

SAGEDANCECOMPANY

Newsletter – Spring 2017

What we did last summer ...

Last year's summer season saw us performing at four different venues in four very different parts of London. On June 20th we performed "Pieces of Eight" at the Cubitt Arts Festival in Islington Town Hall. We danced with such great gusto that we nearly ended up on the laps of the Mayor and her assembled dignitaries who were sitting almost in the middle of our performance space. On June 28th we held a second evening of dance and prose at the OSO Arts Centre, Barnes and received excellent feedback for our mixed programme. On July 16th we took part in the Big Bus intergenerational festival on Twickenham Green, a lovely sunny afternoon of fun for all the family. Finally on July 30th we performed at the Sagacity festival organised by Fergus Early at Oxford House in Bethnal Green. This always showcases an interesting mix of dance styles and confirms for us that we appear to be unique in attempting ballet-based pieces for older dancers.

What we want to do nextmoving on up and moving on out

Sage has been running for six years now and during that time we have enjoyed challenging established ideas about what older dancers can and should be doing. This year we have decided that it is time to try and raise our game and seek additional funding to help us grow and develop as a company. So we have recently submitted funding applications to the Arts Council and the Foyle Foundation. If we are successful our plans include:

- Producing a bigger and better version of our OSO Arts Centre programme and performing it in a central London venue.
- Gaining experience as performers by working in public arts venues such as Tate Modern, Tate Britain or the Dulwich Picture Gallery.
- Creating and performing our own work as choreographers. We have already begun this journey with workshops provided by Simon Rice, our Artistic Director, but additional funding would enable more of us to take part, and possibly to work with other guest choreographers.

Finally we would love the opportunity to take our work outside London to help open up opportunities to older dancers in other parts of the country. This is in response to the emails we regularly receive asking for such advice and support from all parts of the country. Here's an example:

"We are writing to you, because we are very interested in finding out more about the Sage Dance Company. We thoroughly enjoyed watching the video on You Tube and found it very inspirational. Myself and a colleague have many years' experience in community dance practice and have recently joined together to promote the dance projects we do here under the banner 'Community Dance, Isle of Wight'.

A small number of the more agile members, are very interested in pushing themselves further, and would like to learn some contemporary dance and ballet technique (one lady was once a dancer with the Royal Ballet). Some would also love to perform. The funding I have at the moment is specifically for 'health and well-being' and forming a performance company would not be part of the funder's remit. Therefore we are looking to start a new group which could hopefully become a small scale performance company on the island.

We were wondering whether you could give us some advice? We'd be really grateful if you could share your experiences and give us some tips on how to get a group such as yours off the ground." Michelle Hainsworth, Community dance teacher IOW

There is obviously a big need out there for older dancers to have the chance to push themselves, to learn some contemporary and ballet-based technique, and to perform to a high level. We want to do our bit to encourage those opportunities. So fingers crossed that our funding applications are successful although we are only too well aware of the intense competition.

A fond farewell ...

We are immensely sad to announce that long-term Sage dance member and trustee Zélide Jeppe passed away peacefully on Friday August 12th 2016. She joined Sage in September 2010 just six months after its formation and danced with us almost to the end. She had a great deal of experience in many aspects of dance and was something of a pioneer in dance therapy. Zelide grew up in India and South Africa and trained in classical ballet with Frank Staff in Johannesburg where she danced alongside Monica Mason. On her return to England she joined the Royal Ballet School at 14 and danced with the Royal Opera Ballet before going on to work in other dance idioms in London and South Africa. As well as her extraordinary gift for dance we will remember her for her charm and unfailing good humour, for her warmth and willingness to share her talents with us all. We were so very lucky to have her. We held an open rehearsal evening in memory of Zelide on November 9th to which her family, friends and former Sage members were invited and at one point in the evening we were all dancing together to the stirring music of Handel's Zadok the Priest. It would have made her smile. Whatever we do in the future we will do it very much with Zelide in mind.

And a warm welcome...

We are very fortunate to have several new members, so a very warm welcome to Teresa Thornber-Mann, Jen Kahawatte and Maggy Pigott. We also have a number of other dancers who joined recently who are still in their probationary period. Some new members have had extensive dance training, some less so, but they all bring an individuality of style which will greatly benefit Sage.

Happy new year to you all...

And as our supporters wish us luck for our coming year. Let's hope we can realise some of our plans. Do join us if you can – **our next performance is at the OSO Arts Centre, Barnes on March 25th**. You can follow us on Facebook, Sage Dance Company, Twitter@SageDanceCo1, and Instagram @sagedancecompany. Also our website has a new short promotional video about our work which you may like to view at: <http://sagedancecompany.com/productions/>

And why do we do all this? Because we need to! To paraphrase good old Henry David Thoreau: *"Most men (and women) lead lives of quiet desperation. They go to their graves with their song unsung".*

We have no intention of doing so. Our dancing will be done!

