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POP STAR ARIANA GRANDE GETS MARRIED

American pop star Ariana Grande married her luxury real estate agent fiance Dalton Gomez at her home in Los Angeles on Sunday, US media reported Monday. "It was tiny and intimate - less than 20 people. The room was so happy and full of love," a representative for 27-year-old

Grande told People magazine, which confirmed a report from TMZ. "The couple and both families couldn't be happier," the representative said. Grande announced her engagement to Gomez in a December Instagram post that included photos of the pair and her diamond and pearl ring with the

caption "forever n then some." The couple was seen for the first time together in public in a music video for "Stuck with U," a charity song she recorded with Justin Bieber during the coronavirus lockdown in California and released earlier this month. The lyrics of the song refer to the couple spending the lockdown together. The song tells a story familiar to many young couples in the pandemic era-forced to settle down together quickly or be kept apart thanks to virus mitigation restrictions. The experience seemed to have a happy ending for the "thank u next" artist. Grammy-award winning Grande was also engaged to comedic actor Pete Davidson in 2018. And Ariana Grande made headlines outside of the US in 2017 when a stadium concert of hers was the target of a suicide bombing terrorist attack in Manchester, England, leaving 22 people dead and hundreds injured. — AFP

In this file photo US singer-songwriter Ariana Grande performs during the 62nd Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles. — AFP



This handout photo taken on Monday and received from Yokosuka City yesterday shows 60 million yen (\$550,850 USD) in cash donated by an elderly man anonymously to Yokosuka City, Kanagawa prefecture. — AFP

Special delivery: Man donates \$550,000 in cash to Japan city

An elderly Japanese man has anonymously donated his life's savings-in cash-to a city outside of Tokyo, an unexpected financial windfall as the economy reels from the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic. The man, who did not identify himself, appeared at city hall in Yokosuka on Monday and asked that a backpack with a letter inside be given to the mayor, the official who met him told AFP. "We found 60

million yen (\$550,850) in cash inside and a letter saying 'This is the money I've been saving since the first grade. Please make use of it. It's a donation,'" said the official. The man appeared to be in his 70s or 80s and declined to give his name, saying he wanted to stay anonymous. "We've never received such a big donation from an anonymous person," the official added. Mayor Katsuaki Kamiji said in a statement he was "surprised and moved" by the donation, particularly during the hardship of the pandemic. "I'm speechless and full of gratitude," he said. Japan is no stranger to anonymous donors. Last year, a man appeared at the Nara city hall with a bag filled with 30 million yen in cash. He left a note inside saying he wanted the money to be used to help the poor and fund education, according to local media. And elsewhere last year, a hospital in Kobe received five million yen in cash sent by mail by an anonymous donor. — AFP

Yes we cancan: Moulin Rouge to return in September

The Moulin Rouge in Paris will be high-kicking its way back on stage in September, it announced with a flourish on Monday, after the longest shut down in more than a century. The first cancan of

the post-pandemic era is due to take place on September 10 under the iconic windmill in Montmartre. Twelve dancers, in matching masks and feathers, braved the morning chill outside the Moulin Rouge on Monday to reveal the opening date stitched into their dresses, much to the surprise of passing motorists on the Boulevard de Clichy. "I'm extremely happy," said 32-year-old dancer Mathilde Tutiaux. "It feels so good to finally have a date. We are desperate to see our audiences again. The first cancan of the restart will be something else. It's a very technical number and after a break of more than a year, we will have to rehearse very hard this summer." Like the other 60 members of the cast, Tutiaux was forced to train alone at home during the shutdown, using her

kitchen work surface to stretch. The Moulin Rouge has been shut since March 12, 2020 — the longest closure since the theatre was destroyed by fire in 1915. "Today, the planets are aligning. We are pleased to be working on this restart," said Jean-Victor Clerico, director general of the Moulin Rouge. "If everything goes well, there won't be any distancing even inside. There are still some unknown factors. If one-meter (three feet) distancing is still needed, we will have to reduce capacity to 50 percent." The other renowned centers of Parisian "nude chic" will reopen around the same time: Crazy Horse on September 9 and Le Lido on September 16. With infection rates falling and vaccine rates rising, France is set to reopen many cultural sites today after a six-month shutdown that began during the

second wave of the pandemic in late October only to be extended through the spring as a third wave hit the country. The Moulin Rouge at the foot of Montmartre opened at the height of Belle Epoque Paris in 1889, quickly associated with the wild cancan dance and immortalized in the paintings of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. It has lived many lives, rebuilt after the fire, surviving through World War II, its boards graced by legends from Edith Piaf to Charles Aznavour, and then getting another global boost with the release of the 2001 eponymous film starring Nicole Kidman and Ewan McGregor. Today, it remains a favorite with tourists, who account for half its business in normal times. — AFP

THE SHOW GOES ON FOR UK THEATRES AS COVID RULES EASE

The curtain went up again in Britain's theatres this week, after a year of closure due to the coronavirus pandemic, bringing hopes of recovery for the beleaguered culture sector. College lecturer Denise O'Brien, 49, seized the opportunity to visit London's Bridge Theatre on Monday, as restrictions on indoor mixing were finally eased. "It's a really controlled environment. I've always loved the theatre-the industry is going to die if we don't go," she told AFP. Heather Alderson, a 56-year-old advertising employee, braved a downpour and booked an hour off work to visit a theatre for the first time in more than 12 months. "You can get narrative from anywhere, but nothing beats theatre in its immersiveness and the fact that it's live," she said. Agatha Christie's "The Mousetrap"-the world's longest-running play-returned to St Martin's Theatre in London's West End entertainment district on Monday. A special concert production of "Les Miserables" takes centre stage at the Sondheim Theatre from Thursday, while "A Midsummer Night's Dream" returns to Shakespeare's Globe from Wednesday.

'A mixed picture'
Thousands of jobs were threatened as theatres were shut and Britain lurched from one period of restrictions to another throughout 2020. But despite the reopening, many larger venues will not welcome back theatregoers immediately as social distancing requirements mean some shows are not profitable. Julian Bird, chief executive of the Society of London Theatre and UK Theatre, welcomed the changes, even though only one-third of West End theatres plan to reopen straightaway. "We are desperate to have everything open, but it's fantastic that we can open in parts," he told AFP. "It gets audiences back into theatres and, crucially, provides employment for people in our sector." Bird previously warned that 70 percent of theatres would go bust by the end of 2020 without state support, while a study for the Creative Industries Federation predicted 200,000 job losses without government intervention. Now he remains optimistic about British theatre's future and the international primacy of the West End, which drew over 15 million visitors and generated revenues of almost £800 million (\$1.1 billion, 928 million euros) in 2019. "It's a mixed picture but not nearly as bad as it looked like being," he said. "We've learned a lot about COVID and I'm proud we have this safety mark for theatres. The pipeline of production is coming through and new shows are opening. That creativity and flair hasn't gone at all." Although government support has kept organizations afloat, some people have fallen through gaps in the safety net. Freelancers make up an estimated 70 percent of theatre workers and were hit hard by lockdowns due to their fragile employment status. Freelance lighting designer Robbie Butler, 27, worked in the West End before the pandemic and received self-employment income support. —AFP



Dancers from the Moulin Rouge cabaret, wearing French cancan outfits, pose for photographers in Paris, to announce the cabaret's reopening next September 10. — AFP photos



Dancers from the Moulin Rouge cabaret, wearing French cancan outfits, pose for photographers.

Dutch slavery exhibition confronts brutal past

A set of leg irons that once chained slaves by the ankles for punishment. A pair of Rembrandt portraits of a rich Dutch couple dressed in slavery-funded finery. Dozens of objects like these went on show yesterday at the Dutch national Rijksmuseum as it opens a landmark exhibition on slavery highlighting the Netherlands' dark colonial past. Focusing on the stories of 10 people ranging from enslaved people to slave owners, the show covers 250 years of Dutch involvement in slavery in Suriname, Brazil, the Caribbean, Asia and South Africa. Curators at the

museum in Amsterdam say they want to start a "better conversation" in a country still reckoning with its role in colonialism, and with questions raised by the Black Lives Matter movement last year. "This is national history, not just for a small group but for every one of us," Valika Smeulders, head of the Rijksmuseum history department, told AFP during a preview. "The colonial past is an important element in our national history. So it was timely, as it was not done before, to present an exhibition on slavery." In a sign of the changing times, Dutch King Willem-Alexander will formally opened the exhibition yesterday. It will open to the public as soon as coronavirus measures are lifted for museums, but be viewable immediately online and for school parties. **Burned to death** Called simply "Slavery", the exhibit traces the 10 individual stories using both objects from the Rijksmuseum's collection-some never seen before-and from other museums. But it also uses songs and oral sources, which visitors listen to on an audio tour, to fill the gaps where no records exist. "They tell about people who had to leave their children behind, or they feel they're treated as tools and not human beings," said Eveline Sint Nicolaas, senior curator in

the history department. One story is that of Wally, a slave on the Palmeneribo plantation in Suriname, who took part in a slave revolt in 1707 and escaped but was then recaptured and burned to death. Paintings of slaves on the plantation sit



Items displayed at the exhibition "Slavery" at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

alongside a manuscript detailing Wally's interrogation by slave owners. Like the other stories in the exhibition, his tale is told in the audiotour by someone with a connection-in his case Dutch former world champion kickboxer Remy Bonjasky, whose ancestors are believed to have fled the same plantation. Elsewhere sit the austere portraits of affluent Amsterdammer Oopjen Coppit and her husband Marten Soolmans, which they commissioned legendary artist Rembrandt to paint in 1634. Soolmans' family made a fortune from a sugar refinery supplied by slave plantations in Brazil. After he died, Oopjen remarried to a man who had once kept slaves in Brazil. "We know Oopjen had several links with slavery and that's also very interesting," said Sint Nicolaas. "It really affected Dutch society in many ways, it wasn't history that just happened far away in the colonies."



same time you see that in the public debate it is a very important subject," said Smeulders. The Rijksmuseum is itself also confronting the role of slavery in the "Golden Age" of Dutch art that it houses, adding extra information to 80 objects in its permanent collection to highlight "hidden links to slavery", it said. The Netherlands has never formally apologized for its role in the slave trade. But Prime Minister Mark Rutte admitted last year in the wave of the Black Lives Matter protests that racism remained a problem in the Netherlands. The time is now right for the Rijksmuseum to address the issue, said Smeulders. "Yes, you could even say that we should have done this earlier. But when we decided to do this, we wanted to do it well," she said. — AFP



A man visits the exhibition "Slavery" at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. — AFP photos

