

Barn Theatre

Eightieth Entertaining Year 1924-2004



News

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Hello, Good Evening and Welcome



entrance to the theatre and carpeted stairs to the gallery.

The transformation of the fabric of the Barn Theatre seems to have breathed new life into the old place; audiences have said there is a new excited buzz echoing around the building, especially when the 'house full' notices go out, which happens now on a regular basis.

Much of the credit for this transformation must go to Bruce Reed, Theatre Manager and Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Under his guidance, enthusiasm and leadership he has inspired a dedicated board of trustees, and together with many friends of the Barn Theatre they have given most of their spare time to realising his vision for the millennium. It would not have happened without him.

This is not the end; it is only the end of the beginning. The next major job is to install air conditioning and a lift for the disabled from dressing room to stage. So, much still to go for.

Now that the extension is completed we are now seeing the results. The Barn Theatre has never been busier. It is now fully booked for this year and any available slots for next year are quickly being snapped up.

This is a remarkable achievement when you consider what is happening to some of the other local theatres, the worst affected being Chequer Mead in East Grinstead. This theatre has had a very chequered history over the years,

There is now an even a warmer welcome awaiting you at the Barn Theatre these days. The final finishing touches are still being added to the 'green room', although more red than green, as well as to the foyer. The latest touches are a new 'welcome mat' at the

sorry about the pun. It has had a number of Theatre Managers since it opened, but unfortunately the theatre's fortunes have fluctuated and earlier this year an administrator was called in. This resulted in the majority of shows being cancelled, which has left a number of local amateur groups being owed money. Unfortunately they have to join a queue of creditors, one of the worst affected being Company of Friends which is run by a good friends of the Barn, Michael and Lesley Lowy.

The Fairfield Hall complex, which includes the Ashcroft Theatre, is another local venue that is struggling. The cut in grants it receives from Croydon Council, the uncertainty of the development plans for the complex, and the demise in the audience base have all had an impact. Hiring charges to local amateur groups have had to be increased, which has a knock-on effect. We understand that Croydon Operatic and Dramatic Society (CODA) have just cancelled their Autumn Show because they cannot take the financial risk.

So, the Barn Theatre can stand tall. It has been galvanised this past year and the repertoire of shows now being staged have seen audience numbers rise. The latest triumph was the Barnstormers' magical production of 'Into the Woods' which pushed the Barn Theatre's technically creative talents to the limit. What is also encouraging is that the theatre is attracting the younger generation. August is fully booked with no less than four youth group productions, as well as a number of groups who are returning to stage productions, together with the two local stalwart societies. All this proves that the future looks bright at the Barn.

But the Theatre is never complacent. It recognises the fact that it is you, the audience that is its very lifeblood, and it seems the Theatre is responding by offering something for everyone. The Barn now eighty years old but despite its age I think you will find the welcome is very much 2004. We have seen our vision for the millennium fulfilled.

