



## FULWOOD METHODIST CHURCH

### THEATRE VISIT GROUP

### 2019 NEWSLETTER N° 1



## THIS IS A LONG NEWSLETTER - SO HERE ARE THE HEADLINES

1. Bookings are down so we are having to look again at some of our planned activities.
2. This means that we sometimes will be travelling by minibus which will lead to a reduction in the price, if a little less comfort.
3. In summary:
  - Romeo and Juliet is going ahead.
  - The Verdict is going ahead.
  - St. John Passion – it is up to you!
  - West Side Story visit is in doubt.
  - Stratford-upon-Avon we need a few more bookings before we can go ahead.
  - The Importance of Being Earnest visit is in doubt.
  - Annie – unlikely to go ahead unless we get more bookings by end of February.
4. Read on for more information about Romeo and Juliet, The Verdict, St John Passion, West Side Story, a residential visit to Stratford-upon-Avon, The Importance of Being Earnest, Annie. Also read on for information about Chatsworth, Oberammergau and a residential visit to York.
5. Please share this with your friends, relatives and neighbours and see if they would like to join us – our group is open to all.
6. Might you be able to arrange for posters about our activities to be displayed in your local shops? If so, please contact Sharon.

Dear Friends,

A very happy new year to you all. After our 'Not a Newsletter' communication a few weeks ago, we are writing now to bring you up to speed with our plans for the first part of the year.

There is rather a lot of uncertainty in our lives at present, so it is a relief to be writing about something other than the weather and B..... One thing though is certain; we will do our level best to establish a programme and, if necessary, to adapt it to suit your own needs. Constantly we try to make through our group a welcoming and supportive experience for all who come with this, as well as an enjoyable time at the theatre or wherever. Do tell us what more we can do or how we can do better in the future.

The group's year has got off to a mixed start. First a smaller than expected group of us went to see ***The Producers*** at the Royal Exchange. This was probably one of the most enjoyable of my hundreds of visits to the theatre over the years. The production was so successful that it was sold out weeks in advance, had its run extended by two weeks and extra performances were scheduled.

What has been of some concern at the start of the year, however, is the rather slow uptake in respect of the rest of the programme we published just before Christmas. We are not sure why that is and we would welcome your feedback. We have been organising these visits for over fifteen years now and it may be that the group has served its purpose. Fifteen years on and the profile of the folk attending the Church has certainly changed and maybe that of the members of our community who have been attracted by our visits. Certainly, as we shared at our open meeting in late Autumn, we know that prices have had to increase. Not only have we had to contend with higher costs for tickets (as Arts subsidies have fallen) but we needed to restructure our financial arrangements particularly in response to an increasing number of 'no-shows' (bookings which were made, but not fulfilled). We all are facing uncertainties at present and perhaps don't feel confident in committing ourselves so far ahead. If you have any thoughts about these matters please do contact us.

One inescapable fact is that some theatres (not all) are often requiring us to pay earlier for tickets which we have reserved. In some cases, long before

we know how many people intend to come along. We took a risk with The Producers (although the Royal Exchange was very helpful to us) but our visit ran at a slight loss as a result of not all the tickets being taken up by our party. You will see from what follows that we have had to make decisions to vary our programme based upon the number of bookings which had been made to date. For instance, we decided to cancel our visit to the Bolton Octagon planned for late January.

You will find below that each of our intended trips has a date indicated which indicates the point in time we will decide whether to proceed with the booking. This will normally be 10 days or so before the due date of payment for the tickets. Anyone who makes a booking and an initial payment will be refunded in full if the trip does not go ahead, including the £7 deposit. If it does go ahead the £7 non-returnable deposit rule will be applied if you decide not to come when we have purchased a ticket. We also have the additional insurance scheme of which you are aware.

So these are our forthcoming plans:

### **SATURDAY 2 MARCH.**

Our visit to see *Romeo and Juliet* at Blackpool Grand Theatre will go ahead. We will at the maximum be purchasing only 14 tickets for this production and we will travel to Blackpool using a minibus, as we have done on some recent occasions. This is the *Royal Shakespeare Company* on tour and we have excellent seats in this beautiful theatre. Reviews from elsewhere are outstanding. The play starts at 1.30pm and we will leave Church at 10.45. This will give time for a little shopping, a view of the sea and some lunch. Since we are using a minibus for this visit the cost will be less than previously advertised. It is £30 plus an optional £3 insurance payment. We will provide refunds to those who have paid at a higher level.

### **WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH**

We have organised a visit to Oldham to see a court-room thriller *The Verdict*. To date we have received 11 bookings and one expression of interest. **On that basis the visit will go ahead using a minibus, with a**

**resultant reduction in the cost which we will announce shortly.** If numbers grow significantly by **13 February**, a Cosgrove's coach will be booked and the cost will remain as originally advertised at £37 with an additional £4 insurance payment if you wish.

### **SATURDAY 16 MARCH.**

This is not part of our official programme but we are prepared to obtain tickets and to try to co-ordinate transport for anyone who would like to hear the ***The St. John Passion*** by J.S. Bach. The performance will be in Lancaster A new libretto, translated into English, is to be performed for the first time at a performance commencing at 7.30pm. Sharon will have details, including costs, in the next few days.

### **THURSDAY 16 MAY**

We have 30 tickets on reserve for ***West Side Story*** at the Royal Exchange, Manchester. This is the matinee performance, commencing at 2.30 pm. We will leave around 11.00am ( to be confirmed) to allow for time in Manchester beforehand. I will need to purchase the tickets at the beginning of April and therefore we need to know what level of interest there is in this visit **by the end of March**. We now know the cost will be £59.50 including top quality stage level seats. If we are few in number and travel by minibus the cost will be lower (approx £54). Optional insurance is £5.

Recent musical productions at the Royal Exchange have been hugely accomplished - *The Producers* being just the latest. This is a special production celebrating the Leonard Bernstein centenary and we can expect a very high standard again.

### **MONDAY 27 – WEDNESDAY 29 MAY**

This is the first of two planned residential visits during 2019. On this occasion we will stay for 2 nights in Stratford-upon-Avon at the splendid Crowne Plaza Hotel. We are still at the planning stage for this visit but we intend to include the following:

- Two nights bed and breakfast at the Crowne Plaza Hotel
- Coach travel by Cosgroves
- Departure about 9.30 am on the Monday (Bank Holiday Monday)
- Optional visit to see ***Venice Preserved*** on the Monday evening (additional cost)
- Full-day in Stratford on the Tuesday or optional tour and visit by coach in the locality
- Optional visit to see ***The Taming of the Shrew*** on Tuesday evening (additional cost)
- Wednesday morning free in Stratford-upon-Avon on Wednesday morning (or by agreement an earlier departure to visit a venue on the return journey) and return to Preston by around 6.00pm

Full costings, including theatre ticket prices, will be provided within the next two weeks. Lunches and evening meals will not be included unless there is a substantial request – individual preferences can be catered for at the many and varied cafes and restaurants in the area.

## **WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE**

I have a reservation on 30 tickets for ***The Importance of Being Earnest*** which is being performed in Bolton. Many of you will have seen or heard this play before (remember our visit to Theatre Clwyd at Mold?) but it is a cherished and much-loved piece of theatre by Oscar Wilde. Although this follows on swiftly from our visit to Stratford, I would like to keep this visit in our programme. However, tickets will need to be bought in early May. My intention will be to take a group, however large, in one or more cars, a minibus or coach. That being so, I cannot quote a price as yet but it will not exceed £35, with optional insurance of £4. The performance will be in the Civic Hall offering easy access – the Octagon Theatre continues its programme of restoration. Please liaise with us as soon as possible to help in our planning.

## **SATURDAY 29 JUNE.**

This is the visit which is causing me the biggest headache at present. When we discussed this at our open meeting there was much enthusiasm to see **Annie** on its national tour. We chose to reserve seats at Liverpool Empire theatre because this would enable people to visit Liverpool in June where there are some interesting large art exhibitions taking place in the nearby Walker Gallery. It would be a full-day visit starting off around 9.15am (to be confirmed), attending the matinee performance (2.30pm) and returning around 6.30pm.

This production is very expensive and to keep costs down our seats will be in the Circle in rows M,N and O. The Circle is accessible by lift but there will be stairs to negotiate to those rows. Regrettably there are no price reductions for children.

I have negotiated with the theatre to gain **an extension until late February** before I need to buy tickets. A decision will be taken on **26 February** as to whether this visit goes ahead. I will need at least 12 more bookings to make the purchase.

The price for this visit remains at £66 with an optional additional insurance of £6. We will fully understand if that price is out of reach for many of our members.

If you are very keen to see this show we will understand if you begin to look for other ways of doing so, just in case we decide to cancel.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

1. I am continuing to explore a possible date to visit **Chatsworth** during the Spring/early Summer. So far there has been minimal interest and I would need 25 to justify booking a coach (the journey is too long for comfort in a minibus). As things stand I doubt this visit will occur this year.
2. **Oberammergau** – there have been some expressions of interest but not really sufficient to suggest we should proceed to organise a visit in 2020. Also, it is not yet clear that we could provide two fit and able leaders for such a sustained period of time. If there is a surge of interest we will think again but please, for now, consider this as very doubtful. If anyone

would like assistance by putting you in touch with other organisers please let us know.

3. In contrast, a visit to **YORK** from 24 November for three nights is very much on our minds. Costings will follow in a month or so. Again, we are working on the detail but it will include the following:
  - Staying at the Mercure Fairfield Manor Hotel, situated a couple of miles outside York, for three nights bed and breakfast. Possible evening meal in the hotel on one or all evenings.
  - A Cosgrove's coach available to us at all times.
  - Probable full-day visit to Castle Howard, where the Christmas Fair (a huge event) will be in full swing.
  - Possible visit to York Theatre Royal (once we see their autumn/winter programme)
  - Possible visit to the chocolate museum or return via nearby Harrogate
  - Chance to see York Christmas lights and sample the excellent shops and cafes
  - Information about York's many tourist attractions – the Minster, the Castle Museum, the Viking Experience and so on.
4. Finally, after much effort, I have received an apology from Britannia Hotels for the concerns we had after our visit to the Buxton Spa Hotel in late summer. They have sent me two vouchers for four people each to have a complimentary afternoon tea at the Hotel. Less than I hoped for, but some recognition after a long silence. The tokens need to be used by the end of June this year. I am happy to pass them on to the first two folks on that trip who could use them either for themselves or as gifts to relatives/friends in the area. Others not on the trip who are interested please contact Sharon and we will hold you in reserve. If no one has contacted Sharon by the **15 March** I shall send them to a local charity in Buxton for their use.

Very best wishes to you all!!

**Ken Wales.**

**Sharon Beck**

# **THEATRE VISITS PROGRAM SUMMARY 2019**

## **Saturday 2nd March 2019**

### **'Romeo and Juliet' at Blackpool Grand Theatre**

This is the Royal Shakespeare Company on tour. Matinee performance. Price £30 per person (minibus and theatre ticket) with optional insurance £3 per person.

## **Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

### **'The Verdict' at Oldham Coliseum**

Matinee performance. Price £37 person (coach and theatre ticket) with optional insurance of £4 per person

## **Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

### **'St John Passion' (J S Bach) at Lancaster**

Evening performance. Prices and details TBC

## **Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019**

### **'West Side Story' at The Royal Exchange Manchester**

£59.50 per person with optional insurance of £5 per person

**Monday 27<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019 for two nights  
(3 days)**

**‘Stratford-upon-Avon**, Crowne Plaza Hotel B & B, including coach travel and optional visit to see ‘Venice Preserved, on Monday evening and ‘The Taming of the Shrew’ on Tuesday evening. Tuesday will be full day in Stratford or optional tour or visit by coach in locality. Pricing TBC.

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019**

**The Importance of Being Earnest – Bolton Octagon**

This is a matinee performance which will be in the civic hall in the centre of Bolton, very close to the theatre. Estimated Price £35 per person (coach and theatre ticket), optional £4 insurance per person. Exact price TBC.

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2019**

**‘Annie’ at the Liverpool Empire**

This is a matinee performance. Price is £66 per person (coach and theatre ticket) and optional insurance at £6 per person.

**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2019 for 3 nights / 4 days**

**York staying at the Mercure Fairfield Manor Hotel including day trips by coach. Prices & further details TBC.**