind Fund**

#### **FREE specially designed radios for people living with sight loss**

British Wireless for the Blind Fund (BWBF) is a national charity that provides FREE specially adapted audio equipment to visually impaired people across the UK.

BWBF products are designed to be easy to use for those with sight loss. Equipment is issued on free loan to those that meet the criteria,

registered blind or partially sighted, resident in the UK, over the age of eight and in receipt of an income related benefit.

If you or someone you know would be interested in a radio from British Wireless, please

call **Simon Parsons on 07545 230017**

or email [simon@blind.org.uk](mailto:simon@blind.org.uk)

or visit BWBF's website [www.blind.org.uk](http://www.blind.org.uk)

### **15. November's quick quiz**

Q.1. True or false, US TV star Jerry Springer was born in London's Highgate tube station?

Q.2. Which mammal has the largest brain by weight, a human or a sperm whale?

Q.3. In which country was Marie Curie born? a) Germany, b) Poland or c) United States

Q.4. In which country do you find the Cliffs of Moher?

Q.5. In the world of Beatrix Potter, what type of animal is Timmy Tiptoes?

Q.6. Obsidian is a natural glass from a) volcanoes, b) oceans, c) meteors or d) coal?

Q.7. November is named from Latin 'novem' meaning which number?

Q.8. In which city was the world's first steam passenger railway opened? a) Manchester, b) London or c) New York

Q.9. What was the name of the official residence of Russian monarchs between 1732 and 1917 (the English name)?

Q.10. What African nation and old coin prefixes hen, pig, fowl and worm?

And the tie-breaker!

Q.11. Which painter created a series of 82 prints entitled 'Los Desastres de Guerra' (The Disasters of War) depicting the atrocities committed by Napoleon's soldiers on the Iberian peninsula?

The answers are given after '...and finally'

*...and finally*

### **Sir David makes voice heard above the rest**

National treasure Sir David Attenborough has the nation's favourite voice, it has emerged.

The 92-year-old broadcaster beat Hollywood great Morgan Freeman to claim the top spot in a survey by Scrivens Opticians & Hearing Care.

Author and comedian Stephen Fry came in third, followed by Dame Judi Dench and former 007, Sir Sean Connery.

Other famous names to make the top 50 list include former US president Barack Obama, movie legend Samuel L. Jackson and the Queen.

Despite Dame Judi's high ranking, the top 20 favourite voices are dominated by men.

Idris Elba, heavily tipped to become the next James Bond, made it to number 11 in the list with Welsh singer Tom Jones close behind.

The top preference for women's voices is soft, upbeat and husky, which fits with the few that made the top 20, including Joanna Lumley OBE and Dame Helen Mirren.

For men, the top preferences are deep, slow and soft.

Donald Trump topped the poll of most annoying voices, closely followed by *Celebrity Juice* host Keith Lemon.

Most people (72 per cent) said they do not like hearing recordings of their own voice and more than half of those polled had judged people solely on their voice.

### **The answers to November's quick quiz**

A.1. True (it served as a bomb shelter during the war)

A.2. A sperm whale

A.3. b) Poland

A.4. Ireland

A.5. Squirrel

A.6. Volcanoes

A.7. Nine (it was the ninth month of the Roman year)

A.8. a) Manchester

A.9. The Winter Palace

A.10. Guinea

And the answer to the tie-breaker!

A.11. Francisco Goya (1746 – 1828)

Thank you for reading the newsletter.

See you again in January 2019.

## **VIC Newsletter supplement: Getting out and about**

### **Geffrye Museum**

#### **Make a Tactile Christmas Wreath**

**FREE event for blind and partially sighted people**

**Sunday 16 December**

**2pm – 4pm (Tea & Coffee from 1.30pm)**

A sensory version of the traditional Christmas wreath to invoke the festive season in your home: the Geffrye Museum's Head Gardener and experienced learning team will use handling and description to guide you through the making process. Mix fresh greenery with sumptuous textiles and festive scents to create a unique handcrafted decoration.

No experience needed, all materials provided.

To book contact Fran Riando at [FRiando@geffrye-museum.org.uk](mailto:FRiando@geffrye-museum.org.uk) or on 020 7749 6041.

The Geffrye Museum of the Home, 136 Kingsland Road, E2 8EA

### **Sir John Soane's Museum**

#### **Audio-described tour**

**Saturday 5 January 2019 – 9am**

Have the museum brought to life through this fully accessible audio-described tour, offering a fascinating insight into Sir John Soane's work, family life and some of the collection highlights. Throughout the tour you will be given the opportunity to touch some of the museum's original artworks. The tour is scheduled for 9am before the museum officially opens to the public and lasts around an hour.

Tickets are limited to two per person.

Tickets can be booked on the link below:

[https://shop.soane.org/products/sir-john-soane-s-museum-audio-described-highlights-tour?\\_ga=2.191276138.1382640701.1540377472-1037600972.1509096389](https://shop.soane.org/products/sir-john-soane-s-museum-audio-described-highlights-tour?_ga=2.191276138.1382640701.1540377472-1037600972.1509096389)

Sir John Soane's Museum, 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC2A 3BP

## **Tate Britain**

### **Audio description events**

**Monday 17 November, 11am – 12.15pm**

#### **The Turner Prize 2018**

A description of entries for this year's Turner Prize.

All four artists nominated for the Turner Prize this year have chosen to submit video works so the exhibition layout is of a large lounge space with sofas from which doors lead into four separate dark screening rooms.

Tate audio describers will take a ten minute dip into each room and using a microphone transmitter and earphones will describe what's happening on screen.

[www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/turner-prize-2018/audio-description-tour-turner-prize-2018](http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/turner-prize-2018/audio-description-tour-turner-prize-2018)

**Monday 17 December, 11am – 12.15pm**

#### **Edward Burne-Jones**

A tour around the highlights of this exhibition of paintings, stained glass, tapestries and even a grand piano decorated by Burne –Jones, a Victorian Pre-Raphaelite artist obsessed with the stories and beauty of medieval history, Arthurian legends, fairy tales and the Annunciation and Nativity.

[www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/edward-burne-jones-audio-description-tour-edward-burne-jones](http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/edward-burne-jones-audio-description-tour-edward-burne-jones)

Refreshments will be available from 10.30am in the Manton Studio.

Tate Britain, Millbank, SW1P 4RG

### **Theatre highlights: audio-described performances**

#### **A Very Very Very Dark Matter**

Saturday 8 December – 2.30pm (Touch Tour time: TBC)

The Bridge Theatre

3 Potters Fields Park, SE1 2SG

Ticket price: £25 (reduced from up to £65)

Bookings: 0333 320 0051

In a townhouse in Copenhagen works Hans Christian Andersen, a teller of exquisite and fantastic children's tales beloved by millions. But the true source of his stories dwells in his attic upstairs, her existence a dark secret kept from the rest of the outside world.

### **Summer and Smoke**

Tuesday 11 December – 7.30pm (Touch Tour time: TBC)

Duke of York's Theatre

St Martin's Lane, WC2N 4BG

Ticket price: £20.83 access and companion ticket

Bookings: 020 7565 6485

Following a critically acclaimed, sold-out run at the Almeida Theatre, Rebecca Frecknall's innovative new production of Tennessee Williams' Summer and Smoke transfers to the West End for a strictly limited season.

### **White Teeth**

Tuesday 11 December – 7.30pm (Touch Tour: 6pm)

Kiln Theatre

269 Kilburn High Road, NW6 7JR

Ticket price: £10.50 - £30.50 (with one personal assistant comp.)

Bookings: 020 7328 1000

Adapted from the novel by Zadie Smith. You're in Kilburn. Melting pot where nothing's actually melted. It's all just kinda stuck together at the bottom in a gooey mess.

### **Macbeth**

Saturday 15 December – 2pm (Touch Tour: 12 noon)

Shakespeare's Globe

21 New Globe Walk

Bankside, SE1 9DT

Ticket price: £5 - £47 (call for concessions)

Bookings: 020 7401 9919

Returning as heroes from the battlefield, Macbeth and Banquo encounter three witches who prophesise that Macbeth will become King of Scotland. When Lady Macbeth learns of this, she compels her husband to murder King Duncan, unleashing a brutal cycle of bloodshed, paranoia and guilt, as the couple do whatever is needed to cling to the crown.

### **Orpheus**

Saturday 15 December – 2.30pm (Touch Tour time: TBC)

Battersea Arts Centre  
Lavender Hill, SW11 5TN  
Ticket price: £15 - £40  
Bookings: 020 7223 2223

A magnificent night out in jazz-era Paris; prepare to be transported to 1930s Paris where legendary musician, Django Reinhardt, has been cast as the lead in a new production of Orpheus.

### **Dick Whittington**

Saturday 15 December – 6pm (Touch Tour: 4pm)

Lyric Hammersmith

Lyric Square

King Street, W6 0QL

Ticket price: From £10

Bookings: 020 8741 6850

A mix of live music, crazy characters, awesome adventure, singing, dancing and heroic goodies with a little bit of feline flavour chucked in for good measure.

### **Approaching Empty**

Saturday 22 December – 7.30pm (Touch Tour time: TBC)

And

Tuesday 22 January – 7.30pm (Touch Tour time: TBC)

Kiln Theatre

269 Kilburn High Road, NW6 7JR

Ticket price: £10 - £32.50 (with one companion)

Bookings: 020 7328 1000

In a scruffy minicab office, Mansha decides it's time to create his own destiny and offers to buy the business from his lifelong friend Raf. As the realities of the state of the company slowly unravel, these two best friends must confront the difficulties of going into business with those closest to them.

Set in the North of England, in the aftermath of Margaret Thatcher's death, this compelling drama lays bare the everyday struggles of a post-industrial generation of British men.

### **Peter Pan**

Saturday 5 January – 3pm (Touch Tour: 1.30pm)

Park Theatre

Clifton Terrace

Finsbury Park, N4 3JP

Ticket price: £18.50 – £32.50 (Concessions £16.50 - £23.50)

Bookings: 020 7870 6876

In 1904 J.M. Barrie premiered one of the greatest adventures to ever play on a theatrical stage. Filled with mermaids, pirates and fairies, lost boys and crocodiles, this is the stunning original story of the boy who could fly.

### **Don Quixote**

Tuesday 8 January – 7.30pm (Touch Tour time: TBC)

Garrick Theatre

2 Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0HH

Ticket price: £25

Bookings: 0330 333 4815

Taking up a lance and sword, Don Quixote sets out on a hilarious journey across medieval Spain, defending the helpless and vanquishing the wicked.

### **Nine Night**

Saturday 12 January – 2.30pm (Touch Tour: 12.30pm)

Trafalgar Studios

14 Whitehall, SW1A 2DY

Ticket price: £25

Bookings: 0800 912 6971

Gloria is gravely sick. When her time comes, the celebration begins; the traditional Jamaican Nine Night Wake. But for Gloria's children and grandchildren, marking her death with a party that lasts over a week is a test: nine rum-fuelled nights of music, food, storytelling and laughter and an endless parade of mourners.

### **Pinter at the Pinter – The Room / Victoria Station / Family Voices**

Saturday 19 January – 2.30pm (Touch Tour time: TBC)

Harold Pinter Theatre

Panton Street, SW1Y 4DN

Ticket price: Check with Box Office

Bookings: 020 7492 0810

An all-too-familiar and frighteningly topical brand of English xenophobia runs through Pinter's first play, The Room.

In the hilarious Victoria Station and the reflective Family Voices, isolated voices attempt to communicate, but can we ever truly express the depths of our feeling?

### **Pinter at the Pinter – Party Time / Celebration**

Saturday 19 January – 7.30pm (Touch Tour time: TBC)

Harold Pinter Theatre

Panton Street, SW1Y 4DN

Ticket price: Check with Box Office

Bookings: 020 7492 0810

Party Time: A scathing and bitterly amusing attack on the increasingly powerful and narcissistic super-rich, set against the backdrop of terrifying state oppression.

Celebration is an irresistible comedy about the vulgarity and ostentatious materialism of the nouveau riche, set in a fashionable London restaurant.

### **The Cane**

Saturday 19 January – 2.30pm (Touch Tour: 1pm)

Royal Court

Sloane Square, SW1W 8AS

Ticket price: £15 (plus a companion ticket at the same rate)

Bookings: 020 7565 5000

After 45 years as a dedicated teacher, Edward is looking forward to the imminent celebration to mark his retirement. But his home is under siege. A mob of angry students have gathered. A brick has been thrown through the window, he and his wife haven't left the house for six days, and now his estranged daughter has arrived with her own questions.

### **Sweat**

Saturday 19 January – 2.30pm (Touch Tour: 1pm)

Donmar Warehouse

41 Earlham Street, WC2H 9LX

Ticket price: £20 - £40 subject to availability (companion goes free)

Bookings: 020 3282 3808

In 2011, Lynn Nottage began spending time with the people of Reading, Pennsylvania: officially one of the poorest cities in the USA.

During the following two years, she dug deep into the forgotten heart of Middle America, finding a city divided by racial tension and the collapse of industry.

### **Doctor Faustus**

Saturday 26 January – 2pm (Touch Tour: 12 noon)

Shakespeare's Globe

21 New Globe Walk  
Bankside, SE1 9DT  
Ticket price: £10 - £24  
Bookings: 020 7401 9919

Doctor Faustus sits in his Wittenberg study, restless for knowledge and frustrated with the limitations of conventional scholarship. Coveting fame and power, he conjures the menacing demon, Mephistopheles, who offers Faustus a deal; in exchange for 24 years of supreme power and service from the demon, Faustus must sacrifice his immortal soul to a fiery Hell.

### **The Tragedy of King Richard The Second**

Saturday 26 January – 2.30pm (Touch Tour: 12.45pm)

Almeida Theatre  
Almeida Street, N1 1TA

Ticket price: Check with Box Office

Bookings: 020 7288 4999

Simon Russell Beale plays Richard II in a visceral new production about the limits of power.

### **How to book**

To make a booking, call the number given against the individual show. Please ensure that you tell the operator you are booking for an audio-described performance, so that you qualify for any ticket discounts and are allocated an appropriate seat.