

Friends of Stag

AUTUMN 2013



Supporting Stag Community Arts Centre

Wanted!

Support the Stag

Join the Friends and help ensure this vibrant venue is not lost. Log on to

www.friendsofstag.org.uk to join and see the shows discounted for members.

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PANTO INVITE

Magic Beans are inviting Friends of Stag members to see the dress rehearsal of their panto 'Robin Hood' on 6 December. The Friends have set the ticket price at just £8.50 to include a drink and a mince pie.

The show should start at around 6pm (to be confirmed).

The performance should be almost perfect but the audience should be prepared for interruptions.

Ticket applications to panto@friendsofstag.org.uk and payment will be by bank transfer or letter with cheque. The offer is limited to 3 tickets per membership and no children under 8 years.

SADLY MISSED

The death of Lady Miranda Cormack recently is a great loss to Sevenoaks and especially to theatre buffs. Miranda had a background in repertory theatre but when she settled in Sevenoaks in 1972 with her husband and family she moved to teaching speech and drama at Tonbridge Girls' Grammar and later also at Sevenoaks Primary and West Heath. She was Hon President of Friends of Stag over recent years. She was on the executive committee of the District Arts Council as well as Hon President of Sevenoaks Shakespeare Society. Until her stroke early last year she was very active in the community and not only in theatrical circles – she was for some years a trustee of Sevenoaks Day Nursery. Miranda was a friendly straightforward and involved person who will be much missed by all who knew her as well as the organisations she supported.

Stag's 30 years

Come and see musical excerpts from all your favourite shows at Stag's 30th

The Stag complex celebrates its 30th birthday this year and local amateur groups intend to 'raise the roof' with a mostly musical tribute to the men and women who brought it to life and those who have sustained it through good times and bad.

On Sunday November 24 in the Plaza Suite in a show organised by Friends of Stag, and directed by well known director Keith Neville, songs from some much-loved shows performed on the Stag stage over the past 30 years will be heard once more in a trip down memory lane.

Players, Sevenoaks Entertainers, Petts Wood Operatic Society, Bullfrog Productions, Stag Theatre Company and Swanley Light Operatic.

The Stag Theatre, cinemas and Lodge café have become a hub of activity since re-opening in 2009 but it has been a long struggle to gain the confidence of the local community that the venue would remain open. Over the years there have been many doubts about its financial viability and there have been times when it seemed the site

Founder of the Stag, Margaret Durdant-Hollamby, gives a talk on those early days on Sunday 10 November in the newly refurbished theatre, 2.30pm.

Come and relive the passion and the excitement of 'My Fair Lady', 'La Cage aux Folles', 'Annie', 'A Chorus Line', 'The King and I' and 'The Princeford Pals' to mention just some of the productions. Drama will be featured in a comedy sketch on 'evacuation' of the Stag written by Yvette Walters and will be performed by the Stag Theatre Company. Sevenoaks Players will perform a short sketch. Attending the event will be the theatre's founder Margaret Durdant-Hollamby who campaigned for a theatre for Sevenoaks years before it finally opened on December 18 in 1983.

Taking part will be all the familiar amateurs - Sevenoaks

would become a car park, block of flats or more shops. Sevenoaks Town Council took over the management on a 25-year lease using a different business model in January 2009 and the venue was officially renamed the Stag Community Arts Centre to make the point that it is more than just a theatre. The boundless energy of local amateur groups, touring professionals and a database of loyal ticket-buying customers the second largest stage in the South East is much in demand. Come along to 'Stag's 30th' and wish the complex a very happy birthday with more to come. Tickets are £10, starts 5pm.

Boot fair sells out

The Plaza Suite was filled to capacity on 15 September when FoS hosted their fundraising Boot Fair. Requests for tables far outnumbered what was available which pleased organisers but disappointed those who were unlucky in securing a pitch. Sellers had gone through their attics to raise money for local churches, to fund school trips or simply to create a bit more storage space. All this was for the benefit of the steady stream of buyers who came through the doors looking for a bargain. Proceeds from the event – £425 - were boosted by the sale of hot drinks and delicious cakes. There was a raffle as well with two lucky prizewinners. The main question to be asked during the morning was "when will you be holding another one?" We have booked the Plaza Suite for **another Boot Fair on Sunday 13 April 2014** and if you want a table, book early!



PRIZE DRAW WINNERS

The first winner of our new Prize Draw was Vanessa Witchell (centre) seen here receiving her £100 prize from FoS vice chairman Roger Walshe and treasurer Sue Cockett. Sevenoaks resident Vanessa was lucky to have bought a ticket to a performance of 'Grease' this summer, entered it into our Prize Draw and became the first person to claim what will be a regular prize. On receiving the cheque she said that it was the first time she'd won anything, adding that she and her husband enjoy regular trips to the town's theatre and cinema which they consider enormous assets to the town, especially as they can walk there from home. She plans to spend her winnings on further visits to the Stag. The new Prize Draw started 13 October and the lucky winner will again win £100 when the draw is made in January. All you need to do to enter the draw is to attend one of the following performances at the Stag and pop your used ticket (or e-ticket) into one of the special collection boxes at the Stag, having first written your name and membership number clearly on the ticket.

- 13 October —Sevenoaks Symphony Orchestra Family Concert
- 16 November —The Elevators
- 17 November —Sevenoaks Symphony Orchestra Anniversary Concert
- 24 November —30th Birthday Gala Concert
- 12 December (evening performance) – 'Robin Hood' pantomime
- 18 December (evening performance) – 'Robin Hood'



50/50 CLUB

Our new 5050 Club, only available to members of Friends of Stag, has now seen 5 winners – one winner being announced each month. The lucky winners so far are Sybil Gadd, Jason & Ruth King, Sybil Gadd (again!), Claire Bates and Paul & Jeanne Barsby. Could it be you next? If you haven't yet joined the club, perhaps it is because you are not sure how it works. You can join at any time (and as many times as you like) by a payment of £12. Each month, for 12 months, £1 of this pays for an entry into the draw. 50 pence goes to the winner and 50 towards FoS funds, so by entering you have the chance of winning the monthly prize pot and help the Stag at the same time. For full terms and conditions of the Prize Draw and the 5050 Club, please see our web site or our notice board in the upper foyer.

Saturday girl (pt II)

I took a break from working at the Stag when my Mum was ill, but got involved again after she died in 2002. Funnily enough it was my then headmaster, previously cross with me when I had injured myself falling over a stage weight and missed work, who encouraged me to get back into it.

During this time I also ran the box office for the Shakespeare Society shows from my house and would do various box office stints for Sevenoaks Summer Festival events, so it was no surprise to be asked to 'man' the box office in January 2009 when the Entertainers were back at the Stag. By this time the computer revolution had finally reached the Stag and I was taught how it worked. This training was to come in rather handy later on as I looked to get back involved with the new look Stag.

In Easter 2009 I signed up as a volunteer and wound up in the box office – sitting in for an unwell Tony McEwen - the box office manager who I had known since he was 9 years old. I was back and I loved it! Every Saturday from then on I was in the box office.

Soon I was offered a few paid hours per week and come school holidays I was a constant presence in the box office. Fast forward to mid 2010, and the then Deputy Box Office Manager had left. Having worked out that I could do that and teach part time, I applied. Sadly however, the powers that be didn't think it was as great an idea as I did and I got overlooked. But it seems, those who are patient sometimes do get their reward.

In the May half term of that year, I was offered a full time job in the box office. Partly serving, and partly an admin role, which I had been developing as a volunteer. For me this would require a massive leap of faith, because I would have to give up my full-time teaching job. On the Monday morning after half term, I approached my then headmistress and explained to her why I wanted to hand in my resignation. In teaching we have to give a lot more notice than in most jobs, and I was a few days late. Apparently I was so enthusiastic about what I was going to do, that she did not feel she could refuse. As word got round my colleagues, no one was surprised that I was going to work in 'my' theatre! Many of my colleagues had been with me on trips to the Drama Festival with my children and had commented on how different I was when I was in the theatre.

So in July 2010 I left full time teaching, admittedly with a few tears and embarked on my 'new career'. My ties with my 'old' school have not been cut completely, I occasionally work as a supply teacher for them, not as often as I would like..... Since then my role has changed again. September 2011 saw me covering for the Facilities Manager, and in February 2012 a new role of Stag Booking and Administration Officer became mine.

In this role I have been able to utilise many of the friendships that I have made over the 25 years I have been associated with the building, I have also made some new friends amongst our regular hirers. I am learning all the time... Yesterday I was building up my knowledge of PRS, one day last week I was investigating urns and tomorrow I will be helping to update the box office software. There is just something about the building that enchants me. When I was teaching full time, I would come out of school completely shattered and arrive at the Stag to fulfil a shift, fifteen minutes after I entered the building I felt revived.

My dear old mum, bless her cotton socks was right, she predicted that I would work in the theatre full time after she died. Never in 100 years did I imagine that what she had said would come true!