

THE VICTORIA HALL THEATRE

The Victoria Hall Theatre, a much loved Victorian building was originally built in 1887 as a community centre. It has, over the years, served as a concert hall, library, dance hall, wartime canteen, and youth club.

In 1997, after several years of under-use, the building was converted by volunteers into a fully functioning, 120 seat community theatre, and the Victoria Hall Performing Arts Association (a charitable trust) was set-up to run and manage the venue.

It has since become home to several local theatre companies for adults and children and hosts a wide range of shows & events all year round. Work on maintaining and running the theatre is done on a purely voluntary basis – from bar staff and box-office to the on-going building and refurbishment work.

Last year Essex County Council, who own the building declared their intention of selling it off, giving the Victoria Performing Arts Association first option of buying it from them. Although no final figure has been agreed it is expected to be in the region of £90,000, which would need to be raised by the end of 2008.

FUND RAISING

As part of the process to raise money, several schemes have been initiated. These include:

- **Membership** – encouraging users, visitors and local people to become members (or Friends Of) Victoria Hall Theatre. Not only does this raise money in membership fees, but also keeps members informed and involved in the theatre and the campaign to keep it open.
- **Events** – Casino Night, Race Night, Indulgence Evening, Quiz Nights
- **Shows** – most in-coming theatre companies now donate all profits from productions to the fund.
- **Seat Sponsorship** – actively seeking sponsors (individual and corporate) to buy a seat for £250 each.

- **Friends of Johnny Wong** – In June this year one of the theatre's most popular and active members, Johnny Wong, was tragically killed in car accident. It was strongly felt that starting a fund in his name, dedicated to raising funds to save the theatre would be a most fitting tribute. This fund now stands at £23,000.
- **Lottery and Grants** – the VHPAA entered a lottery bid at the beginning of the year, which reached the third stage, before being declined. VHPAA has also applied for grants from local authorities and arts councils, but has, so far, only received one, relatively small, grant.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

At the end of 2007 it is estimated that we will have raised at least £30,000, a third of what we require. Momentum has gathered in recent months and there are several schemes and events forthcoming. We are however, also aware of the monumental task ahead. We are, when all is said and done, a small community theatre and raising £60,000 will be a huge mountain to climb. However, we are committed to doing our utmost to preserve not just the theatre, but this historic building for the community.