Basingstoke's young actors ready to make history

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Let's Make History is the brainchild of Proteus Theatre Company and the project has been made possible, thanks to a £23,700 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

As part of the Basingstoke Festival 2012, the young participants will be discovering more about the heritage of their home town and surrounding areas. Working in partnership with Hampshire Arts and Museums Service, the young people, aged between 11 and 21, will be researching the lives of their contemporaries in Tudor and Victorian times and in the 1960s.

The older age-group (15 – 21) will follow the lives of a number of young people who called Basing House home, as the final civil war siege of October 1645 comes to a close; a middle group (14 -16) will discover what it was like to live as a young person in Victorian times using the Milestones Living History Museum as inspiration. The youngest researchers (11-13) will be uncovering life in 1960s Basingstoke with help from the Willis community museum.

They will work with specially commissioned professional playwrights Clive Holland and David Lane and each group will use its findings to help script a performance that will take place at each of the historic locations during the Basingstoke Festival 2012 in July.

For the Heritage Lottery Fund Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East England, said: "This project has been supported by funding from our Young Roots programme and will provide the young participants with a range of skills as well as helping them to learn more about their locality through the ages. With Young Roots now ten years old, we have increased the funding available and welcome new applications."

For Proteus Theatre Company, Ross Harvie, Associate Director (Producing) said: "We are incredibly grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for investing in such a worthwhile project. Over 55 young people have started researching history all over Basingstoke with the help from Sue Washington, at Hampshire Arts & Museums Service, as well as engaging in sessions with their respective writers. The process of this project is just as important as the end result in July and all the young people involved have shown a new found interest in Basingstoke's local history."

Basing House, in its heyday, was the largest private house in England and became a Royalist stronghold during the Civil War when it was besieged by Parliamentary forces, finally falling to Oliver Cromwell in 1645. Milestones Living History Museum houses technology, transport and social history exhibitions and has created an imaginary, full-scale village depicting Victorian times as well as the 1930s and 1940s. The Willis Museum tells the history of the local area from prehistoric times to the present day when the building served as the Town Hall and was used during the 1960s as a concert venue for the younger generation of that era.

Notes to editors

Performance information:

Let's Make History 1645 written by Clive Holland
Directed by Alix Cazalet

Wednesday 4 July and Thursday 5 July 2012, 7pm at Basing House, Old Basing, Basingstoke

A new play performed by the Proteus and Central Studio's Young People's Theatre, the Pro-teens, in the magnificent Tudor Great Barn that follows the lives of a number of young people who call Basing House home, as the final siege of October 1645 comes to a close. The great sweep of history that changed the face of England acts as the backdrop to the loves, the lives, the comedy and the tragedy of ordinary people living at the centre of these extraordinary times. For a few short weeks in October 1645 Basing House had the magnifying glass of the country trained upon it; the balance of power within England came down to Oliver Cromwell's Artillery at the Battle of Basing House. This is a touching story of hope and fear, of happiness and regret of a group people who live in a world where everything is beyond their control.

Let's Make History 1895 written by Clive Holland
Directed by Amanda Affleck-Cruise
Wednesday 11 July and Thursday 12 July 2012, 7pm at Milestones Museum, Basingstoke

A new play performed by the Proteus and Central Studio's Young People's Theatre, Pro-jectors, exploring the lives of young Victorians. It is 1895 and Basingstoke is an up and coming country town, the railway has opened up the West Country and London to the local population; it is a time of great change. This is a story of contrasts; the wealthy in the big new houses and the poor in Basingstoke's Workhouse, the glamour of an exotic touring show and the mundanity of an industrial accident, the Co-Op and the crime of the century. Set on the Victorian streets of Basingstoke, and performed on the Victorian Street in Milestones museum, prepare to be transported back through time to the reign of Queen Victoria; though you will have to walk on your own two feet.

Let's Make History 1965 written by David Lane
Directed by Ross Harvie & Kat Ellicott
Monday 2 July and Tuesday 3 July 2012, 7pm at The Willis Museum, Basingstoke

A new play performed by the Proteus and Central Studio's Young People's Theatre, Pro-actives. This promenade piece around the Willis Museum allows audiences to follow a group of young 1960's socialites as they spend their evenings in the Galaxy Club at the Town Hall (as the Willis Museum was known back then). The new motor way, hospital and houses are shaping Basingstoke into the town we know today but the talk on everyone's lips is the promise of a new shopping centre and an influx of 60,000 people from London who will be shaping a new era of the town. Be prepared to walk, watch and dance at we transport you back to 1960's Basingstoke.

Tickets are £5.10 Adults, £4.10 Concessions and £3.10 Students and Children. Available from Central Studio Box Office on 01256 418 318

Proteus is an award winning theatre company that believes the audience is as important as the artist and that to create truly dynamic and relevant theatre the audience and artist must inspire each other's imagination. Quality, Integrity and Innovation are the values at the heart of all Proteus's work, and the criteria by which the company judges its success.

Further information

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