



Fulwood Methodist Church Crossroads Centre

THEATRE VISIT GROUP

NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2017

There is a lot of information that we need to pass on to you, so please forgive another newsletter so soon after the previous one. We hope the New Year is going well for you, even though so much is happening in the world that is causing concern. We hope too that any personal anxieties you have are not overwhelming. Do let us know if you think we might be able to help.

1. Our first visits in 2017

We have had the opportunity to see two wonderful productions in Manchester already this year. 'Sweet Charity' was simply outstanding in terms of its verve, colour and the music. I wonder how many people have dusted down their old video of this show to see the film again – and which version they preferred.

'Billy Elliot' was a memorable show especially for those (like me) who have not seen it before. Again, the music and dance were breathtaking and especially the performances of the younger actors/dancers. I know the language was a bit rich in places – unnecessarily and unrealistically so in some places I thought – but the show gave me much to think about in terms of giving full expression to the gifts and talents with which we have been blessed.

The Palace Theatre is not everyone's ideal venue. It was built over a century ago when people were smaller and theatre design not as sophisticated. It was a very expensive show, and in order to keep it within most people's financial reach, we did not book the most expensive seats. Productions at The Palace (as at other theatres) often attract large groups of younger people especially at weekends and their theatre-going habits are not necessarily ours. We recognise that not everyone thought our seats were the best we can do! As ever, organisers have to compromise.

2. Next up!

Our next two visits should be slightly less (much less!) hectic. First we go to Oldham Coliseum to see Patrick Hamilton's 'Gaslight' – a good old-fashioned thriller. Then on the 4 March we are The Lowry to see the ballet 'Cinderella'. If you haven't yet booked and are interested do contact Sharon.

These are both trusted venues and Oldham will be even better when a new theatre has been built for 2020. The Lowry has plenty of eating venues round about as you know but there are fewer of them in Oldham. However, there is a Wetherspoon's and the usual coffee chains and fast food outlets. If any of you know of anywhere more salubrious, don't keep that information to yourself, please.

3. Our visits in 2016.

Three of you nominated your favourite visits in 2016 and these included 'Singing in the Rain', 'Pride and Prejudice', 'Midsummer Night's Dream' and 'The Girls' (which has just

opened in London) and 'Wind in the Willows'. A lovely box of chocolates was won by Jean Lether, one of the three. Only three – are you all on New Year diets? We expect more entries next year, please.

4. Plans for a residential visit to Llandudno.

Our plans are now moving ahead for a three night/four day break at The Merrion Hotel in Llandudno from Saturday 20 May and returning on the Tuesday after lunch. Dinner, bed and breakfast in a very good hotel, all travel and gratuities (including two optional coach trips for a half-day and a full-day) and a ticket to see 'The Importance of Being Earnest' at Theatre Clwyd in Mold on the way there. The cost, fully inclusive, is £360 with a £10 per night single room supplement. Our aim is to have a relaxing time together in good surroundings. This is a really good opportunity for people who find it difficult to spend time away from home on their own and are looking for friendly folk to share a few days away. Please spread the word – it is a community event and open to all!

5. Future plans for the Group

Thanks to the 30 or so of you who came to the open meeting we held on Saturday 28 January. To see so many faces was very encouraging and rewarding and thank you too for your kind words about the group and for the advice you offered as to how to do things better.

At the meeting we explained some of the pressures which have built up in organising our trips. Many theatres are requiring earlier payment for group bookings as a result of losing financial support from local and national government. This also means that the bigger shows (with many actors and live music) are expensive. Actually, we in this region are in a better position than in London where prices are much higher.

We now employ an administrator and whilst this has enabled us to increase the number of visits it does add to our costs. So early payments to the theatres, rising cost of seats and the need to employ an administrator add to the problem of a rising number of cancellations and 'no-shows'. We know that some of you enjoy our visits as you cope with serious health problems and we are always ready to try to work sensitively with you when you keep in touch.

However, because we are part of a Church, which itself is a charity formed primarily for Christian worship, we do need to cover our costs. At the meeting on 28 January, we discussed these problems in some detail and developed a new booking procedure and a revised and more open method of pricing each show which are explained at the end of this newsletter. This will be considered by the Church Council in mid-February but I anticipate few changes and so we are informing you now. This means you can contact us in the next few days if any of this causes concern and it gives you time to plan ahead. As you will see no bookings already made will be affected.

We are very conscious of rising costs and people's ability to pay. The last thing we wish to do so is give rise to disappointment or anxiety and Sharon and I will talk to anyone with concerns. For the future, although we will occasionally include the more expensive shows in our programme, we will try wherever possible to use the smaller regional theatres where the costs will be lower

5. Let us know what you think!

One decision we made at the meeting was to create a reference group of church members, with official responsibilities, and other members of the Group. Lyn Brown and Christine Tognarelli are on the group and, once we have their permission, we will give you contact points for the so you can let them know if you have any ideas. But do contact Sharon and Ken as well: we want to be a club and not a business!

In fact, this group was created by a few theatre enthusiasts within Fulwood Methodist Church over 10 years ago. We became aware that others, some connected with other churches or none, wanted to join us. So we became a community group under the umbrella of the Church. We have made about 120 visits over the years and sold at least 4000 tickets. We can only continue doing this to your satisfaction if you regularly tell us what you think – feel free!

Sharon Beck
Ken Wales

2 February 2017

New Pricing policy on next page -



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THEATRE VISIT GROUP

Revised Pricing and Booking Arrangements effective from 5 March 2017

1. These new arrangements will apply from **5 March 2017**.
2. All bookings made to date and in the period up to 4 March will be honoured at the prices currently advertised on the Church website (and as shown below).
3. **The new booking arrangements**
 - Bookings may only be made using a new revised booking form (this will be made available shortly). This can be handwritten and posted to us or sent by email.
 - This means that bookings will no longer be taken on the coach during a visit (although forms will be available for you to collect).
 - The details of forthcoming visits will be displayed on the church notice board and website. These will be updated from time to time to show the number of places still available. However, for an up to date status on number of tickets still available, it is best to contact the administrator, as the status of ticket availability is constantly changing.
 - A place may be reserved by completion of a new booking form and a payment of a £10 non-returnable administration fee.
 - Full payment (along with an insurance fee – see below) will need to be made by 28 days before the visit. Some trips may necessitate different payment terms, such as residential trips where alternative private insurance arrangements or payment terms or deposits to secure the booking may be required.
 - If full payment is not made 28 days in advance of the trip or by the date due this may lead to seats being resold to individuals on the waiting list and you will lose your deposit of the £10 booking fee. If you have paid the insurance premium against cancellation please see details below.
 - In the event of a cancellation within the 28 day period, if you have paid the insurance premium and the full trip price, a refund of the ticket and travel costs (not the deposit / administration fee or the insurance premium) will be refunded. If you have not paid the insurance premium we will do our best to sell the ticket for you (if requested) but will charge a £3 administration charge as a fee for doing so (which will be in addition to the non-returnable administration fee of £10). Alternatively, the ticket will be passed to you for you to resell, keeping in touch with us so that we are aware of any changes in the names of those travelling.
4. **The new pricing arrangements**
 - The cost of the place on the visit will be calculated in the following way.

- The cost of the theatre ticket to the Church (usually obtained at a discounted rate)
- A £10 per ticket administration fee to cover all organisational costs.
- The cost of travel and gratuities – usually calculated at £15 per half day excursion and £25 for a full-day.
- An optional insurance payment of between £3 and £6 depending on overall cost . This would cover cancellation within the 28 day period as described above.
- For certain trips, such as the residential trip to Llandudno, the cost structure may differ to reflect room bookings, meal requirements on trips etc and additional deposits required to secure the booking or different payment terms. These will be notified in advance for each trip. There may also be a different cancellation policy and we may recommend taking out private insurance for the holiday. Any changes in terms will be notified in advance of the trip.

Effects of this new pricing structure from 5 March 2017.

TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL - £40 plus optional £3 insurance - currently advertised at £30.

TWELFTH NIGHT - £50 plus optional £4 insurance – currently at £48.

THE PLAY THAT WENT WRONG - £50 plus £5 optional insurance – currently £45.

SHIRLEY VALENTINE - £48 plus £4 optional insurance – currently £36.

HANDBAGGED - £50 plus £5 optional insurance –currently £40.

HAIRSPRAY - to be confirmed.

AS YOU LIKE IT - £50 plus £5 optional insurance – currently £40.

ELF - To be confirmed.