

LYRIC'S NEW YOUNG THEATRE COMPANY LOOKING FOR A FEW BRIGHT SPARKS

ARE YOU young and dying to get on stage and strut your stuff? If so, the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith has launched its Lyric Young Company (LYC) and is looking for talented Londoners for its debut season of two shows.

The Young Company is holding auditions for the summer productions, *Accidental Heroes* and *The Luna Club*, this month.

As well as offering young west Londoners the chance to perform on stage, LYC members receive a range of benefits including workshops, talks, special events and backstage access. Membership costs £5 a year.

The LYC is open to 14 to 19-year-olds who live in or attend a school from west London.

● For *Accidental Heroes*, the LYC is looking for anyone aged 17 to 19 to audition to work with writer/director Mark Murphy, to create a highly physical show about courage and violence.

Mark's previous work includes the National Theatre of Scotland's Young Company's *Recovery Position*.

Auditions will be held on tomorrow (Saturday), 10am-noon, 1.30pm-3.30pm, 4pm-6pm. On Monday, May 14, from 7pm-9pm. On Tuesday, May 15, from 7pm-9pm.

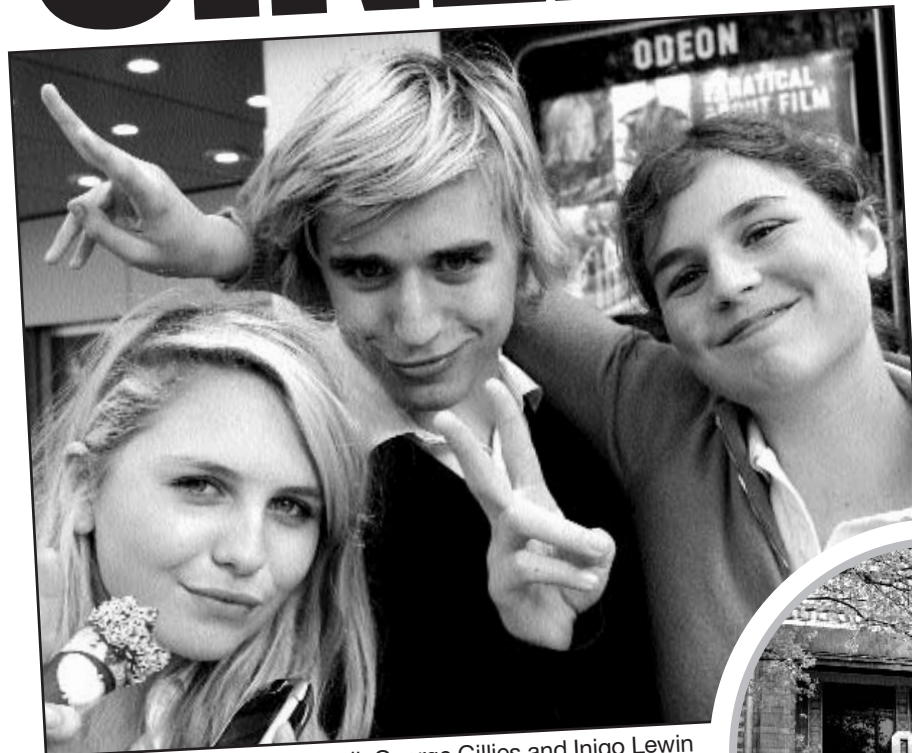
It is free to audition, but you must book in advance.

● For *The Luna Club*, the LYC is looking for anyone aged 14 to 16 to audition to work with Anglo-Brazilian theatre-makers Dende Collective, to create a magical and bizarre world.

Auditions will be held on Tuesday, May 29, from 10.30am-12.30pm, 2.30pm-4.30pm. On Wednesday, May 30, at 10.30am-12.30pm, 2.30pm-4.30pm.

It is free to audition, but you must book in advance. Phone 0870 500 511 or visit: www.lyric.co.uk for more details.

SAVE OUR CINEMA



ODE TO FILM: Esme Hodson, George Gillies and Inigo Lewin

IT WOULD STAY A SIX-FILM COMPLEX, BUT WITHOUT AN ICONIC BIG SCREEN. CHRISTIAN McLAUGHLIN REPORTS

THE fate of the Odeon cinema in Kensington hangs in the balance after film buffs rejected proposed changes to the venue.

In a bid to settle the two-year feud, developers Northacre unveiled a third set of blueprints for the proposed conversion of the building in Kensington High Street, with underground screens.

Northacre acquired the site in 2005 but withdrew its last proposals in February 2007 in the face of strong opposition.

Last week's concessions include reducing the height by one storey and blocking vehicle and pedestrian access from flats behind. The spiral marble staircase in the cinema would, however, be lost.

Nick Sharpe, Northacre's town planning consultant, said: "Apart from the iconic facade, the rest of the building is a large brick barn."

"The building has been identified by the council as a site for redevelopment since 1993. Refurbishment is good news story for the area. We have nothing to hide."

"We've sent 1,000 invitations to residents because this is an issue for them, not the patrons of the cinema. Our chances are reasonably good. We hope to have permission secured by July and be totally finished construction within two to two and a half years."

The 6,000 sq ft top floor

has been earmarked for a multi-million glass-fronted penthouse similar to One Hyde Park, which recently sold for £100 million. The rest will be divided into 35 flats and five separate houses.

Developers do not yet have planning permission, but attempts to protect the building from change by gaining listed status failed in 1988, 1993 and 2006.

If plans go ahead, a new underground cinema would be leased to Odeon for 25 years. It would keep six screens but lose 131 seats and the second biggest screen in London. The big screen would be scrapped in favour of two smaller ones.

Fulham resident and film aficionado Don Walker, 57, is co-ordinating a 9,000-strong petition to save the cinema.

He is concerned the proposed changes to the cinema will ruin its high-profile status. He said: "We are about to lose the biggest screen in London after the Odeon in Leicester Square. Without it how can we expect the cinema to keep pulling in the biggest and best movie premieres? Last year Denzel

'WE'D LOSE THE BIGGEST SCREEN IN LONDON AFTER LEICESTER SQUARE'

Washington came in December for the premiere of *Deja Vu*, and *Casino Royale* was opened by Prince Edward in November for a charity event."

There are also fears for the future of the affordable housing initially planned within the luxury complex, but now to be developed off-site.

Mr Sharpe said: "We don't guarantee land value will be the same as that of the Kensington High Street complex, but we can guarantee we will have the council's approval."

Matthew Holloway, who works for Squire and Partners and is chief architect of the new proposal, said: "I'm pleased with the new plans. The original facade has really grown on me."

"I found the previous plans to destroy it disappointing. The changes we have planned are absolutely in line with the character of the building."

Mr Holloway, who was also responsible for the £150million Knightsbridge development, said: "We'll get rid of the ugly signs and doors and replace it with stone and glass doors, which will actually make the entrance more in line with its original design."

"Unfortunately, the spiral staircases will be difficult to keep. They are in pretty bad condition and wouldn't work with modern access needs."

YOUR SHOUT:



Sue Padley lives in Earls Terrace, which flanks the Odeon to the west. A resident for more than 30 years, she said: "The height of the building has been reduced but flats will still overlook the private gardens of both Pembroke and Edwardes Squares. Problems finding parking and congestion will increase too."

"There's only one spot allocated for each of the 35 flats proposed, and many of the types likely to move in will have more than one car. Losing the cinema also bothers me because it's a vital part of the community."



Esme Hodson, 16, of Bassett Road, North Kensington, said: "I come here all the time. Messing with the cinema is just plain stupid. There's loads of housing here already and with the Odeon underground Kensington High Street won't really have a cinema anymore."

Ernest Davies, 76, lives in Edwardes Square, directly behind the proposed development. He said: "I am comfortable with the revised plans. Northacre has been reasonable in honouring the

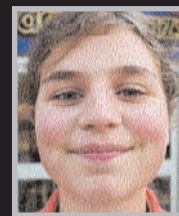


building's facade and have agreed to take out the oppressive top floor which threatened the skyline."

John Hull, 81, also of Edwardes Square, has lived in the area 44 years. He said: "I was born around the corner from here in 1925,



the year before the cinema was built, and I am totally opposed to the project. The cinema is a landmark and a wonderful piece of 1920s architecture. But one can't live on nostalgia alone."



Inigo Lewin, 16, of Collingham Gardens, South Kensington, said: "Money-hungry nutcases! They will ruin something that's been with us for decades. The Odeon's a trademark of South Ken. I'll chain myself to the cinema and starve until they give up their plans. I come here every day, I love film and I love the ice cream."



Gabrielle Giessen, 16, of South Eaton Place, Belgravia, said: "The cinema is ridiculously over-priced, but it's still good to have it. I don't like the thought of it being underground though, what if there's a fire? I don't think I'd go as much. But it is a good idea to include affordable housing in the project."

HAVE YOUR SAY:

Do you want to save the Odeon's big screen? Email us: informerbignews@trinitysouth.co.uk