



Streatham Hill's Sleeping Beauty

Streatham has a 'sleeping beauty' – a unique gem of a theatre built for an audience of over 2500 with a stage large enough to take the very biggest shows. The **Streatham Hill Theatre** at 110 Streatham Hill was Grade 2 listed in 1994 as "an unusually lavish example of a theatre built in the short-lived revival of building in 1929-30; as a suburban example of this date the building may be unique".

Opened in 1929 as Streatham Hill Playhouse, the theatre attracted stars including John Gielgud and Vivian Leigh in top shows from the West End. It survived bomb damage in 1944 and reopened in 1950, but by 1962 it succumbed to the growth of TV and became Britain's biggest bingo venue, the



theatre preserved in suspended animation.

Bingo stopped in January, and the owners of Beacon Bingo now seek a new cultural use for the building. Many in Streatham are keen to put it to use as a centre for the burgeoning cultural scene in South London. There is great local concern about the risk of deterioration and the potential loss to redevelopment of this iconic part of Streatham's heritage.

The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre has been founded by David Harvey to help bring the theatre back into use and save it for future generations. A new arts centre based at Streatham Hill Theatre would give Lambeth a counterpoint to the South Bank Centre. The Friends are working with theatre heritage organisations including the Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT) and the Theatres Trust.

David said, "I know this lovely building well, having helped stage theatre and run tours there, with



great support from Beacon Bingo. Everyone who sees the theatre is in awe of this hidden gem and wants it to be brought back to life."

The Friends will hold a public meeting in the New Year to give everyone a chance to get involved. They would love to hear from anyone able to support them in any way.

Join the Friends by liking them on Facebook at facebook.com/StreathamHillTheatre, following on Twitter twitter.com/StreathamHillT or contact sht@gaz.me.uk.