

'Tis the season to be jolly.... there's good news for FTA!

It's not (yet) the reinstatement of the Redgrave, (shame!) or even a plan to build an exciting new replacement (shame!). Is it an end to the East Street pantomime? Not that, either. Although we all dearly want to see that farrago of bad taste and dated monument to commercialism put behind us. If only we *could* cry 'It's behind you!'

No, the good news for your FTA is that we have achieved a significant boost to our funding from Grassroots, a government funded support agency. Now, with this much-needed increase in revenue, FTA can expand and improve its website to carry more detail and useful information such as the history of the Redgrave and Castle Theatres, past Press Releases and a great deal more.

The funding is specifically earmarked to help us develop improved communications, however you will appreciate that it is limited - more is always urgently needed to enable us to create improved printed matter including the mailed newsletters as well as other new campaign materials.



Congratulations to Mike Mitchell, (our Treasurer), Joe Michel (funding adviser) and of course our Chairman, Anne Cooper who together put forward the funding proposal and presented to Grassroots – and a special thank you to the Rev. Andrew Tuck, rector of Farnham Parish Church who agreed to be our referee.

Some towns and cities DO value their theatres



Go to www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2008/oct/07/theatre.bristol.old.vic

It's tremendous news that Bristol's Old Vic Theatre has been saved since being abruptly closed in 2007. For more information, there's a very interesting blog by Lynn Gardner on the Guardian website with detail about the re-opening and the relationship between the theatre, the Arts Council and Bristol's City Council too.

Other people can and do get their local theatre saved, or a new one built. They achieve their great aims and we can too. It's not impossible. Remember, we are not alone in our fight.

Another great success is at the Cambridge Arts Theatre where Dave Murphy is the Artistic Director.



Objecting passionately to the Arts Council dictating to him the nature of the productions he had to stage, he was compelled to forego their subsidy simply to rise clear of what he saw as a narrow and unacceptable yoke. Now devising a creative programme of his own, he has developed a hugely successful theatre in this city.

It's to be hoped that, in the New Year, we can arrange a meeting for all members with a visit to Farnham from this inspirational Director to give us all his story about the Cambridge Arts Theatre and how it prospers.



And consider the brand new and wonderfully designed Curve Theatre in Leicester with its two auditoria! The result of an inspired £multi-million expansion plan for the Arts quarter of that city.

Opportunities with the University for the Creative Arts?

Early discussion with the newly expanded University – the UCA – about closer working is proving very encouraging. The University certainly recognise the potential of the Redgrave in this area, for its students across so many disciplines.

Their expanding range of studies does mean there would be synergy between their future needs and what FTA might be able to help deliver to them. We'll keep you posted on developments.

A new Cultural Strategy from Waverley

Waverley Borough Council has issued their proposals for reviewing and updating the 2003-2008 Cultural Strategy, which was set up involving consultation with 549 voluntary clubs and 657 households. Recently there was full consultation on Sports and Leisure Centre facilities **but this time the public is not being asked for their views for the arts.** Only 17 organisations have been contacted and many people will just not be aware of what is on offer or of what is at stake.

The range of organisations which have already been consulted does include the New Farnham Repertory Actors' Company, but FTA have only been invited to participate because we asked! There is scant reference to theatre in the document, except for the grand-sounding Waverley Theatre Forum, the group set up by Cllr. Roger Steel to help amateur societies to work together more effectively. In no way does that support professional live theatre and its aspiration to provide excellence nor does it ask the public what it thinks of what is on offer.

A new Cultural Strategy from Waverley...continued

Having a Cultural Strategy is not a mandatory element for a Council. But you would think, would you not, that a focus on the Arts would be a wise and valuable counterbalance to have as part of your Council's Offer to the public who elected you?

If you too feel that this is wrong, please write to Waverley Borough Council, the Burys, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1HR for the attention of Kevin Mills, Head of Leisure. In considering a Cultural Strategy, tell him they need to focus on the Consumer and not solely on not those existing organisations who receive Council grant support. Tell them that it's a basic tenet of market research that **Understanding Needs must always start with the Consumer, not the Supplier.**

The East Street saga rolls on...

A developer of substance?

Despite smooth words emanating from WBC including protestations that Crest Nicholson is a wholly financially sound organisation with whom to effect a lasting partnership, common sense -and all the media - tell us clearly that property developers are in a sorry state, a precarious position. That must include CNS, so the question remains: should your Council be proceeding with a commercial organisation that may fail? Will Sainsbury plc be able to prop them up?

How has FTA 's website performed?

The answer to that question is: remarkably well in that we have about 1,400 hits per month to the website with an increase to well over 2,000 in October, probably due to the AGM, the Waverley approval of the East Street plans and FTA contact with UCA students. So from its beginning in February this year it has become a recognised source of news and information for many.

The statistics we track all tell a similar tale of increases since launch - we are getting more 'Unique Visitors' each month, generating a steady stream of visits by those unique visitors as well as an increasing trend to the number of pages seen each month. It's very encouraging.

There is a plethora of web statistics available which just stop short of describing what the viewer was wearing when they visited the site! Other than the UK we have visitors from across Europe (Belgium figures highly for some reason?), USA and Canada.

Given the Grassroots funding, mentioned earlier, we can now implement the plans to expand and improve the site overall to make it more useful, more attractive to the eye and more valuable to all those who go there.

The Winslow Boy at Salisbury Playhouse

Salisbury - here's another City with an exceptionally loved, well-supported theatre. And what is more, the new season in 2009 includes our own Abigail McKern, a director of FTA and professional actress, playing in Terence Rattigan's *The Winslow Boy*. As the mother in this renowned play, she will be performing alongside Philip Franks (another FTA supporter), with the Playhouse's own Artistic Director, Philip Wilson directing the production.

Performances run from 29 January to 21 February.

For more details and to book, go to www.salisburyplayhouse.com

Abigail McKern



New ideas?

Your FTA is always open to new ideas and opportunities to develop and help the cause, new ways to generate additional revenue to help it fight its corner, so if you have a suggestion or feel that there is some avenue we should explore as a campaigning organisation, then do please let us know. Contact the Editor below or the Chairman, full contact details are below.

Apologies

To those of you who expected us to see us involved with the Christmas Fair last month at the United Reformed Church Hall in South Street, we offer our apologies. Because of unforeseen circumstances we had to withdraw.

The Fair we hear was successful without our stall, so, good news for them.



We're not the first to wish you a Merry Christmas but to all our supporters, a very heartfelt thank-you for your unwavering support and encouragement. Let's wish all of us a wonderful Christmas, a Happy New Year and, always, for better news about The Redgrave and East Street!

Editor: Mike Silver 01252 725263 Note new email address: mike.s@farnhamtheatre.co.uk

FTA Chairman: Anne Cooper cooperstudio@mac.com 4 Nutshell Lane, Upper Hale, Farnham, GU9 0HG

Treasurer: mmitchell465@btinternet.com Hartside, Back Lane, Bucks Horn Oak, Farnham, GU10 4LW

The Farnham Theatre Association Limited is a company limited by guarantee.

Registered in England No. 6250927