



AGM 18 June 2015

Chairman's Report April 2015 to March 2016 and beyond

- **David Evans**

We were shocked and saddened to hear of the sudden death of STC stalwart David Evans at the beginning of the year. David acted in our very first show *Then and Now*, and became an established part of the company, often seemingly type-cast as a 'creepy old man' in our shows! He went on to act with other companies too, and taking acting and directing courses. I discovered that David had been to same university as me around the same time though we had not met. He was the third David from UEA in the company! David was a lovely, kind and friendly man always willing to help others and we will miss him greatly.

- **Highlights**

As we move into our fourth year, it's been another busy and successful year for STC. We are an established part of the Streatham community.

- **Events**

We have held our regular events on the second Tuesday of the 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, seminars, talks, visits and readings – we have more details from Helen later.

We also had our regular stall at Kite Day 2016, staffed by volunteer members, attracting much interest and growing the mailing list. We did not attend the Lambeth Country Show this year as the costs are prohibitive.

- **Productions**

- *Streatham Festival 2015*. Taking the festival theme of "Coming of Age" we selected a scripted play *Breaking the Code* about Alan Turing the homosexual mathematician behind breaking the WW2 German Enigma code and developing the first computers. We had an excellent cast and well-staged production which impressed audiences.
- *A rehearsed reading version of Breaking the Code went 'on tour' to St. Leonards-on-Sea (Turing's home in his early schooldays) and Tooting Library.*
- Our Halloween 2015 production was *The Devil Rides Back* at Streatham Hill Theatre (thanks to Beacon Bingo). Denis Wheatley, the author of the super-natural book (and film) *The Devil Rides Out* once lived in Streatham, so a story was devised about devil worshippers in the basement of the theatre getting caught up in the story of the death of an actress featured in last year's show. This was enjoyed by everyone present and we were asked to do an extra tour for Beacon Bingo's Gala Night.

- Although strictly speaking in the year 2016-17, we staged rehearsed readings of Alan Bennett's *Talking Heads* on consecutive Mondays in May in a new venue for us, The Manor arms (in this very room). Again these performances were well received.
- We have tried using rehearsed readings this year as a way of putting on more performances more quickly and enable us to take theatre to more informal spaces. Results have been mixed in terms of attracting audiences so we will need to review how we go about this. Maybe the industry term 'rehearsed reading' is not well recognized?

- **Moving on**

- We are constantly looking ahead to our future programme of productions. We envisage continuing to stage 3 or 4 productions a year, including the 2016 Streatham Festival and a pantomime in early 2017.
- This year we have two productions underway for the Streatham Festival. A Shakespeare-themed tour of Streatham Hill Theatre (for Shakespeare's 400th anniversary of his death) plus a classic 1980's farce set in Streatham (and Wimbledon) *Run for Your Wife* by south Londoner Ray Cooney. Tickets for both are now on sale via the website – we advise booking early!
- 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 Kite Day, take part in the Streatham Festival, and other local events, to spread the word and build membership.
- We have many ideas and suggestions about what to do and where to do it – there are some interesting outdoor sites suitable for site-specific shows for example. What we also need are organisers/directors/producers to drive forward these ideas and turn them into reality. At the moment we can only really run one production after another in series; if we had more interested people we could perhaps run parallel teams?

- **Members and Friends**

We now have **42 members** (including **3** honorary), a slight reduction as members don't renew. Our online community continues to grow, with over **820 on our email** list, **380 Facebook** followers and over **1300 Twitter** followers, and these continue 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:

Please renew your membership as it expires, and tell your friends about us and encourage them to join us. 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. Our workshops are free to members, but we make a small charge (currently £3) to non-members to cover costs. Subscriptions will remain at the low rate of £10 per annum for the time being.

- **New theatre for Streatham**

As you may know the Megabowl/Caesars redevelopment includes a new theatre. Building is underway and the theatre shell is in place. The developers are tendering for an operator to run the theatre, with first stage proposals due in at the beginning of July. STC would like to see a financially and artistically sustainable theatre which is available to us (and similar groups) to use. We

considered bidding ourselves but the task is too demanding of volunteer time and potentially too risky for an amateur group.

However, declaring an interest in my personal professional capacity, I have put together a consortium of local professionals (including Ian Freeman, Bernie Byrnes and Helen Mason who are members or former members of STC) and others to put in a bid, independently of STC. This bid would be community-focused within Streatham and the surrounding area, with connections into the wider performing arts industry. Details are commercially sensitive at the moment during the bidding process.

- **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I'd like to express our great thanks to everyone who provided support and encouragement from all around Streatham, and all those who have provided their time and expertise to stage our shows and run our events programme. Plus of course our committee, members, patrons, followers, and audiences – with apologies to anyone I've left out.

You have all continued to help put theatre into Streatham.

Thank you

David Harvey

Chairman, 20 June 2016