

# A joyful day in the company of the Great Gatsby

●●● At 3pm an actor enters a stage that is fastidiously designed like a 1930s office and sits at a desk. When his computer won't start, he rifles around the cluttered desk and happens across a copy of *The Great Gatsby*. He begins reading it aloud, in a flat tone: "In my younger and more vulnerable years..." At about half past 10 the same evening he reaches the book's immortal conclusion. The audience rises in appreciation - in one of the few ovations for which I have also unreservedly stood.

This was *Gatz*, the epic production by the New York theatre company, Elevator Repair Service, which ran last week in the Dublin Theatre Festival. The show has been staged in America and around Europe to great acclaim, but a rights dispute meant it was only briefly staged at invitation-only performances in New York. The same problem currently precludes it from the London stage too.

It lasts seven and a half hours, with two intervals and an hour-long dinner break - theatre as cricket match. Mercifully there was free espresso on hand, though barely a moment of the show flagged. Unsurprisingly, it was not a sell-out and the empty seats allowed one to comfortably stretch out.

The actor, Scott Shepherd, reads the entire book, taking on the persona of the novel's narrator, Nick Carraway, with more actors, initially playing surrounding office workers, becoming the other characters. Every single "he said" and "she said" is left in. Shepherd, it seems, knows the entire book by rote - for the final 30 minutes he closes it and recites from memory.

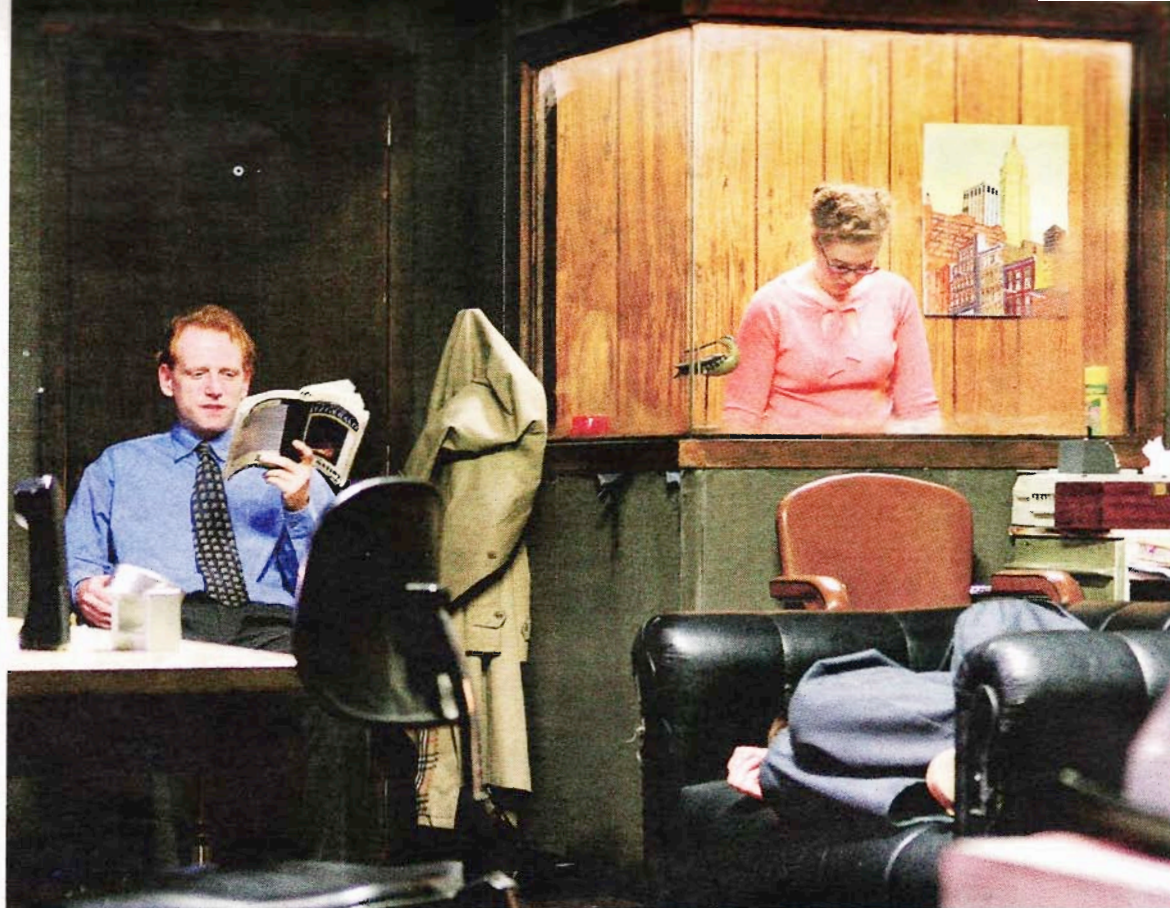
This could be mere event theatre gimmickry or mind-gnawingly boring, but every aspect of the production is so brilliantly conceived and executed that all doubts are overcome. Perhaps there are better ways to spend a weekend. Maybe you could just read the book again, or watch the film, or listen to an audio version. Regardless, for seven and half hours on a day when American politicians struggled to agree on a deal that they claimed would preserve the "American Dream", F Scott Fitzgerald's immaculate portrait of the Roaring Twenties came gloriously alive for me.

**LARRY RYAN**

www.elevator.org; Dublin Theatre festival runs until 12 October (www.dublintheatrefestival.com)

## Eating as artistic experience

●●● You might be used to looking at art installations, but it's not often that you get the chance to



Reading aloud: 'Gatz' saw an office worker reading F Scott Fitzgerald to the audience (above); Ted Hughes (below) AP

eat in one. Yet that's exactly what you can do at "pop-up restaurant" Flash, opening on 1 November for just 80 days, as part of the Royal Academy's GSK Contemporary Arts season.

Designed by architect David Kohn and inspired by co-creator Pablo Flack's idea of "a room within a room, an installation within an exhibition", it will be a temporary structure assembled out of 191 storage crates. Stacked together to resemble the proportions of a panelled room, on one side the plywood boxes will be turned inside-out to display art, rather than to store it.

Art installation aside, quirky touches will abound. From a Giles Deacon Swarovski chandelier featuring metal studs and spikes to graffiti patterns on Wedgewood china by illustrator Will Broome, and gin cocktails served in teapots, it's all a far cry from the restaurant norm.

For former fashion designer Flack and his restaurant-owner partner David Waddington (the brains behind Bethnal Green's Bistrottheque restaurant,) this isn't the first pop-up adventure. Two years ago they opened the sell-out dining room Reindeer, complete with fake snow and a Christmas tree, which, like this one, was here and then gone in a flash.

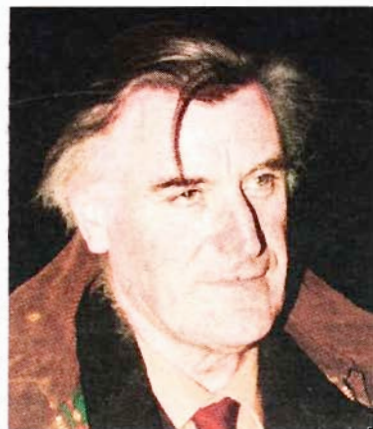
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www.bookflashnow.com

## Inside Ted Hughes' house

●●● It's half past seven in the morning, the thick of the rush hour in London, but on the hills by Hebden things remain quiet. The crowds for the upcoming Ted Hughes festival clearly haven't

made it to town yet. I am staying in Lumb Bank, an 18th-century mill-owner's house, bought by the former poet laureate in 1968. Lodged halfway down a secluded valley, in the house it seems that little has changed since Ted left. Ricketty desks look out



## THE BAROMETER

### What's hot...

#### Concrete and Glass

The new SXSW - in Shoreditch! One hundred hip bands fill east London's warehouses, disused shops and venues (www.concreteandglass.co.uk)

#### Supreme Silverman

Queue up for the acid-tongued, politically incorrect American comedian Sarah Silverman's (right) debut UK show at Hammersmith Apollo on 19 October (0844 844 4748).

#### The Clash

The new, self-titled book, published on Monday by Atlantic, reveals unseen photos of the pioneering punk rockers over the years.

### ...and what's not

#### The Turner Prize

We know, it's boring to moan about it but the mannequins on toilets and crusty porridge bowls are a new low.

#### Keane's rockstar moment

The boy wonders' new single "Spiralling" is pretty good, but the "Did you wanna be famous?" voiceover in the middle? Cringe.

#### Product Placement Bond

Daniel Craig, take note: promoting La Perla trunks = hot, flogging Coke Zero and laptops = not.

