



Following our Spotlight feature on RSC Friends Coordinator Penny Kirkwood, we thought it might be nice to hear from our volunteers in London. Kim Allen and Geraldine Caulfield set up and organise all the Friends events in London whilst both having busy careers.

How do you prepare for the events?

When the RSC transfer their productions from Stratford-upon-Avon to London they can use 2 or 3 different theatres in the course of one season. If the theatre is one in which we haven't held an event before we have to establish contact with the Theatre Manager - we introduce ourselves and the FRSC and explain who we are and what we do and try to persuade them to let us hold a series of Friends events in the theatre. We go along to meet the manager, look around the theatre facilities and try to work out the most suitable locations to hold our events.

As soon as we know which productions are transferring and who will be the Company Manager we contact them and discuss what we want to do and who we would like to invite to come along to speak to us. We then rely heavily on them to cajole and persuade the relevant people, although Geraldine is very good at this too, especially when it comes to persuading Directors to let us watch a technical rehearsal! For *The Histories*, the hardest thing was to find a window in the schedule when the actors weren't either rehearsing or performing.

Generally Kim handles the dealings with the Theatre Manager and organises the logistical aspects of the event, whilst Geraldine liaises with the Company Manager and handles the details of who is appearing in the event and what they are going to talk about. We then decide which of us is going to handle all the administration, who will host the Q&A event and work out what gifts we're going to give to our speakers. Whoever will be hosting Q&A events will also research their subjects and compile a list of questions to ask on the day. In an event like the Birthday celebrations we also source birthday cakes and shop for refreshments/catering supplies.

What happens on the day?

We turn up a couple of hours before the event starts, liaise with the Theatre and Company Managers, prepare the room, put up signage and welcome the Friends and their guests. Whoever is hosting the Q&A will go backstage before the event to meet the people they're going to be interviewing. Sometimes events can change on the day (witness the recent technical rehearsal/birthday celebrations) so we have to be prepared to take everything as it comes and just do our best to go with the flow. At the end of the event we thank our speakers, present them with gifts and try to take a few photos. We also write an article for the Friends Newsletter about the events.

Do you have any other responsibilities in your role?

Friends' volunteer organisers correspond with each other and the RSC Marketing Department all year round. There's always something which requires some action, whether it be discussing marketing activities, what's appearing on the Friends section of the website, or ideas for improving processes. We all meet once a year for an AGM where we discuss future plans, decide what activities the FRSC are going to fund in the forthcoming year, and work out how we might spend our "kettle fund" which provides the Company comforts. Geraldine and Kim like to send the London Company a welcome gift - this year the supplies of chocolate were highly appreciated. We both keep in touch with each other all year round, meeting up regularly to discuss what events we want to do and how we might invite. As organisers we also volunteer for other non-FRSC related events such as helping out at the annual RSC Open Day in Stratford.

Any message for the Friends?

We'd just like to ask the Friends to be patient with us. As we are volunteers we don't operate from the RSC's premises and so don't have access to the RSC's systems. Everything we achieve is carried out using our personal resources and with our employers' tolerance! Sometimes if you ring us you will have to leave a message. But we always do our best to help as quickly as possible. Questions about Friends Membership should always be referred to the Membership Department in Stratford but we're happy to assist with queries relating specifically to our London events.

Friends' funding

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST - UNDERSTUDY PERFORMANCE



Photo by Jillian Edelstein after Henri Matisse's 'The Dance'

As you are probably aware, the Friends have helped to fund a public understudy performance of *Love's Labour's Lost* on Tuesday 21 October at 1pm. We have a limited number of tickets available for this and have arranged for Assistant Director Cressida Brown to speak to us about it after the performance. The price for theatre seat, talk and a cup of tea/coffee is £5. Don't worry if you have already booked a seat, you can join us for the talk and drink for £3 post show at The Courtyard Theatre.

Booking Closes 19 October.

Seat and talk - £5 Friends/£6 Guests

Talk (only available to those who have already got theatre tickets) - £3/£4 Guests

The 'seat and talk' offer is limited to one member plus one guest. To Book please call the Friends Event Ticket Hotline 0844 800 1120

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!

Looking a bit further ahead, please make a note in your diaries for an event to celebrate 25 years of RSC Friends. Details will be in the next newsletter, but we can tell you that it will take place on **Sunday 12 October**, in Stratford-upon-Avon.

If you have been a Friend from the start we would love to know. Also if anyone has a favourite event or story about their own experiences as a Friend we'd like to hear from you. Either email elin.joseph@rsc.org.uk or send in your story to Elin Joseph, The Courtyard Theatre, Southern Lane, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 6BB



WRITTEN BY THE FRIENDS, FOR THE FRIENDS

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

Gregory Doran

Saturday 21 June 2008



With the re-staging in The Courtyard Theatre of his 2005 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the eagerly awaited productions of *Hamlet* and *Love's Labour's Lost* to direct, Gregory Doran is a very busy man this season. All the more reason for us to be especially pleased that he has agreed to come and talk to us. 11am in the Methodist Church Hall.

Booking Closes 19 June.

£5 Friends/£6 Guests

Joe Dixon

Saturday 19 July 2008



Back in 2005, Joe Dixon played the part of Oberon in the acclaimed production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

This season he returns to play Bottom. This must be an interesting experience for him and we are delighted that he has accepted our invitation to come and tell us about it. 11am in the Methodist Church Hall.

Booking Closes 17 July.

£5 Friends/£6 Guests

Penny Downie

Saturday 6 September 2008



Last seen as a member of the RSC playing her namesake in *The Penelopiad*, Penny Downie returns this season to play Gertrude in *Hamlet*. Penny was a delightful guest for the Friends some years ago when she was in *The Prisoner's Dilemma* at The Other Place so we are very glad that she will join us once again in September.

Please note the slightly earlier start to enable Penny to get to the matinee performance on time. 10.30am at the Methodist Church Hall.

Booking Closes 4 September.

£5 Friends/£6 guests

For more information on these events please call Penny Kirkwood, 01242 581883, kirkwoods@lineone.net
To book tickets please call the Friends Event Ticket Hotline 0844 800 1120 (see below)

BOOKING FOR RSC FRIENDS EVENTS in Stratford-upon-Avon, London and Newcastle upon Tyne

We are changing the way that you book for RSC Friends Events.

Instead of returning separate booking forms for each event to RSC Friends Organisers, you will now be able to book all events through the RSC Box Office - by phone, post or in person at The Courtyard Theatre.

BY PHONE

Call the dedicated RSC Friends' Events line on **0844 800 1120** or call your Membership Ticket Hotline.

IN PERSON

Visit the RSC Box Office at The Courtyard Theatre, open 9.30am (10am on Tuesdays) to 8pm Monday to Saturday (6pm if there is no performance).

BY POST

Write to: Box Office
Royal Shakespeare Company
Stratford-upon-Avon
CV37 6BB

In addition to being able to purchase all your tickets in one transaction, you will now have the option to pay for Friends' Events using any of the methods accepted by the Box Office - including credit or debit cards.

No booking fees or postage apply to any of these methods. If you purchase tickets for a performance in addition to an RSC Friends' Event, a 75p postage fee will apply. Ticket refunds will be available until 72 hours before the event.

Events in this newsletter can be booked by phone, in person or by post. Online booking for Friends events will be launched later this year.

FRIENDS' EVENTS TICKET HOTLINE 0844 800 1120 (NO BOOKING FEE, CALLS FROM BT LANDLINE COST 5P PER MINUTE)

PAST EVENTS

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

Maureen Beattie



It was an absolute pleasure to welcome Maureen to talk to us in February as The Histories Ensemble were in the final stages of their time at Stratford. We talked about how unusual it is to be given the opportunity to be part of an acting company for such a long period of time and about the journey they have all been on – and the hard work! Maureen's wonderful sense of humour and her Scottish roots came through strongly and we all hope that we see her again soon.

Bench unveiling



We had two events in April – on Shakespeare's actual birthday we unveiled a bench in memory of Gwenda Stephens, former officer of the Friends. The sun shone as we gathered outside The Courtyard Theatre together with Gwenda's sisters Ann and Betty and other members of their family and friends. After Bryan and Penny had unveiled the bench, we all went upstairs for coffee

and cake and a great deal of reminiscing about a Friend who is much missed and, as it says on the bench's plaque, 'Remembered with affection and gratitude'.

Birthday Celebrations



The annual Birthday Celebrations took place on Saturday 26 April and we not only had a full complement of present Company to cut our cake and read sonnets to us, but had also been approached by Richard Johnson who was celebrating 50 years of participating in the Birthday festivities. We were delighted to welcome him and thrilled by his beautiful rendition of

Sonnet 65. After the reception, Stephen Boxer, currently playing Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, represented us in the procession and unfurled the Friends' flag. We are very grateful to Catering General Manager Terry Davis and his team for all they did to make these events run smoothly, and to David Wimperis for the gorgeous cakes.

Jane Cromack & Penny Kirkwood, RSC Friends organisers

NEWCASTLE

Noughts & Crosses lunch



During February 2008 Newcastle audiences were privileged to have *Noughts & Crosses* at Northern Stage. This production was well received by Newcastle theatre goers and it was good to see large numbers of young people in the audience. To celebrate this event the Newcastle Friends, with the support of Alan McKenna who is in charge of catering at

Northern Stage, produced a splendid afternoon tea and we were joined by the majority of the Company.

Simon Callow



Following *Noughts & Crosses* we were to be without an RSC visit until the autumn. However, Simon Callow who was appearing in *Equus* at the Theatre Royal agreed to be our guest at a talk arranged for a Friday afternoon. Simon was a wonderful guest and was very enthusiastic about taking part, indeed he asked to meet us after one of his performances to discuss the

format of the forthcoming afternoon. The 50 Friends in attendance thoroughly enjoyed his talk which was declared by one member to be an 'inspiration'.

Birthday Celebrations



19 April was the date of the Friends' Birthday Celebration in Newcastle. This was well supported by over 40 Friends, many of them contributing to the event with readings, sketches, etc. It is surprising how much talent is possessed by many of our members! An opportunity was taken at the Birthday Celebrations to raffle a Histories poster which had

been kindly signed by the complete acting Company. We are grateful to Michael Dembowicz, Histories Company Manager, for organising this for us.

Yvonne & David Richardson, RSC Friends organisers

LONDON

Birthday/Rehearsal Event



Sticking to the script was definitely not on the agenda when the Friends met at the Roundhouse on 23 April to celebrate Shakespeare's Birthday and watch the technical rehearsal of *Henry VI Part III*. At very short notice and due to the success of the technical rehearsal it was necessary to bring the event forward to 5pm, and even then there was just Act 5, Scene 6 left for us to see. However the somewhat ad hoc format of the event was nonetheless very enjoyable.

We were delighted when almost the entire Company joined us to celebrate the Bard's 444th birthday. Ann Ogbomo, James Tucker, Nicholas Asbury and Hannah Barrie entertained us with readings and Michael Boyd encouraged everyone present to get to know each other.

Following the toast, Michael cut the cake which had been specially designed to reflect a Wars of the Roses theme. After Friends and actors had a chance to mingle, we were invited back into the auditorium for a talk by Michael Dembowicz, the Histories' Company Manager, on how the RSC had transported the productions so successfully from The Courtyard Theatre to the Roundhouse. The high point of the event came when we were invited to stand upon the Histories' stage and to pass through the hallowed portals from whence every character has emerged over the course of the last 2 years. Roaming backstage we discovered all sorts of curiosities from headless corpses to buckets of blood! Reluctantly we had to take our leave of this usually forbidden environment but a great deal of fun was had in the process and all agreed that it had been a very memorable event.

We must thank everyone who was involved, but particularly Michael Dembowicz, Alison Bomber and Corinne Beaver from the RSC and Laura Watson from the Roundhouse.

Kim Allen & Geraldine Caulfield, RSC Friends organisers

Introducing Elin Joseph, Assistant Marketing Officer



Elin Joseph has now taken over from Natasha Goodge as the RSC's Assistant Marketing Officer responsible for the Friends. Elin graduated with a BA in Theatre Arts from Derby University in 2005 and has come from Malvern Theatres in Worcestershire where she was working as Marketing Trainee.

"I am looking forward to working with and meeting the Friends. I have come into the company at a very exciting time with a lot of changes under way, I have already got my RSC Friends' thinking cap on for all the amazing opportunities the new RST has to offer".

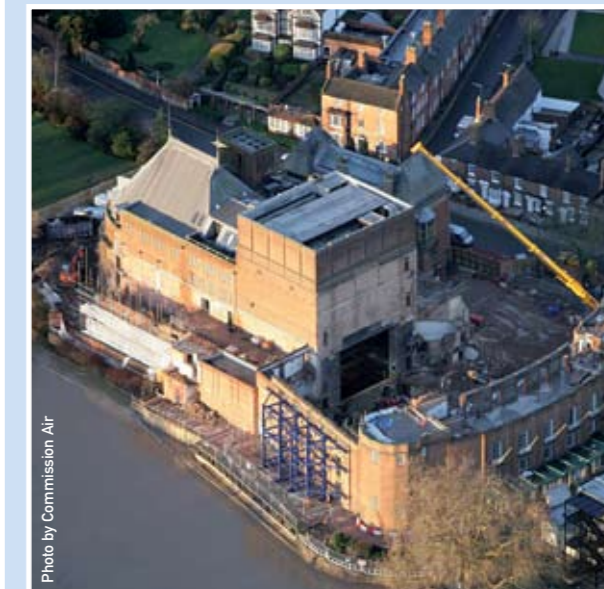
Volunteering Opportunities

Many thanks to all who responded to my appeal in the last newsletter for desk volunteers. We now have a good number in the team and have been able to complete the rota to the end of the season.

Penny Kirkwood, 01242 581883, kirkwoods@lineone.net

Transforming the Royal Shakespeare Theatre with support from the RSC Friends – an update from the RSC Campaign team

Last year, the RSC Friends joined Arts Council England's Lottery Fund, Advantage West Midlands and other lead donors in making a major contribution to support the transformation of our theatres. This early support enabled us to begin the project with £100 million in funds already raised, leaving £12.8 million needed to complete the project.



In Stratford-upon-Avon, work continues on the main theatre site while we continue to perform in The Courtyard Theatre up the road. Having secured and protected the retained portions of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre (including the Art Deco foyer, riverside facade, Fountain Staircase and fly tower), the demolition contractors are now completing their work. The next stage has begun with the pouring of concrete pilings so that the new buildings can begin to take shape in the coming months.

The RSC Friends were also early supporters of the Take Your Seat appeal, naming three seats in the new Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Donations to the appeal are put toward building the new theatre, and will be recognised with an inscription on a seat plaque. Many individual Friends have also taken part, and it has become quite popular to name a seat in memory of a loved one. We are hearing some very moving stories about people who have been coming to the RSC for many years and wish to formalise their memories on a seat plaque in the new Royal Shakespeare Theatre.

Any Friends who want more information on the Take Your Seat appeal, can visit our website at www.rsc.org.uk/support or call the RSC Campaign office on **01789 272526** or email us at campaign@rsc.org.uk

REGIONAL SCHOOLS CELEBRATION

The RSC's Education Department would like to invite you to the Regional Schools Celebration. We are celebrating the talent and creativity nurtured by our flagship project, the Learning and Performance Network, a three year partnership with schools throughout England. This selection of unique performances, inspired by Shakespeare texts, will be performed by Primary and Secondary students from nine schools across the country.

The Courtyard Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Monday 30 June 2008, 10.00am to 4.30pm

Places are limited, please reserve your free ticket by calling your Members' Ticket Hotline