

FRIENDS OF THE COMPANY OF FOUR

Newsletter April 2020

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Facebook Page - The Company of Four

Dear Friends -

Winter is behind us, daffodils that have been showing majestically, grass areas again need regular cutting and the hoe needs to be at hand after its winter slumber. It's nice not to have Brexit in the news all the time but alas, this topic has been replaced with coronavirus which, now rated as a pandemic, has caused dreadful distress to many families suffering illness and worse and is disrupting practically the whole world in some form or other. As you will be only too aware, the Government restrictions on travel and being in groups, etc. have seriously affected people's plans, with theatres and other venues all closed for the foreseeable future. Obviously, this has affected our plans as well but hopefully for not too long.

Outings & Holidays we will let you have information when the country recovers from this dreadful illness. On occasions, we find that we have to quickly respond to events that come to our attention and then have to make quick decisions to secure seats and/or accommodation and sometimes this doesn't coincide with sending you a newsletter. So, will you all PLEASE indicate on the membership renewal form whether you are interested in the outings and holiday, etc., on offer, as 'YES' or 'NO'. Failure to do so could mean that you don't get the opportunity to make a booking with us.

Regarding renewal of membership for the 12 months 1st May 2020 to 30th April 2021, we are enclosing a renewal form to members who are not on email and hope that you will want to complete and return. Cheques payable to Friends of the Company of Four, please and be sure to let us have your details on the form provided so that we can ensure that we have the up-to-date information.

A big 'Friends' welcome to new members; we hope that you enjoy the company of all of us.

- Reminder that stage costumes are available for hire to you and family/friends, for £5.00 per costume plus £5 deposit, returnable when the costume is returned in good condition. Contact - Kathy Hilton tel. 01728 746492.

- Reminder also that the single storey 'Fred Reynolds Centre' in Woodbridge is available for hire; please call 07935 333457 to check dates and/or to make a booking.

FROM AMATEUR TO PROFESSIONAL - (No. 8)

Some time ago, in a series of newsletters, we let you know what has happened to some of the members of the Company who have entered the professional world of entertainment for which they should be very proud. We have in the past, heard from Annika Rands, Clare Holmes, Daniel Holmes, Hannah Berry, Paul Berry, Gavin Lee and June Allum. On this occasion, we have asked Katy Spall to be scribe No. 8 - Katy writes - My first stage show was as a four year old 'Tot' in Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs. I progressed into the Juniors and then became part of the team of Junior Dancers and then into the Senior Dance troupe at age 15/16. My favourite memories were taking part in the pom-pom routines and

big flag waving/high kicking numbers that Dad (Don Spall) as Producer, was so good at arranging. Performing with Company of Four had to stop when I reached 18 years of age and went to University.

We take up the story - Katy is the youngest of the three Spall sisters. She grew up performing on stage with her two sisters and her mum Lyn for the Company of Four at The Riverside Theatre. She helped her mum to make the numerous costumes she and the family would wear in the many shows. Sometimes they would each have about 8 costumes so you can imagine that Katy became quite adept at sewing!

- When she was old enough for a part time job, Katy worked in the parlour and then the box office at The Riverside and later followed her dad Don to become a theatre technician. After leaving university Katy wanted to combine her love of theatre and sewing, so she went to work in the costume department at the National Theatre and then to Sadler's Wells as wardrobe assistant for Matthew Bourne's New Adventures production of 'Romeo & Juliet'. Then in January 2020 she became Head of Wardrobe for Sadler's Wells and Universal Music Group co-production "Message in a Bottle" where currently she is supposed to be on the European tour with the company. Sadly, with all theatres closing because of the coronavirus Katy has found herself back home in Woodbridge.

- Wanting to make herself useful during the Lockdown, Katy signed up as a volunteer, then heard that they were looking for people to sew scrubs for Ipswich Hospital. She got in touch to offer her services and was asked if she had a large enough floor space to cut out patterns. She asked her auntie Tina Wiseman, who is the manager of The Riverside, if it would be possible to use the premises for washing and drying the 25m lengths of material and to use the stage as a giant surface for cutting out, ready for the collection and distribution to the many sewers who had also volunteered to help.

Katy has to wear protective knee pads as she crawls around to cut out and uses stage weights to help keep the material in place on the stage! She sings along to songs from her favourite musicals played through the surround sound system as she works. It is great to know that she is doing something she loves during this challenging time and is helping to make a difference for our NHS. Very, very Well Done, Katy!

Another member of the Company of Four who is also using her skills to cut out patterns for scrubs is Julie Windermere. She, like Katy, volunteered her services and is keeping very busy in her own home while she is unable to go to her own place of work. Well done Julie!

RECENT EVENT & C/4 PRODUCTION

Woodbridge Tide Mill - October 31st and November 1st 2019

The Company of Four had been contacted by the Tide Mill committee to participate in "Thrill at the Mill", which meant taking part in costumes to suit the theme, at various times of the two days. This new experience went very well with members and the general public, so perhaps will take place again next Halloween

PANTOMIME 2020 - 'ROBIN HOOD' - Riverside Theatre, Woodbridge

Saturday 15th to Saturday 22nd February (school half-term holiday)

This annual pantomime was based on hero Robin Hood and how he battled against the will of the evil Sheriff of Nottingham, to rescue the babes in the wood and win the heart of Maid Marian. With this in mind, the cast performed a wonderful show ably supported by many people 'behind the scenes'. There was excellent acting, singing and dancing and a huge amount of laughter from the audiences in response to the comedy. The raffle raised an enormous £866.00 and was made possible because of the number of prizes donated by the 'Friends' and some of the cast. "Thank you" to everyone; not least the people helping in the foyer 'front of house'.

For many years, Leiston Brownies, Rainbows & Guides have attended the pantomimes and as well as enjoying themselves, they encourage the cast members by joining in with the excitement and call-backs. They have again sent a 'Thank you' card that they made themselves and signed it with comments from several of their members.

Members of the 'Friends' - Di and Peter wrote -

Hi Penny & Vernon - Please let the cast of the Panto know that we thought it was an excellent performance last Saturday evening - perhaps one of their best shows. We really enjoyed the whole performance - fantastic costumes, endless dancers - loved the children performers and especially the 'slap dash' episode - all in all a really good evening.

FUTURE C/4 PRODUCTIONS

SUMMER SHOW - 'BEST OF BRITISH' -

This variety/song & dance show scheduled for 24th to 27th June has had to be cancelled because of coronavirus outbreak but will be presented sometime in the future.

AUTUMN - 'GOODNIGHT MR TOM' -

The Company is still looking to perform a play in the Autumn called 'Goodnight Mr Tom'. This was made into a moving film in 1999 and is a World War II tale in which a bad-tempered widower living in a small village takes in a nine-year-old evacuee from London. The widower soon realises that his young charge has been damaged both mentally and physically at the hands of his strict mother. He sets about undoing the damage, teaching the youngster to read, write and draw, but as his tenth birthday looms, the child is summoned back to the city.

RECENT OUTINGS & EVENTS

'THE CHRISTMAS SHOW' - WEST CLIFF THEATRE, CLACTON-ON-SEA AND CHRISTMAS MEAL -Saturday 21th December 2019

What a lovely outing this proved to be; shopping at Clacton Outlet, great Christmas production at West Cliff Theatre and a delicious Christmas meal at Brantham Bull. In fairly 'compact' conditions, the kitchen staff performed wonders for such a large group of people and the young waitresses were efficient beyond belief. Penny did what Penny does so very well and organised a raffle and distributed a little gift wrapped for Christmas to everyone.

Members Gavin and Joy sent us a note - *Dear Penny & Vernon - Many thanks for organising such a great day out. The show, the meal and the presents were wonderful. Everyone enjoyed themselves.*

'ADULT PANTOMIME - BIG DICK WHITTINGTON' - Brick Lane Music Hall, London Tuesday 10th March 2020

Thank Goodness that we were able to attend to this pantomime before the current virus really took effect. It was every bit of entertaining as we anticipated and as expected, the suggestion of 'rudeness' was nothing more than innuendo. Another great day out enjoyed by all

Members Ann and Norman wrote to us - *Dear Penny & Vernon - Just to say it was a good day out and we both really enjoyed the day and especially the Pantomime - I certainly had a good laugh and the food was lovely and fresh. Well done; again wonderful organisation.*

'FAMILY BARN DANCE' - Woodbridge Community Hall - Sunday 14th March 2020

Vicky Fosker (C/4) engaged the services of locally based Ceileidh Band 'Stumpy Oak' with Caller and was very pleased with the support and together with the supper provided, all made for an excellent evening.

FUTURE OUTINGS & EVENTS - PROPOSED

'LES MISERABLES' - THEATRE ROYAL, NORWICH

Thursday 26th March 2020

This 'sold out' production had been presented for a few days at Theatre Royal, but before the date that we were to see it, the management had to cancel the remainder of the performances because of coronavirus outbreak. Tickets for the afternoon performance had been paid for and as yet, we haven't been told when we can expect a refund because they are in discussions with Cameron Mackintosh to see whether a future date can be agreed for the show returning to Norwich. If this can be arranged, our booking with them will be honoured at which time we will contact those members who have paid for the day. If any other member would like to be contacted if we find that we have spaces for the new date, please let us know. In the mean-time and in accordance with conditions of hire of the coach, we have had to pay a percentage of the invoice amount.

'SUMMER SPECTACULAR SHOW' - WEST CLIFF THEATRE, CLACTON

Wednesday 19th August 2020

Tickets for the 6.00pm performance have been reserved for this latest 'Summer Show' but of course, at this stage, we have no idea whether this outing will take place. If it does, we propose to leave Woodbridge at approx. 11.00am, call in at Clacton Shopping Outlet for refreshments and then go on to Clacton itself, where there will be free time before meeting at the theatre. We will leave for home after the show and arrive at Woodbridge by approx. 9.30pm. The cost for the day will be in the region of £25.00; please let us know if you will be interested in the outing, should it go ahead.

'WARNER HOLIDAY - THORESBY HALL, NOTTINGHAM

Friday 24th to Monday 27th July 2020

This is a prime example of making a booking quickly to secure adequate accommodation, before first being able to advertise it in a newsletter. We approached our 'usual' members who have joined us in the past and they showed enough interest to warrant making a booking. If anyone else is interested in joining us, please contact us and we will let you have details. However, as the Warner hotels are currently closed and we are very much influenced in action by coronavirus scare, it remains to be seen whether this tour will actually take place. If that is the case, we will make contact regarding a holiday at a later time.

NEIL SANDS - 'LAND OF HOPE & GLORY' - MARINA THEATRE, LOWESTOFT -

Tickets had been provisionally booked for Thursday 18th June for the 2.00pm performance of Neil Sands & Company's new production for 2020, of their most popular patriotic show 'Land of Hope & Glory' celebrating the Best of British. This entertainment has been especially produced to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the end of The Second World War - VE Day 75. The theatre is now closed for a while but their website indicates that the show has been re-scheduled for Thursday 3rd September. With all the doubts, ifs and buts that we are all experiencing, we won't be pursuing this idea, at this time.

Additional diary date

Stardust Big Band - Riverside Theatre, Woodbridge -

This entertainment was scheduled for 2.00pm and 6.00pm on Sunday 24th May 2020 by the Theatre itself and was to include the 'Spallettes' singing songs that everyone is likely to know. This is to be re-scheduled if at all possible, for September/October time, so if interested, please check the theatre website and telephone direct with them. Initially, we thought that we could make this into a social occasion by provisionally making a group booking of 'Friends' but organising this for a future unknown date will be too difficult to achieve. Money for tickets sold already by Penny has been deposited with the theatre so we must ask that these members deal with the box office (01394 382174) when it re-opens regarding a refund or credit. Please let us know if you experience any problems.

GENERAL NOTES REGARDING OUTINGS, ETC. -

- Outings/trips - When booking outings with us, please remember to include a stamped addressed envelope if you would like a receipt for the payment; otherwise we will let you have the paperwork when we next meet.
- When booking seats during the current coronavirus unrest, please be aware that every effort will be made to claim back any money paid out to the venue, etc., if a show has to be cancelled.
- If anyone is unsuccessful when applying for an outing/event, we invite you to let us know if you would like to be considered for any cancellations.
- Guests - Regarding guests wanting to join us for any outing or holiday, we try to make places available whenever possible but members must be given priority.
- Seat numbers - We prepare numbered seating plans for every outing but, sometimes these will conflict with the actual coach seating and/or theatre seating provided. Please bear with us for any changes forced on us and be assured that there are always sufficient places available.

Best Wishes to you all as we head for a 'glorious' summer albeit in a difficult period of time and we look forward to seeing you at forthcoming Company of Four shows, events and outings. PLEASE make yourself known to us at front-of-house of the theatre so that we can say "Hello" and let you have a complimentary programme.