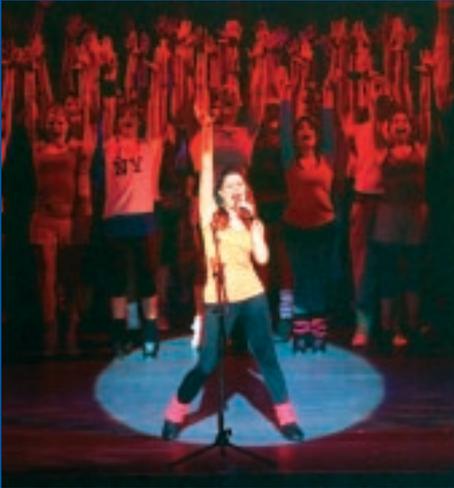




GLASGOW 1 FAME - EASTBOURNE 2 !! WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY



Fame, title number in concert

Amateur Stage has followed Glasgow's Apollo Players from four productions of Fame through to the World Premiere of the sequel, Fame Forever, in May. However, the English Premiere this month has gone one better, thanks to the Rattonians in Eastbourne.

In 1984 a small group of ex-Ratton School pupils and their drama teacher, Mark Adams, decided to put on a show in Eastbourne's 250 seat Arts Centre, the Tivoli. From those small beginnings, the Rattonians company has flourished over the last 23 years, establishing an enviable reputation and growing from Eastbourne's smallest into its largest venue, the 1,689 seater, Congress Theatre. Over 30 shows produced and over £45,000 raised for charity, the Rattonians are focusing their fund raising this year towards Cancer Research.

Every Musical Theatre Society, every year ponders *What next?* Finding shows to perform each year is an increasingly difficult problem. What will be available? What will be popular? What will be possible? What will be different? What will be right for us?

Eastbourne's Rattonians always try to do two things: put on a show to the best of their ability and a show that the majority of their audience will appreciate and enjoy. Finding, selecting and choosing that show is never easy. Different and appealing shows are a scarcity, although they wait in the hope that one will come their way. Last year they staged the classic *West Side Story*, but had no show in mind to follow it. Until, out of the blue, came a phone call from New York. David De Silva, known globally as Father Fame, telephoned Mark Adams to see if he would stage the English premiere of *Fame Forever*, the sequel to the phenomenally successful and popular musical *Fame*. Always eager for a challenge, Mark saw at once both a challenge

and an opportunity. *Fame Forever*, as a new musical, presented an amazing opportunity, but, in isolation, presented the company with a considerable risk. So an idea was hatched. Why not stage *Fame* for one week and follow it with *Fame Forever* the next week? When Mark presented David De Silva with the idea, he said it was a dream come true. David told Mark that, having worked and lived with *Fame* for over 20 years, and having planned the sequel for some time, he had always hoped that one day the two shows would, in some way, be presented together. He did not dare hope that dream would come true so soon into the life of *Fame Forever*. But for the Rattonians it was the perfect idea for a truly unique event.

Both shows are set in the La Guardia High School for Performing Arts in New York. *Fame* is set in 1984 and *Fame Forever* is 20 years further on, in 2004. However, their message is the same: *Life is everybody's performance, and performance is many people's life*. Co-incidentally, the Rattonians, as a Society, has been in existence since 1984 and has members from that decade, as well as new young, vibrant hopefuls of college age. Who better then to cast the two shows: one with those who were there at the start in '84 and the other with students of today in their teens?

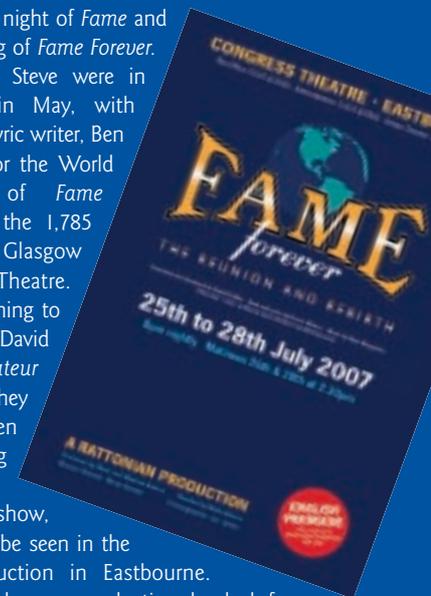


Fame Forever company in rehearsal

However, staging two different, full-scale musicals in two consecutive weeks, is presenting massive logistical and practical problems to the whole team, but what a challenge, says Mark Adams. There is some overlap in the Companies. There are requirements for adjacent rehearsal spaces for one of the two Choreographers to work with one set of performers as the single Musical Director works on another close by and interchange can happen quickly. Despite the big commitment, with extra rehearsal nights and Sundays as the shows loom closer, there is a real buzz of excitement within the company. From that original challenge has come an incredible energy and enthusiasm, driving both shows. Mark visited David in New York in February to discuss the concept and the shows, and they have talked a lot subsequently, with suggestions being made and taken on board. It is a piece of new

live theatre which is constantly evolving. Indeed, two numbers have been changed since they were set in Eastbourne. Unable to attend himself, Director Mark's wife, Melanie and *Fame Forever* Choreographer, Debbie Hackett, saw both matinee and evening performances of *Fame Forever* in Glasgow in order to gain as much insight as possible from their trip there in May. They were able to see their rehearsal script on stage and now must adapt to the many changes made and being made in it. And it is not only the challenges on stage. Rattonians normally play ten days for one show, but the word of mouth from week one will not necessarily sell the different show in week two this year. There is always the challenge of ensuring that short term visitors to the town know that the shows are on too. David De Silva is so delighted with the whole idea that he and Steve Margoshes, the composer of both musicals, will be in Eastbourne for the last night of *Fame* and the opening of *Fame Forever*.

David and Steve were in Scotland in May, with book and lyric writer, Ben Winters, for the World Premiere of *Fame Forever* at the 1,785 seater, Glasgow King's Theatre. Since returning to New York, David told Amateur Stage that they have been making changes to the new show, which will be seen in the new production in Eastbourne. They also have a production booked for Cheltenham in 2008, which will see the subsequent changes made after this month's English premiere.



Fame and *Fame Forever* are at the Congress Theatre, Eastbourne from 18th to 21st July and from 25th to 28th July. Box Office 01323 412000.

The most recent development for the Rattonians as a company is the formation of a younger section, which will be run by Debbie and Thomas Hackett, long time performers in the company. After choreographing *Fame Forever*, Debbie will be joined by Thomas to start work on their first production, *Les Miserables, Schools Edition* at the Devonshire Park Theatre for April 2008. The age limit for casting is 19 years and open auditions are being held in September.

Anyone requiring more information should email Rattonians@hotmail.co.uk or write to Mark Adams, c/o Ratton School, Park Avenue, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 2XR.