



**Friends of Finchley Youth Centre**

## **Supporters' Meeting**

**Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013 at 8:15pm  
at Finchley Youth Theatre, 142 High Road, London N2 9ED**

## **Minutes of Meeting**

### **Present**

Arjun Mittra, Carolyn Pickles, Cheryl Ferner-Reeves, Christine Marchesi, Jan Venga, Judy Osborne, Katy Hoodfar, Kate Brown, Ken Osborne (secretary), Laura Davitt, Lene Venga, Liz Sacre, Lizzie Allen, Marian Stratton (treasurer), Marie Allen, Paul Osborne, Robina Spinks, Roger Chapman (chairman), Sarah Marchesi, Stan Spinks, Stephen Allen, Tark Butler, Zoe Newell,.

### **1. Introductions and Apologies**

Roger Chapman welcomed everyone to the meeting. There was then a round the table introduction of attendees.

Apologies for absence had been received from Andrew Harrod, Catherine Atkinson, Peggy Sharp and Tark Butler.

The agenda had been issued by Ken on 25/9/13 (file: **FoFYC Supporters Meeting 131002 agenda.doc**).

The minutes of the previous meeting had been held on 28/2/13 and issued as **FoFYT Supporters Meeting 130228 minutes.doc** on 3/3/13. Although not discussed, the status of actions from that meeting are listed in these minutes at Annex 1.

### **2. Talk by Carolyn Pickles**

Roger welcomed Carolyn to the meeting and thanked her for agreeing to give a talk.

Carolyn started by saying how community-based activities were a very powerful influence and could result in lifelong friendships - she recalled how many lasting friendships had developed after she had been involved with the Osborne family and others at a Holy Trinity musical play put on by the children in 1997.

She said that her two daughters had attended Finchley Youth Theatre activities when they were younger and they loved it. Carolyn herself had recently taken part in a poetry reading event with Barry Jackson at FYT and she was stunned to realise what a marvellous and special place it was. She wondered if others in the community really knew what happened at FYT and suggested that more publicity would be useful.

Carolyn said that she wanted to be an actor from an early age. She grew up in Halifax where although there were few facilities for training, and certainly nothing like FYT, she had various parts in community plays - her first role was a second moth in Mrs Dungbeatle! but she progressed from there. Others in her family were also in the acting profession - her aunt Christina Pickles had been in many films and TV series, most notably in Friends and her great uncle was Wilfred Pickles, famous as a radio celebrity and broadcaster as well as a TV, film and stage actor (and the first newsreader to speak in a regional accent - on the BBC Home Service during World War II, partly to make it more difficult for Nazis to impersonate BBC broadcasters!). Although she had tried to dissuade her daughters from following the same profession her eldest daughter Lucy was now doing an acting MA.

Carolyn continued by giving a brief synopsis of her subsequent career - after university she joined the National Youth Theatre and got various roles in theatre and then TV and film. Her big break was in the TV series Bluebell in 1986 where she got the starring role as Miss Bluebell (against competition from Shirley Anne Field and Twiggy) where she had to learn to dance, and to teach the professional dancers how to act. In 1989 she played the part of Anton Rogers's daughter Simone in May to December - a long-running TV comedy and subsequently appeared in many episodes of The Bill as DCI Kim Reid. She recalled that afterwards she had sometimes been mistaken for a real police woman when out in public and that in the green room the actors

tended to group together with other actors playing the same police ranks, as they tend to do in real life. Since then she had appeared in numerous other TV series and films and on the stage, both West End and in repertory, the most recent being as in the TV series Land Girls, as Charity Burbage in the film Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows and as Maggie Radcliffe in the TV series Broadchurch - of which a second series next year will be based around the trial.

### **3. Questions and Answers with Carolyn**

Roger asked how Carolyn prepared for each role. Carolyn said that it was different for each medium - in the theatre one had five or six weeks to prepare with rehearsals, since you had to be absolutely rock solid whereas in TV and film, apart from learning the lines beforehand, it was not uncommon to first meet your co-actors on the first day of shooting. In soaps such as Emmerdale in which she'd appeared the scripts came out like a production line in a factory.

Arjun wondered how much research Carolyn did into the background of a play or film, for example in the Land Girls which was set in World War II. Carolyn confessed that she did not do much, mainly concentrating on the script, although in some plays, such as Beasts, which involved three sisters in Pinochet's Chile, she had studied the background a bit more.

Marian asked if there was any role or play which Carolyn would really like to do now. Carolyn said that there were many; on the stage there was more scope for playing characters younger or older than herself but not so in film and TV. At the moment she was doing a series of radio plays but the work available in that medium had decreased.

With that, Carolyn ended her talk and Roger thanked her very much and continued with the normal FoFYC agenda items.

### **4. What's happening with the Theatre and what work has the Board of Trustees of the Friends been doing?**

Roger, now ran through what's been happening since the last Supporters' meeting.

He said that the trustees held Board meetings on a monthly basis and had done various administrative things such as sorting out the bank account, updating the trustee names with the Charity Commission and setting up the website.

Roger mentioned that, as explained by Flo Armstrong, Head of Youth and Community at Barnet Council, at the last Supporters meeting, the Council had decided to rename FYT as the Finchley Youth Centre (FYC) (although the sign outside the building still said FYT). He said that as a result of the Localism Act, where other organisations can bid for services provided by the Council, there had been two bids to run FYT (from Arts Depot Trust and Cutting the Strings) but both had been rejected by the Council partly on the grounds that the building provided more than just arts and theatre services. However, Roger said that we should continue to be on our guard in case future bids were submitted.

Roger said that currently it seemed that the Council's budget for FYC was safe for next year although there was no guarantee that there would not be cuts in the future. He said that it was not surprising that there would not be significant cuts in an election year. Arjun, as a Barnet councillor, said that he would be happy to do anything needed to support FYC. He said that there would be another funding review next year and he was under no illusion about future funding difficulties, particularly since there was the possibility of some London councils merging.

Various fundraising options had and were being investigated. Roger and Liz had met with Fairplay Barnet (previously called IPOP) to discuss the possibility of a joint funding application for an inclusive arts officer to help out during the evening activities. Currently Liz was the only council-funded arts officer in Barnet and is being given more daytime duties, so a member of staff available during the evening would be very useful.

Another bid to Awards for All was in preparation to sponsor free places and pay for support costs (these are increasing as a result of for additional activities taking place, particularly when putting on a show when costs escalated due to rehearsals). Liz explained that, in order to keep a full programme of activities, many are now being run by other providers who are funded by the activity fees and currently offer two free places – but are unable to provide more free places for children from disadvantaged families.

Roger mentioned that during the East Finchley Christmas Festival on 7 December there would be an Open Day at FYC to show people what FYC was doing, with guided tours. He hoped to have an exhibition of the history of FYT so asked if anyone had any photos, cuttings or other historical information to contact himself or Liz. Such material could also be added to the website.

**Action 1/131002 - Anyone with suitable historical material about FYT (photos, press cuttings, etc.) to contact Roger Chapman or Liz Sacre - to use in the Open Day exhibition and on the website**

## **5. Open discussion on future activities of the Friends**

Stan asked if more funds were needed. He had noted that the website included a donations page but it was currently blank. Marian said that it would soon be constructed with a PayPal facility. Stan had some experience of using PayPal so could offer some advice if needed.

Other fundraising ideas were suggested:

- Christine mentioned the "buy a brick" concept (although not sure if appropriate for a council-owned building);
- Robina suggested an FoFYC presence at the Cherry Tree Woods festival - although leaflets had been handed out at the last festival, a stall may be beneficial;
- Laura suggested asking people to sponsor a free place as a Christmas present and also mentioned that some retail websites have a facility to pay a small additional percentage to a charity;
- Arjun suggested publicising such ideas on the website and could also set up direct debit schemes for people who would like to make regular donations - he was sure that there must be many people in East Finchley who would happily donate £5 per month;
- Robina mentioned the GiftAid scheme to claim tax back on donations - she and Stan could give advice on how this operated;
- Kate wondered if an article in The Archer, referring to Carolyn's talk, could encourage people who had found FYT helpful to be persuaded to give something back.

The subject of the name change of FYT to FYC was then discussed again. Liz said that she understood Flo's argument for the name change but was concerned about the Friends appearing to represent FYC instead of FYT so may be asked to support non-theatre/arts activities. She said that there was a covenant on the building when it was sold to the Council which says it must be used for young people but need not be limited to the Arts. Marie said that the name "Youth Centre" brought to mind sports activities such as table tennis and young people hanging around without a purpose - she was worried about watering down the purpose of the building and losing excellence. Cheryl said that the term "Centre" removed any association with the Arts.

Stephen had the worry that many current participants with learning difficulties in FYC activities were approaching the age of 25 when in theory they were not "youth" so thought there may be a mismatch with the name. It was noted that there were now activities which encompassed a greater age range (the Mencap drama and dance on Monday daytimes and Cheryl's 18-35 drama group on Friday early evenings).

Stan asked if there was a problem if non-arts groups wanted to use the building. Liz said that in practice the timetable was full with arts activities. She mentioned that Community Focus had recently made an approach to use the building (although this had been rejected since they needed the whole building).

Ken wondered whether the Friends should revert back to being the Friends of Finchley Youth Theatre FoFYT instead of FoFYC. The constitution, charity name and bank account were still FoFYT and so to change back would only need a change to the website and headings on minutes, etc. Roger agreed to discuss this at the next Board meeting and would also mention the idea to Flo to gauge her reaction.

**Action 2/131002 - FoFYC trustees to discuss the possible change back of the name to FoFYT at next Board meeting**

Steve said that the building provided a fantastic facility and praised Liz for managing more activities with less staff. With that there was a round of applause for the good work that Liz is doing.

## **6. Next Supporters' meeting: Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

Roger said that the next Supporters' meeting was planned for Wednesday 18 December - which would take the form of a social evening of some sort.

He closed the meeting and thanked everyone for turning up with special thanks to Carolyn and Liz.

## Annex 1

### Status of Actions from Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th February 2013

**Action 1/130228 - Ken Osborne to email supporters asking for volunteers to contact Marian Stratton to help with serving refreshments and providing cakes for sale and helping out front of house during the forthcoming FYT performance of "Something Wicked This Way Comes" Thursday 21st to Saturday 23rd March**

- Status: Done. Various supporters volunteered and the refreshments and cakes were a great success, raising a profit of £63
- Action - closed

**Action 2/130228 - Roger Chapman to revise the "Role and purpose" paper to change FYT and Finchley Youth Theatre to FYC and Finchley Youth Centre**

- Status: Done and issued on 3/3/13 as 130301 FoFYT Role and purpose.doc
- Action - closed

**Action 3/130228 - Roger Chapman to check with Charity Commission and Bank whether it was possible to easily change the name of FoFYT to Friends of Finchley Youth Centre**

- Status: Roger had checked with the Charity Commission and discovered that it was possible to do this. A change to the bank account had not yet been checked but it was obviously possible to close the existing account and open a new one. However, see discussion and action in §5 of these minutes regarding a change of name.
- Action - closed

**Action 4/130228 - Cheryl Ferner-Reeves to send Roger Chapman a couple of "Vision" paragraphs to help build a funding case to allowing young people with learning difficulties to continue at FYC after they were 25 years old**

- Status: Cheryl is now running a drama course for 18-35 year-olds at FYC
- Action - discharged

**Action 5/130228 - Trustees to suggest meeting dates for 2013 and advise supporters**

- Status: Ken Osborne had advised Supporters on 4/4/13 of the dates of 12 June, 2 October and 18 December although the 12 June meeting was subsequently cancelled
- Action - closed