

Theatres' Archive

Farnham Theatres' Archive Association - now that this group has disbanded and the archive handed over to FTA for safe keeping at Farnham Museum. It is intended to view this archive material, on 10 May. The hope is that we may be able to make it more visible to the public; in subsequent newsletters we will bring you more details and photos.



Jeremy Hardy speaks out!

freezing cold dressing room at the back as well as the cold in the foyer too, wondering what kind of venue this was meant to be that didn't look after performers or audiences.

It was wonderful to hear Jeremy urge the audience "to rise up with your pitchforks and demand that this theatre is returned to the people".

Farnham educated Jeremy Hardy performed his one-man show at Farnham Maltings earlier this month. Right at the start, he railed in his inimitable forthright style against the

Later on, during this great show, he said he was amazed that the Redgrave - where he first appeared - is still dark.

Thanks Jeremy; we need more people with passion and spirit!

Update on Farnham's Community Play

Rupert Creed has been approved as artistic director of the Farnham play which is expected to be produced in 2012, subject to funding.



Rupert Creed



Rupert has worked for over 25 years as a professional playwright and theatre director. He was co-founder and artistic director of Hull-based Remould Theatre Company for 16 years, specialising in writing and directing stage plays in partnership with groups and organisations in the local community. He wrote a series of 'oral history' documentary plays based on the working lives of local fishermen, nurses, social workers, the police, and journalists. He has also written and directed large cast community plays for Howden, Hull and Bridlington, and Dorchester in Dorset. He has also directed large cast musicals at HMP Everthorpe and the Wolds Prison in East Yorkshire.

Farnham Rep's Summer Season

Beginning from July 13 sees the start of *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas, directed by the renowned Maurice Thorogood who brings a new and distinct vision to this much-loved play. Dylan Thomas's small Welsh village and Farnham's sprawling streets may seem miles apart in make up as well as distance, but *Under Milk Wood* shows a common thread of character, idiosyncrasies and human baseness which binds both settings equally. It's a bawdy tale of the human condition; a bawdy tale of everyday folk. Don't miss it! Tickets available soon for this Summer season to be at the United Reformed Church, Farnham.



Stop press

17 July - An evening with Simon Cole and Victoria Newlyn bringing these two much loved and superbly talented play ers back to Farnham.

July 24 - Stefan Bednarczyk, back by popular demand, presents his sell-out one man show on Flanders and Swann.

Is there a budding Treasurer out there able to help FTA?

For personal reasons our current Treasurer has to move on so we are looking for someone with a financial background able to work with us who also supports our aims. If you would like to help us then initially please contact Anne Cooper on 01252 716394.

Editor: Mike Silver 01252 725263 mike.s@farnhamtheatre.co.uk

FTA Chairman: Anne Cooper; anne.cooper@farnhamtheatre.co.uk 4 Nutshell Lane, Upper Hale, Farnham, GU9 0HG Treasurer: mike.mitchell@farnhamtheatre.co.uk Hartside, Back Lane, Bucks Horn Oak, Farnham, GU10 LW
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A Tale of Two Cities *Revisited*. More similarities and yet more sharp differences.



Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich

The Maddermarket is housed in an attractive converted chapel with Tudor origins and workshop outbuildings and is celebrating its 90th year as a theatre. Its company of amateur actors has a professional artistic director and the management of the theatre is run by paid staff with some volunteer help.

Our chairman, Anne Cooper paid a visit to the 300 seat Maddermarket recently to see how it is coping in the present financial climate. In 2006 theatre consultant, Michael Holden identified it in the FTA Theatre Report as a model as a successful non-funded small theatre.

Anne was shown round by a Board member who explained that the theatre is surviving well, despite concerns that sponsorship could diminish over the next few years. However, ticket sales are currently providing enough income to cover costs. The theatre company yearly puts on 10 -11 of their own shows with a quarter of the year available for hire of the premises by touring productions or community groups. Education projects bring in some funding from the local council, but the overall picture is one of resilient self-sufficiency.



Theatre courtyard with work in progress



Maddermarket auditorium

Note: The plan for a Farnham theatre is not exactly like the Maddermarket, which has no paid actors. The balance is different - the Farnham plan is more for professional productions with a small core of paid management staff but supported by volunteers.

We will be highlighting other towns with theatres old or new, in the months to come to show how successful they can be and how they are supported

A Community Theatre - support continues to grow.

Supporters for the FTA's campaign to bring in a community theatre gains ground. More and more people from Farnham and from outlying towns and villages are very supportive of our campaign.

What is the aim? We want to see a theatre in the town with a lively programme of mixed entertainment: seasons of professional plays interspersed with community productions of drama, music and dance with educational projects, business and social events in the mix – something for the whole town.

Recent joiners lending their weight to the campaign include Opera South, Farnham Rep, Grayshott Stagers, Elstead PETS, Rushmoor Male Voice Choir, Farnham Voices.

These organisations join those already registered which include The Waverley Singers, Farnham Stagecoach, Farnham Shakespeare Company, Hart Male Voice Choir, Alder Valley Brass and Surrey Border Film and Video Makers.

(continues...)

The larger groups are interested in using a Farnham venue to further their work and to raise money for charity, while the smaller groups support us with 'hearts and minds' and an interest in participating in drama, arts and music festivals.

“Farnham and nearby towns and villages have the necessary population to support a thriving theatre. Opera South would be willing to bring productions, some of which have been acclaimed in the national pressto a venue which provided a larger seating capacity than its present home...” **Opera South**

So, amateur theatre companies seek smaller venues with around 150 seats while operatic groups need a large orchestra pit, preferring an auditorium capable of seating up to 400; both need high tech facilities. Schools need flexible performance spaces with simpler, low-tech facilities.

It is illuminating indeed that these stated requirements seem similar to those features and facilities offered by the Redgrave when it was first designed - an auditorium seating for 364 with a separate studio theatre! That too was state-of-the art in so many ways when it first opened.

The business case for a community theatre in Farnham is modelled on other successful venues of this kind, but is custom-built to suit our local circumstances. You can see this professionally produced plan at:

<http://www.farnhamtheatre.co.uk/TheatreReport.html>

After the Bank holiday on April 29 we will be back in the Surrey and Hants office (next to Laura Ashley) in the Lion and Lamb Yard, Farnham every Friday between 10.00am and 3.00pm right through until the middle of June. We welcome you or your group's representatives to call in and discuss a community theatre with us.



We're open! Kika Mirylees visits the shop

See more details about the community theatre campaign and the flyer to complete at:

<http://www.farnhamtheatre.co.uk/Events.html>

We continue to build responses and would welcome any further feedback from individuals or organisations who may yet not have been approached.

May Elections



The list of councillors standing for election is out. FTA is writing to each one to ask them for their goodwill for our campaign for a community theatre for the town to serve its residents and visitors, to bring much-needed investment income back into the town and to revitalize the evening economy.

We urge you to add your names to the growing list demanding action and to specifically ask each of the councillors in your ward for their views on the Arts and Culture in this town.

To find their contact names and address details, go to:

<http://www.waverley.gov.uk/elections>



Arts Council funding

Arts Council England has announced its funding overhaul which has drastically affected so many organisations across the whole spectrum of the Arts.

In some cases established companies with impressive records like Exeter Northcott theatre and Derby theatre will now receive nothing while some new fledgling companies will get grants to help them prosper. These include HighTide Festival Theatre and Birmingham's live art Fierce festival.

It probably was a thankless task to distribute a seriously reduced overall sum to the very many deserving organisations, without causing great distress and hardship to many.

However, it has been said before that the logic of reducing investment in the arts is radically flawed:

"For every £1 that the Arts Councils invest, an additional £2 is generated from elsewhere totalling £3 income". **Stephen Spence**, Assistant General Secretary, Live Performance and Organising, **Equity**, see the fuller article in newsletter no.25 on Arts spending.

Natalie Woolman in the lead article in *The Stage* on 31 March said of Arts Council funding: **"MPs attack ACE on the eve of funding overhaul**. The report claimed cuts could be 'disastrous' for the arts but says the culture world should "share the burden of public sector savings". However, the committee warned that ACE could be exposed to criticism that its funding decisions...are "flawed".

In response to the surprising news that the Arts Council is giving over £2m to the Maltings, our chairman wrote this letter to the Farnham Herald.



Anne Cooper

Dear Sir,

It has to be good news that the Arts Council has decided theatre in the South East should receive better funding and that Farnham Maltings should be a beneficiary, (Herald 8 May). But, what exactly can the Farnham public expect from this surprisingly generous £2 million over a four year period?

Some may be fooled into thinking that it will settle for once and all, that the campaign for theatre in the town has been answered. However, unless there is a building in the town with adequate facilities for stage productions, the situation will remain much as it is now. Very small companies will continue to make infrequent visits to the Maltings, where the facilities still lack much that is required for effective theatre presentation.

The plan for the £2 million is to support touring companies across the South East to towns which have real theatres: the Brighton Dome, the Oxford Playhouse, the Theatres Royal in Portsmouth and Margate, for example. Unfortunately, at present Farnham cannot offer anything to match these venues and will only be able to host minimal productions – unless a magic wand is to be waved over the Maltings buildings.

The newly issued report from the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee "Funding of the arts and heritage" is useful here in illustrating the importance of theatre buildings at this time. In interview with the Committee, the Chief Executive of the Theatre Royal, Bath, makes the point that touring companies are frequently seeking theatre bases in order to open their shows and to share management resources. The conclusions of the report also state that "The Arts Council should encourage arts organisations to build on their core audiences, but should notrelentlessly pursue people who are not interested in the arts."

Here in Farnham we have a core audience for theatre which is still being short-changed. The Farnham Theatre Association, now supported by several significant local community groups, continues to campaign for theatre facilities of which the town can be really proud.

Yours faithfully,

Anne Cooper (FTA Chairman)

The East Street development and the access road for construction traffic - a farrago modelled on Alice's Adventures in Wonderland?

"Waverley Councillors in their wisdom, have now decided to approve a scheme to put Crest Nicholson's construction traffic over a bridge from the A31 Farnham Bypass onto the site, despite local traffic experts advice that this will cause maximum disruption on the bypass, leading to drivers cutting through the town instead.

However, County Highways and Waverley prefer to stick to the myth that this will not happen, leaving Crest Nichol

son worried that if serious traffic problems emerge in Farnham, together with the loss of tree cover on the bypass, potential funders of their scheme might have second thoughts about buying into the development.

East Street campaigners are keen to get the facts out into the public arena and will be seeking the views of traders and residents."