

NEWSLETTER – AUTUMN 2017

New People, New Pieces, New Places

It has been an interesting six months for Sage. We continue to attract new members. We have developed two new pieces choreographed by Sage members as an outcome of a series of choreographic workshops run by Simon Rice. We have added other new work to our repertoire, and we have performed in some highly diverse and very interesting venues. And, of course, we have met some extraordinary people along the way. Apart from the joy of dancing itself, this is one of the most pleasurable aspects of what we do.

New people



The three new members who joined us at the beginning of the year, Jen, Maggy and Teresa (TT) have now become established members of the company and have brought a wonderful collection of new skills to the company as their biographies on our website illustrate. We have continued to attract a steady flow of potential new members who wish to audition with us over the last 6 months. This may well be as a result of an article and ad which appeared in the February edition of *The Dancing Times*, and because we now have over 1,000 Twitter followers. We currently have two probationary members, Angela and Philippa whom we hope will join us in due course.

We also look forward to welcoming back two of our existing members in the autumn, Cecil Rowe who has been touring and performing with the professional company, *Tilted Productions*, for the last three months, and Felicity McDonald who has been taking her own very exciting version of a gap year.

New Pieces

The choreographic workshops have resulted in two highly original pieces of new work.



Trifariam – a work created by Sage member Liz Heasman, in which three performers dance to combined rhythms of choral music and jazz. Sounds interesting? It is! It is a quietly joyful piece which celebrates lasting friendships with grace and style.

Friend – a powerful dance/drama piece which is set to a poem by Bren Gosling and is performed by Bren and his fellow Sage member Catriona Maccoll.



These new pieces give us much more flexibility in choosing what we perform in which venue. For example, we chose *Trifariam* as the most appropriate piece for our performance at the Cubitt Spring Ball this year.



Zadok is another addition to our repertoire. Nobody writes a better tune than Handel and this stirring piece has been co-created by Simon Rice and members of the company. It was first performed at the OSO Barnes in March and was very well received. At the end of the performance members of the audience were invited to dance with us and interpret the music in their own way. A surprising number did so.

Another Presence – TT has been working with Fionuala Power and together they are in the process of creating a lyrical contemporary duet which we look forward to previewing in October.

New Places

Whiteley Village

Mention 'Retirement village' and one immediately thinks of sedate bungalows, neatly clipped hedges and regimented flower borders.

But Whiteley retirement village in Walton-on-Thames is something altogether different. We first heard about Whiteley when it hit the national newspaper headlines for having the unusual distinction of housing the largest number of residents over the age of 100 in the country. One of our members, Maggy Pigott, had also met the Chief Executive, Chandra McGowan, and mentioned that Sage would be happy to perform at one of their social afternoons if they were interested.



We were warmly welcomed in May and were amazed by the Whiteley set-up and by the Whiteley residents we met. It was originally founded over 100 years ago by the Bayswater Department store magnate William Whiteley who made a bequest of over £1 million to house the needy elderly poor. It now stretches over 225 acres, has 262 grade 2 listed almshouses, 51 extra care flats, a residential home and a nursing home, a shop, church, social hall and 23 clubs and societies run by the residents themselves. And what residents! Take Josie, who in her youth was a fire-eater, snake charmer and cabaret artist. (If this seems somewhat hard to swallow watch the video of her life story on the Whiteley website). In her view Whiteley is so successful because it "makes you feel wanted and useful". It's a simple message but one that is all too easily forgotten.



We performed to a relatively small audience of residents who clearly were interested in dance but, judging by their enthusiasm and the way many of them moved to the music, we would love to go back and work with them in a more creative way. We would also like to put our names down so that when the time comes we too can end our days in a place like this!

Guys Hospital Atrium

We have performed a number of times as part of the Breathe Arts programme of lunchtime concerts which take place in St Thomas' or Guy's Hospitals, but in a break with tradition we were delighted to be given the opportunity to take part in an early evening performance in the large atrium space at Guy's Hospital.

We shared the platform with Corali, an exciting professional performance group made up of adults with learning disabilities working alongside professional dancers and other non-disabled artists such as photographers, musicians, and filmmakers. It was a very enjoyable evening and our double bill certainly did its bit to help realise the Breathe Arts vision of opening the arts to as wide an audience as possible and promoting the arts for health and wellbeing. We received a lot of positive feedback and one young doctor came up to me in the coffee shop afterwards and said how much our performance had inspired and refreshed her after a very busy day on the wards.



Ignition Festival

Another first for us this year was taking part in the Ignition Festival run by DanceWest. We performed alongside 12 other dance groups of all ages in the lovely riverside Rose Theatre in Kingston-on-Thames.



We thoroughly enjoyed the experience and found ourselves in very good dance company. The festival showcased a wide range of dance ranging from musical theatre, street dance, contemporary dance from the youth dance companies of Rambert and Arts Ed, and special pieces performed by Ignition bursary students. Such opportunities to perform in large professional theatres like this can only help to increase our experience and our confidence.

Future dates for your diary

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| October 11 | Lunchtime performance Guy's Hospital at 1pm |
| October 21 | Performance at UCL as part of the Bloomsbury Festival |
| April 10, 2018 | We are hosting a whole evening of dance, music and prose at the Arts Ed Theatre in Chiswick |

Be sure to come and see us!

See our website for further details
<http://sagedancecompany.com>

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