



Streatham Theatre to Take Centre Stage

Streatham will take centre stage this month with the launch of its own theatre group. The 'Streatham Theatre Company' has been created by David Harvey, resident and stage manager, along with a group of ten local residents, made up of actors, directors, producers, writers, technicians and others who have a genuine passion in the performing arts.

Ever fancied yourself as an actor or stage hand; designer or director? The Streatham Theatre Company aims to create opportunities for people in the area to gain real life theatre experience and practical skills across all aspects of creating and staging productions, such as writing, directing, lighting, sound, costume and make-up as well as acting. The group is open to all - theatre novices and theatre professionals, regardless of Olivier Award nominations.

Founding member and chairman David Harvey said, "With Streatham formerly known as the west end of south London in the days of Streatham Hill Theatre (now the bingo hall), we have a great heritage in theatre and performing arts. Simon Callow CBE and June Whitfield CBE were both born and brought up here; 'Homeland' and Hollywood actor David Harewood is a current resident.

"With this rich background of talent I was surprised to learn that there is no Streatham-based theatre group, and with a number of performance spaces being created in the area over the next few years, this is a great time to put the theatre back into Streatham. There is news of new theatre spaces in the redeveloped Megabowl site, the soon to be refurbished Tate library, and the proposed Cavendish Playhouse, plus community space in the Tesco 'Streatham Hub' development."

Streatham Theatre Company is currently planning its first production, to be performed at the Streatham Festival in July (11th-14th). Bernie C. Byrnes who brings considerable professional theatre experience (as writer, director and actor) will be directing the production and this is your chance to participate. If you have always had a desire to 'tread the boards' or to help 'behind the scenes', and would like to join the group or get involved with the production then contact info@streathamtheatre.org.uk or telephone 020 3432 5710. Even if you don't want to take part in productions, the company also plans to hold regular social events, with readings, quizzes etc.

The company already has support of a number of local businesses and community organisations and would also love to hear from others able to help in any way.

Streatham Theatre Company will be holding its first event on Friday 19th April 2013 at 7.30pm at The Stables, The White Lion, 232 Streatham High Road, London, SW16 1BB (<http://whitelion.org.uk>). This event is open to all those interested in finding out more, or joining the company.

You can find more information on our website www.streathamtheatre.org.uk, like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/StreathamTheatre or follow us on Twitter @StreathamTheatr [note no final e].

[Additional press material can be found at www.streathamtheatre.org.uk/pr]

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Editors Notes:

Streatham Theatre Company is a new ‘open access’ theatre company. It’s open to anyone with any level of theatre experience or none, amateur or professional. You don’t need to be a member to audition for a part in a show, but to take part in shows you will need to join.

Members pay an annual subscription and participants in our shows contribute towards the costs of the show. The company will generate income from ticket sales, will apply for grants and seek sponsors (in money or in kind). A few local organisations and businesses have offered support already.

The company will also hold regular events such as readings, workshops and socials. These will generally be open to all, though some might be limited to members.

We do not have our own theatre, but will make use of existing and new venues in Streatham.

Streatham has a long history in theatre and entertainment and was known as “the West End of south London” - and due to the wealth of talent living in the area - as “The Beverly Hills of London”.

The main theatre in Streatham was Streatham Hill Theatre (now Beacon Bingo), plus there was the Astoria cinema and theatre (now the Odeon).

Streatham Hill Theatre was opened in 1929 as the Streatham Hill Playhouse. It was bombed in WW2 but was rebuilt and reopened in 1950. It closed in 1962, becoming a bingo hall. Much of the original theatre remains.

The theatre attracted big name stars (including John Gielgud and the newly discovered Vivian Leigh) and big shows either prior to their West End runs, or taking transfers from the West End.

More can be found at www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/Streatham.htm#hilltheatre

The Streatham Society has published a book about the theatre, written by John Cresswell
www.streathamsociety.org.uk

The **Astoria** was built as a super cinema with one large screen and opened in 1930 with a film and variety show. After a number of changes of ownership, the building was modernised in 1961 removing most of the theatre interior, and reopened as the Odeon. Subsequent alterations have added further screens, removing most of the theatre in the process.

More can be found at www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/Streatham.htm#astoria

New theatre-related developments planned for Streatham include:

- A multi-purpose exhibition and performance space in the “Tudor Hall” as part of the Streatham Tate Library renovation, due to open in 2014.
- A theatre space within the proposed Megabowl/Caesars redevelopment, still in the planning stage.
- Conversion of a redundant church hall into The Cavendish Playhouse, which has received planning permission but work has yet to start.

Streatham Festival is an accessible arts festival celebrating local talent, presenting a mix of emerging and well-established artists and encouraging the imaginative use of the different venues across Streatham that characterise the area. www.streathamfestival.com