

FULWOOD METHODIST CHURCH

THEATRE VISITS GROUP

NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2017

Dear Friends,

First of all, very best wishes to all who read this newsletter. For those of us who have been on extended grand-parenting duties over the school holidays, you may be reading this with your feet up and drinking a well-earned cup of coffee. Others may be thinking, as I am, of all that needs doing in the garden over the next couple of months. Whatever, I hope this newsletter whets your appetite for what we have to offer by way of visits and activities.

The newsletter this time is divided into a number of headings. Not everyone will be attracted to everything here. Also, you may find there is some crossover of dates from section to section. That is why there is an attempt at a calendar at the very end.

1. Thinking about the possibility of a holiday in 2018

This year, a group of us enjoyed a few days in Llandudno. We stayed at a good hotel and Cosgrove's provided the transport. We even took in a very good play at Theatre Clwyd on the way! Several people have asked us if we might be prepared to organise something similar in 2018. The answer is that we are certainly interested in talking about it and to see what might be possible. We do need though to think over questions like where, when, for how long and how much?

To have some discussions about these questions, totally without commitment, two meetings have been arranged. They are as follows:

Saturday 23 September at 11.30am at Fulwood Methodist Church (there is a Farmers' Market that morning as an extra attraction)

Sunday 1 October at approximately 12noon (after morning worship) again at Fulwood Methodist Church.

You will be welcome at either or both of the meetings – come along and have your say!

Alternatively, send any suggestions or thoughts you may have to Sharon and she will feed them into the system. (Sharon is now working her usual days and hours now that the school holidays are over.)

2. Visits to the theatre and/or concerts

Several of these visits described below have already been publicised. If you are not sure whether you have booked a place do have a word with Sharon who is there to help.

Wednesday 20 September 17. *Hairspray* at the Blackpool Opera House. We will be setting off around lunchtime and arrive in Blackpool in time to get some sea breeze, a coffee and a sandwich before the production. Afterwards, we will go to local restaurant for a fish and chip tea before we return to Preston with a trip through the Illuminations. We will arrive back probably about 8.30pm. Only a few tickets left!

Costs are as follows; £50 for seats, travel and gratuities. The meal at the restaurant would be extra and payable on the day. Insurance, if you wish, will be £5.

Friday 20 October 17. *As You Like It* at Theatre by the Lake at Keswick. This is our second full-day visit of the year to this delightful theatre. The leaves should be turning and the performance will be of a high standard. There will be time to spend in the town or you can just relax at the theatre or by the lake before the show. Take sandwiches or treat yourself in one of the many cafes. We have a few seats left (and may be able to obtain additional ones). Or if you want, for a reduced price, just come for a day-out!

Costs are as follows; £50 for theatre, travel and gratuities. £5 Insurance, if you wish. £25 if you want to visit Keswick but not the theatre.

Saturday 28 October 17, *The Threepenny Opera* at the Octagon Theatre, Bolton. This is the famous musical by Kurt Weill and it will be great to see it performed at the Octagon. Numbers may be limited for this visit and we may choose to use the Church minibus for the relatively short journey. If so, the price will be lower than the sum quoted below, which assumes the hire of a coach.

Costs are as follows; £45 and £4 optional insurance

Wednesday 1 November 17. *Hedda Gabler* by Henrik Ibsen is being performed by the National Theatre on tour at The Lowry, Salford. It is a much-praised production of one of the world's greatest and most powerful plays. We will be leaving as usual about 11.30 am and returning late afternoon.

Costs are as follows; £53 for excellent seats, travel and gratuities. £5 for optional insurance

Sunday 19 November 17. *The Armed Man* at The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. This is one of three concerts in the country to be conducted by Karl Jenkins the composer of this wonderful modern Mass. The music will be known by many (passages are regularly played on Classic FM) and is tuneful and accessible. We will be leaving by coach from Church at 12.45 pm for a 3.00pm performance and hope to be back in Preston around 6.00pm. We have only a few tickets left for this production and no more are obtainable so contact us to seek to avoid disappointment.

Costs are as follows; £37 for tickets (these are gallery tickets but the sound is wonderful), travel and gratuities. £4 insurance if required.

Wednesday 13 December 17. Our proposed visit to see Elf The Musical will not take place.

Saturday 13 January 2018. *A Christmas Carol* at Bolton Octagon. Our visit to this matinee performance will include a party from Ribblesdale Ave Methodist Junior School. Children from the school came with us two years ago to see BFG and we all had a great time. Come along and share the fun at this traditional Christmas production.

Costs are as follows; £43 for tickets, transport and gratuities. (Children £40). Insurance is £4.

Saturday 20 January 2018. *Guys and Dolls* at The Royal Exchange, Manchester. We are thrilled to have obtained tickets for this Saturday matinee. Some of you will remember the RET Christmas production of Sweet Charity two years ago – if this half as good we are in for a treat. And I have a feeling it will be better! We will leave around 11.30 and expect to return about 6.15pm. On this occasion, we have a limited number of higher priced seats with the remainder at a lower price – all are at stage level.

Costs are as follows; Ticket, travel and gratuities are either £50 or £45 (see above). Insurance in each case is £5.

Saturday 3 February 2018 *Hamlet* at the Lowry, Salford. This is the RSC on tour and this production has been hugely successful. Earlier this year it was broadcast into cinemas all around the world. It is colourful, lively and full of new features – and yet entirely Shakespearean.

Costs are as follows; £53 for top quality seats, travel and gratuities. £5 insurance

Saturday 7 April 2018 East is East at The Octagon Theatre. A return visit to Bolton to see this stage production of the popular film comedy.

Costs are as follows;£43 for tickets, travel and gratuities. £4 for insurance.

September 2018 – DATE , SHOW AND PRICE TO BE ADVISED

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY : 2018 SUMMER SEASON

I am looking at the possibility of organising a midweek visit to Stratford upon Avon in September 2018. The idea would be to stay over for one night with the possibility of taking in two plays (some may prefer just the one and that is fine). I would welcome guidance over which plays might be more attractive. It seems from the programme just announced that it might be possible to see two of the following – Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet and The Merry Wives of Windsor. My preference would be for Merry Wives and one of the others – what advice do you want to give? Via Sharon, please.

Wednesday 21 November 2018 *Matilda* (the famous musical) on tour at the Palace Theatre Manchester. Please note this show is very expensive and a Wednesday matinee has been chosen because tickets are £10 less expensive in well-positioned seats. We will take names and deposits from now on but then early in the New Year announce some arrangements which we hope will help to manage the payments.

Projected costs are as follows; the cost for ticket, travel and gratuities will be £80. Insurance will be £6.

3. A new adventure; a joint promotion involving two other charities.

In recent years, two of the people with links to Fulwood Methodist Church have been involved in developing significant new charities. *State of Mind* is now a nationally-recognised charity looking to further the mental well-being particularly of men linked to the game of Rugby League and increasingly other sports. *Methodist Action North West (MANW)* works with vulnerable men, women and families to eradicate or reduce the likelihood of homelessness. Many of you will be aware of the Fox Street Shelter which is part of MANW. These two charities have invited us to support them for all or part of an event they are arranging as follows;

Saturday 14 October 2017 *UpNUnder* – John Godber’s famous comedy, based upon the world of amateur rugby league, will be performed at The Oldham Coliseum (in the heart of Rugby League country). A matinee visit is being organised and will run from the

University of Central Lancashire at 11.00am. It will collect any who wish to join us at Fulwood Methodist Church and drop off there too. If you, or any of the folk in your family, are interested (North End are away!) you can come just to see the play. Afterwards they will return immediately to Preston, to the University, for a hot pot supper, some fun and games, a comedian (clean we are promised) and some speakers with really good stories about the charities. If you or your friends don't fancy the play come to the evening do. Your support could make a real difference.

Costs and booking arrangements are as follows: No deposit required. Tickets will be £40 (theatre and coach only) £10 social evening (including supper) only and a joint ticket £50. Bookings can be made through Sharon or via Methodist Action North West – 07749576296 (Sarah Carrick). Cheques payable to Methodist Action North West.

4. Another new adventure – the first of our new day trips

As many of you know, it has been suggested that we arrange more day trips over the next few months. This we are very happy to do, not least because it helps to overcome the costs from rising ticket prices in theatres. Our group started off mainly with a view to visiting theatres and that will remain our priority. However, we will try to organise four or five visits each year which are to places of interest. We have already publicised the first of these as follows;

Monday 2 October – a full-day visit to *Chatsworth House, Derbyshire*.

Entry to the grounds, house, travel and gratuities will be £40. Insurance is £4. If people would like a guided tour of the house, these can be booked directly on the day at Chatsworth House at a cost of £4 (subject to availability) – Chatsworth House have advised that guided tour times are 11.30pm, 12.30pm and 1.30pm

A number of other visits are in the pipeline for the early part of 2018, including -

The National Arboretum, near Stoke-on-Trent

A visit to Ilkley to coincide with the pre-Wimbledon tennis championships there (but with other things to do and great places to eat as well!)

A visit to the southern Lakes, to include a full-lake sail.

The dates and booking arrangements will be announced before Christmas.

5. Finally, a word about bookings and costs

The first thing I want to say here is a very big thank you to those of you have stuck by us whilst we have introduced the new arrangements. We have tried our best to keep you informed and to act reasonably. Also a huge thank you to Sharon for continuing to help people to understand what has been going on. I would like to summarise the three key problems we have been dealing with:

- 1. Because of reduced subsidies and the recession, many theatres have had to increase their basic ticket prices. In the main, you have been telling us not to reduce the quality of the seats we book (others are available at a lower cost). This has driven up costs.**
- 2. The number of trips we are running (after 14 years of operation) is now beyond the capacity of being organised by volunteers alone. Whilst we still do rely on volunteers, an administrator paid a proper socially-responsible wage has been vital. These costs need to be covered.**
- 3. Sadly, sometimes people have booked tickets with us and then have withdrawn at a very late stage or even not turned up, leaving us to meet the costs. (We need to pay for the theatre tickets many weeks and sometimes months in advance.)**

That is why our new system has three elements

- A non-returnable deposit, which covers administration and wages**
- The cost of the ticket, travel and gratuities**
- A voluntary insurance payment which means if you do have to withdraw at a late stage we are in a position to refund you. The value of the refund if you choose to take insurance will be the full paid price, less the insurance fee and less the £10 non returnable deposit.**

It has been said to us that 'The new system is subsidising the Church'. I assure you that it is not and I will share the details with anyone interested. The booking fee (the deposit) does cover the costs of Sharon's wages and other administrative costs, including the fact that sometimes we need to buy tickets many months in advance. We plan to make no surplus and if we do it will be used to lower costs on future visits or as agreed with our consultative group. If you would be willing to be a member of that group do please let us know. It meets two or three times a year.

It is the Church, through its volunteers, who are seeking to provide a service to the Community. I know that the majority of you recognise that that is the case and value the opportunities we are creating for friendship, relaxation and fun.

With very best wishes,

Ken Wales

Fulwood Methodist Church

THEATRE VISIT GROUP

Calendar of Events as at September 2017

- 20 September 17; **HAIRSPRAY** at Blackpool, supper and return through the lights
- 23 September 17 at 11.15 am – meeting about a holiday in 2018
- 1 October 17 at approximately 12 noon – second meeting about a holiday in 2018.
- 2 October 17 – day excursion to **CHATSWORTH HOUSE**
- (14 October 17 – **UpNUnder** at Oldham Cloisseum. Social evening for those who wish)
- 20 October 17 – **AS YOU LIKE IT** at Keswick
- 28 October 17 – **THE THREEPENNY OPERA** at Bolton Octagon
- 1 November 17 – **HEDDA GABLER** at The Lowry
- 19 November 17 – **THE ARMED MAN** at the Bridgewater hall, Manchester
- 13 January 18 – **A CHRISTMAS CAROL** at Bolton Octagon
- 20 January 18– **GUYS AND DOLLS** at The Royal Exchange
- 3 February 18 - **HAMLET** at The Lowry
- 7 April 18 – **EAST IS EAST** at Bolton Octagon
- Sept 18 – Proposed visit to **STRATFORD**, date and show TBC