



AGM 9 September 2014

Chairman's Report to March 2014 and beyond

- **In the Beginning**

I was at a business networking event arranged by *inStreatham* in Dec 2012 and talking about what I do – producing and staging amateur, community and fringe theatre, with rehearsal space and workshop here at Vinters.

People were interested in theatre but pointed out there was no theatre or theatre group in Streatham. This is despite its heritage as the 'west end of south London' with the Streatham Hill Theatre, the Astoria (now the Odeon), plus a dance hall and cinemas; and local talent such as June Whitfield, Simon Callow, David Harewood and many more.

The next night was Streatham Festival's 2013 partner event so I went along and came away committed to a new group being formed to put theatre back into Streatham, and performing at the festival in July 2013.

- **Start-up and Launch**

We formed a steering group of local friends with theatre experience, and others who answered our call for help. Big thanks to everyone who helped out – most of you are here.

We chose our name which 'does what it says on the tin' (and you'll find that there's almost the word *theatre* in *Streatham*).

Our aims were defined:

- a) *to promote the performing arts;*
- b) *to produce and promote performing arts productions;*
- c) *to provide performing arts and social facilities;*
- d) *to encourage high standards of the performing arts, through providing opportunity, experience, skills transfer, practice, training, education and other means;*
- e) *to provide access and opportunity for all as participants [18+] and audiences; for the benefit of the community of the Streatham area, where 'performing arts' includes, but is not limited to, all aspects of theatre and related arts and crafts.*

The group set up all the admin we needed for an unincorporated association; a constitution; committee; bank account; membership procedures (18+) and subs; and publicity, mainly online via website, Facebook, Twitter, email etc.

Lord (Michael) Grade agreed to be our Patron (the Grade family have links to Streatham)

We put together a programme for the first 6 months – an important part being a regular monthly event open to all to build a community – readings, workshops etc – as well as productions.

We applied for start-up funding from Streatham Action which we received with grateful thanks to all involved.

We held our launch in April at The Stables at the White Lion (thanks to them for the room and a deal on the wine!). We had nearly 50 people come along to hear our plans and suggest what we could do. Several people joined up on the spot – at only £10 a year (we did an offer of an extra three months free for those who paid up there and then).

Since then STC has been very busy – here are some of the highlights to date (so not just for the year ending March 2014).

- **Events**

Since then have held our regular events on the second Tuesday of every month plus some extras, supported by local theatre practitioners who have willingly given their time and expertise. These have covered a wide range of workshops and readings – Liz will tell us more later.

- **Community Events**

- Stalls at Kite Day (2013 & 14), Lambeth Country Show (2013 & 14), Streatham UnCommon (2014) staffed by members, attracting much interest and growing the mailing list.
- Input into Streatham Tate Library and Tudor Hall renovations to propose that the space be flexible and usable for theatre and a wide range of other activities.
- Input into a London Assembly report on the challenges of small theatres in London.
- Reports to Streatham Action

- **Productions**

- *Then and Now*, for the Festival in July 2013. Following the Festival theme of *The Glamour Days of Streatham*, this was based around poems from local writer Brenda Hargreaves, with newly written dramatic responses and classic jazz songs. Performed in the glamorous 1920s Streatham Hill Theatre, once our west end theatre and now Beacon Bingo – albeit in the circle foyer (the original stage is hidden under the bingo!).
- We also supported the popular behind the scenes tour at Streatham Hill Theatre, arranged by Streatham Society and lead by Brian Bloice.
- *On the Air*, November 2013. A new experience for us, building on great interest and enjoyment in improvising and devising actions and dialogue. So we took a Sherlock Holmes radio script as a core, and built a show around it, creating the actors and production team, and their actions in a stressful live radio broadcast. We also worked with Beacon Bingo to create a small stage area, useable by us and others in future.
- *The Playing with Sugar* project gathered reminiscences of Streatham and devised a production based on them for performance at the re-opening of the renovated Streatham Tate Library and Tudor Hall at the end of our first year in March 2014. This was the first theatre production staged in the new hall. The audiences enjoyed revisiting some memories of Streatham in dramatic form. The interviews have been written up on our blog and have also sparked interest from around the area.
- *Streatham Festival 2014*. Taking the festival theme of “Street of my imagination” we selected a scripted play *Neighbourhood Watch* by well-loved playwright Alan Ayckbourn (requiring special permission from his agent) for two performances in July. An excellent cast left audiences impressed by the quality of the production and enjoying the humour and satire of the play.

- Created *Show in a Suitcase*, a flexible 'kit-bag' show that can be formed (almost) anywhere. Taking scenes from *Then and Now* and *Playing with Sugar* its first outing was last weekend's *Ferrers' Triangle Street Party*. Expect to see more soon.

- **Moving on**

- We are continuing the regular second Tuesday events and other extra events, which are important to maintain an ongoing community...
- And to run stalls at events such as Lambeth Country Show, Kite Day, and Streatham UnCommon, and other local events such as street parties, to spread the work and build membership. I'm also giving a talk to Streatham Society in November about STC.
- A Halloween 2014 production at Streatham Hill Theatre (Beacon Bingo) where a late night guided tour of the theatre stumbles upon the ghosts and former artistes on their one opportunity to return and perform on *All Hallows* weekend.
- A January 2015 Pantomime, which is likely to be our most adventurous production yet – *oh yes it is!*
- Planning for these next two productions continues after this meeting.
- We envisage further productions of the order of 3 or 4 a year, including for next year's Festival.

- **Members and Friends**

We now have about **60 members** plus about 600 on our **email/Facebook/Twitter** list, and continuing to grow. Some members are completely new to theatre and several have made their stage debut with STC. Others have amateur and professional experience which they share with others. If you have a skill you'd be willing to share through a workshop or similar please let us know.

Terry will say a bit more about membership shortly, but one message from me is:

If your membership has recently come up for renewal, we ask you to please renew. Your subs will help us continue to create and perform theatre in Streatham, and bring theatre skills to Streatham's locals. It also gets you concessionary rates at our events and shows. So far all our workshops have been free to everyone, but as our grant funding comes to an end we'll need to start making a small charge to non-members to cover costs. Subscriptions will remain at the low rate of £10 per annum for the time being.

- **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I'd like to express our great thanks to everyone who provided support and encouragement from all around Streatham – Streatham Action, inStreatham, Streatham Society, Streatham Festival, Music4Children, The Stables/White Lion, Friends of Streatham Common, Friends of Streatham Library, Beacon Bingo, Vinters Studios, and all those who have provided their time and expertise to run our workshops. Plus of course our committee, members, patron, followers, and audiences – with apologies to anyone I've left out.

You have all contributed to putting theatre into Streatham.

Thank you

David Harvey

Chairman, 9 September 2014