

The History of Theatre...in Cambridge

A resource pack



This Theatre is a gift for you

Cambridge Arts Theatre has been at the heart of the performing arts in Cambridge since 1936.

Our founder, John Maynard Keynes, imagined a Theatre which would provide for the city and the surrounding region the best of the five arts: drama, opera, music, ballet, and cinema. The Arts Theatre was his gift to the people of Cambridge.

The Theatre's archive tells the story of the history of Cambridge Arts Theatre, but also the history of the performing arts in our region. We want to share the historic material in our archive with you.

There are natural links with the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum for English, 'Origins of Theatre', but we also hope that this resource will be useful for those studying other Local Studies topics. For those of you training the next generation of performers, we hope these stories of Theatre folk past will inspire your future creativity.

This Theatre is a gift for you!

In 2021, we asked a group of work experience students at the Theatre, aged 14-18, to review this resource and devise a series of activities to encourage a greater engagement with the historic archive material. You will see these symbols throughout:



**Something to
discuss**



Something to do

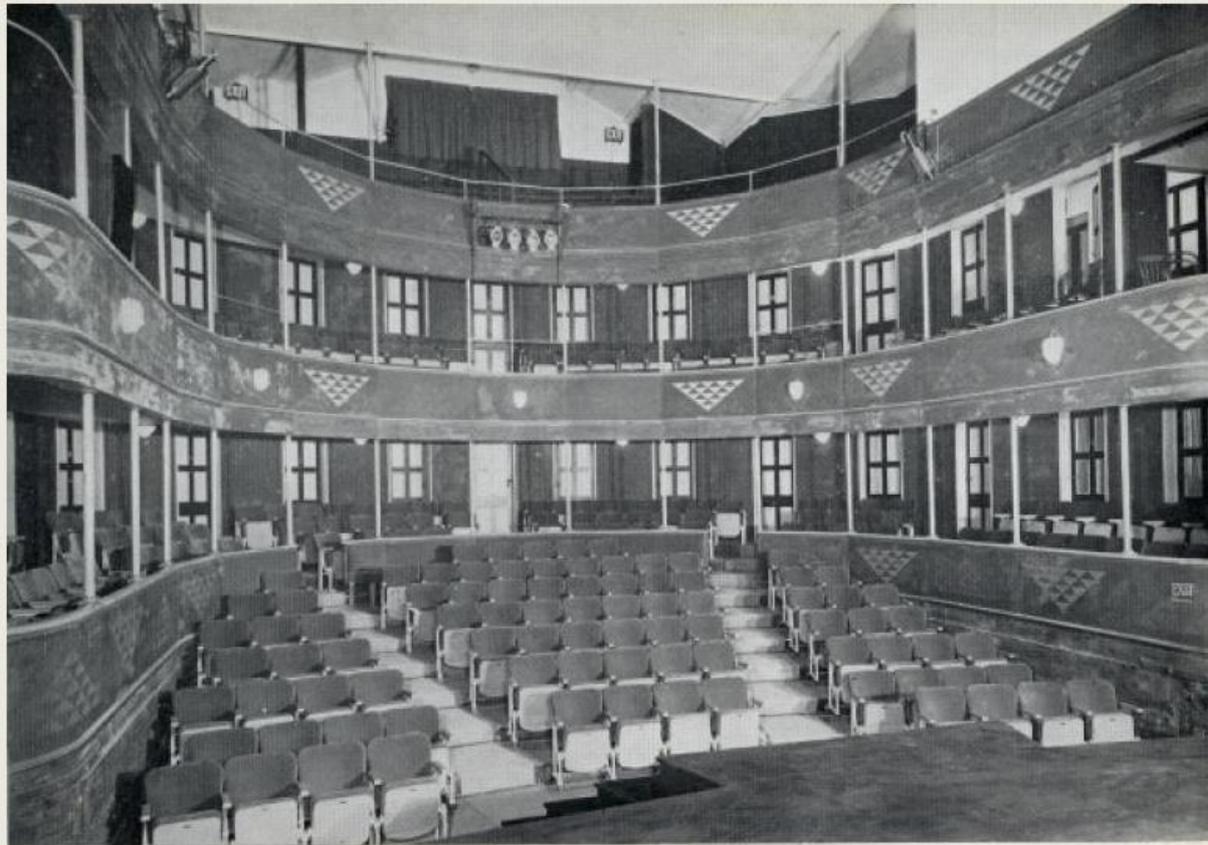


Something to make

Cambridge Theatres

Festival Theatre (1926-1997), previously the Barnwell Theatre (1814 -1878)

Location: 38 Newmarket Road, Cambridge, CB5 8DT



FESTIVAL THEATRE, CAMBRIDGE: VIEW FROM THE STAGE.

EDWARD MAUFE, ARCHITECT.

THM/258/4/1 138-150

The Barnwell Theatre was opened in 1814. It was built by William Wilkins Snr, father of the William Wilkins who designed and built Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds and The National Gallery in London. The Theatre followed a quintessentially Georgian playhouse design, a horseshoe shape with three levels of seating. It replaced a more temporary theatre structure which had operated on the other side of the road next to the Sun Inn. It was built outside the Cambridge City boundary because of opposition in a University City to theatres in general.

The Barnwell Theatre was supported by many of the great actors of the day, and featured performances from many members of the Garrick Club such as James Sheridan Knowles, William Macready, and Charles Kean. However, by July 1878 the Theatre was fairing badly and was put up for sale. It was bought and turned into first a Mission Hall (1878-1914) and later a Boys Club before falling into disuse.

In 1926, the Theatre was reopened under the management of Terence Gray as the Festival Theatre. Significant changes were made to the building to allow the Theatre to host some of the most avant-garde performances of the day. Terence Gray assisted by Harold Ridge and Norman Marshall totally removed the old proscenium arch and created a space with a revolving stage, fixed cyclorama, and Schwabe lighting according to the ideas that had been propounded by Gordon Craig for the preceding 25 years but had not put into practice elsewhere in the UK. An Art Deco foyer was added to provide direct access from Newmarket Road. Flora Robson, Robert Donat, and Anthony Quale performed, as did the ballerina Ninette de Valois (Gray's cousin), who later went on to form the Royal Ballet. In 1939, the Theatre closed. It was used briefly for the entertainment of troops during the war.

In 1946, the Theatre was bought by Cambridge Arts Theatre Trust Ltd. It was used primarily as a store and wardrobe department for around 50 years. Some performances were staged there, the last of which was in the 1990s during the temporary closure of Cambridge Arts Theatre for a redevelopment project. The building is now owned by Cambridge Buddhist Centre.

New Theatre (1896 – 1956), previously Theatre Royal, Cambridge

Location: 48-50 St Andrews Street, Cambridge, CB2 3AH



Photos courtesy of Cambridgeshire Collection

The New Theatre was located on the site of St Andrew's Hall, which had hosted performance since the 1880s. In 1895, a local theatrical manager W. B. Redfern opened a purpose built, 1000-seater theatre designed by the architect M. Ernest Runtz. At the time of opening, it was Cambridge's only dedicated theatre.

Posters from the Theatre Royal, found in the Cambridge Arts Theatre archive during the 2019 'Behind the Scenes' project.

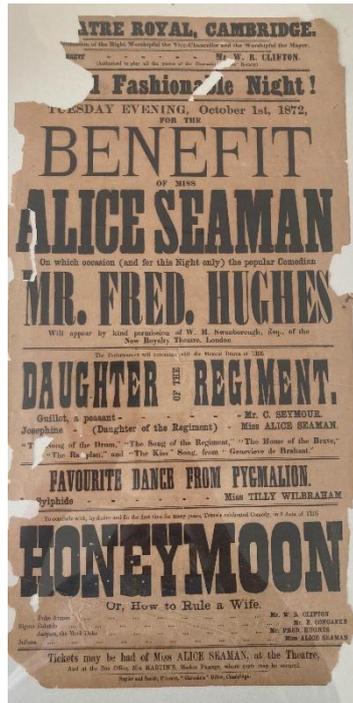
In 1933, after a difficult period of declining profits, the building was sold to Cambridge Cinemas Ltd and reopened as Theatre Cinema. The programme quickly expanded to include, alongside the Cinema, shows by local amateur theatrical producers such as the Cambridge Amateur Operatic Society and the Cambridge University 'Footlights Revue'. There was also an annual pantomime.

In October 1940, during the Second World War, the building was requisitioned by the War Office (it is not known specifically why). After the war it eventually re-opened on 13th October 1947, primarily as a cinema but with a return to its original name - New Theatre - and a reduced seating capacity of 618. Stage shows recommenced from 29th March 1948.

The New Theatre closed on 17th March 1956. The building was used as a warehouse before being demolished in 1961.

ADC (1855 – present)

Location: Park Street, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB5 8AS



Cambridge is home to the oldest amateur-run theatre in the country. The Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Club (ADC) was founded in 1855 to support the creation of theatrical productions by members of Cambridge University. The Theatre was originally a series of function rooms, first rented and then purchased in 1882, with further improvements made in 1888. In 1933 a significant part of the Theatre burnt down and was rebuilt in 1935. The Theatre continues to be used mostly for student performances although small scale professional productions are occasionally programmed.



Listen to actor Griff Rhys Jones remember performing as a student at the ADC (35 mins):
<https://soundcloud.com/user-790558708/oral-history-griff-rhys-jones>

Cambridge Arts Theatre (1936 – present)

Location: 6 St Edward's Passage, Cambridge, CB2 3PL



Cambridge Arts Theatre Redevelopment, 1995. Cambridge Arts Theatre Archive, THM258/9/2/3

Cambridge Arts Theatre was founded in 1936 by John Maynard Keynes, the economist and bursar of King's College, Cambridge and later founding member of the Arts Council England. Keynes was an arts lover and active member of the Bloomsbury Group, a group of middle-class writers and painters based in the Bloomsbury area of London. His wife, Lydia Lopokova was a professional ballet dancer. Keynes wanted Cambridge to have 'a good small theatre' which would present the best London productions alongside amateur theatre and bring together 'town and gown' to enjoy the edifying benefits of the performing arts. Keynes envisaged a place which would present the best of the five artforms, theatre, cinema, opera, dance and music. The logo of the Cambridge Arts Theatre, a five-sided pentagon, reflected this aim.



The Arts Theatre Auditorium in 1936, Cambridge Arts Theatre Archive

The Theatre was built on land owned by King's College, held on a long-term lease by Keynes. The stage was an unusual pentagon shape because of the restrictions of the surrounding buildings. In 1938 Keynes presented the Theatre in trust to the City and the University. Since the 1930s the Theatre has helped launch the careers of theatrical luminaries such as Ian McKellen and Sam Mendes and celebrated many significant cultural milestones, from Margot Fonteyn dancing *Swan Lake* to Harold Pinter's premiere of *The Birthday Party*. The last four directors of the National Theatre all directed on our stage at the start of their careers.



Cambridge Arts Theatre Redevelopment, 1995. Cambridge Arts Theatre Archive, THM258/9/2/3

In the 1990s, the Theatre underwent significant redevelopment. The whole building was demolished except for the Proscenium Arch, to update facilities and stage technology and to allow the stage to be expanded. A subsequent redevelopment relocated and redeveloped the Theatre's Box Office, moving the main entrance to the Theatre from Peas Hill to St Edward's Passage. Today the Arts Theatre seats 666.

Learn more about some of the key moments in Cambridge Arts Theatre's history:

<https://www.cambridgeartstheatre.com/discover-more/our-history>

Cambridge Junction (1990 – present)

Location: Clifton Way, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB1 7GX



Cambridge Junction is the city's newest theatre. It was built in 1990 on the site of former cattle market and extended in 1998. The Junction initially focussed on music and comedy; its programme is aimed at young people. In 2004, two additional performance spaces were built including Junction 2 (The Shed) which provided a dedicated space for theatre performances. The Theatre Trust describe this space as; "Inspired by the Georgian courtyard

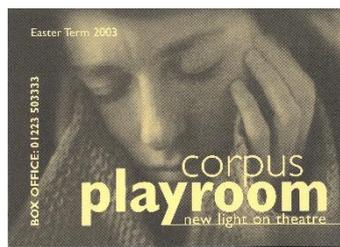
theatre the auditorium has a single rake of bleacher seating, enabling a variety of theatre formats (in-the-round, end on, etc), and is surrounded on three sides by two tiers of balconies."

Corpus Playroom (1979 - present)

Location: 10 St Edward's Passage, Cambridge, CB2 3PJ



The Corpus Christi Playroom was established in 1979 in some disused college rooms, by the college drama society of Corpus Christi college, The Fletcher Players. Run in association with Cambridge Arts Theatre from 2001 – 2010, it was radically redeveloped in 2011. Today it seats 80, it is programmed by the ADC theatre, the programme is mostly made up of student fringe productions.



Cambridge Arts Theatre Archive
THM/258/7/2/3

P&A

Governance Document for the Corpus Christi College Playroom

**Agreement between Cambridge Arts Theatre and Corpus Christi College
for the period ending 30th September, 2003.**

1. Broad Aim of the Joint Venture

The broad aim of the joint venture is to promote use of The Corpus Christi College Playroom (CCCP) as a venue for drama in Cambridge throughout the year. The CCCP should become a well-managed drama venue, to be used as a rehearsal, performance and experimental space, both for student drama, professional and commercial productions, and amateur and community projects.

2. First Principle, and Student Drama in the University Full Term

Cambridge Arts Theatre (CAT) will, in effect, lease the CCCP from Corpus Christi College (CCC). In lieu of paying rent, CAT will, for an agreed 18 weeks in each academic year, give student drama first priority in using the venue; and, during these 18 weeks, will provide student users with a range of basic management and support facilities. Reciprocally, CCC will obtain venue-management and supervisory services from CAT, and will, in effect, pay for those services by leasing the CCCP to CAT free of charge.

Mumford Theatre

Location: East Road, Cambridge, CB1 1PT



The Mumford Theatre, a 270-seat theatre on Anglia Ruskin's campus, which emphasises work created by ARU students alongside some received theatre, music, and dance shows.



Study these images of theatre buildings, arrange them in the order in which they were built. What would be the benefits and challenges of performing in each space?



Discuss other theatres you have been to. The audience at the Cambridge Arts Theatre travels to the Theatre from a 60-mile radius. How many more theatre and performance spaces can you list in the wider region? Have you been to the theatre in London?



Do you think that arts venues in a city like Cambridge are in competition with each other? Why? What is similar/ different about them? Do Arts venues deliberately cultivate different audiences?



Design a week-long programme of cultural activity for a culturally curious family visiting Cambridge arriving on a specific date. Research what is happening in each venue for the week the family will visit.

Cambridge Arts Theatre celebrates the origins of theatre

Cambridge Arts Theatre has a longstanding commitment to celebrating theatre history and shedding new light on historic plays.

The Greek Play

Every three years the Cambridge University Classics department convene to produce production in classical Greek. The Cambridge Greek Play began in 188, in 1936 it transferred to the new Arts Theatre with a production of *The Frogs* by Aristophanes. The archive records a funny story about this production. The Bishop of Lincoln, Nugent Hicks, was in Cambridge to confirm some choristers at Kings College, he tried on one of the frog heads from the production, part of the chorus costume, and had a hard time getting the costume off again!

The Cambridge Greek Play have a range of excellent resources:

<https://www.cambridgegreekplay.com/teaching-the-play>

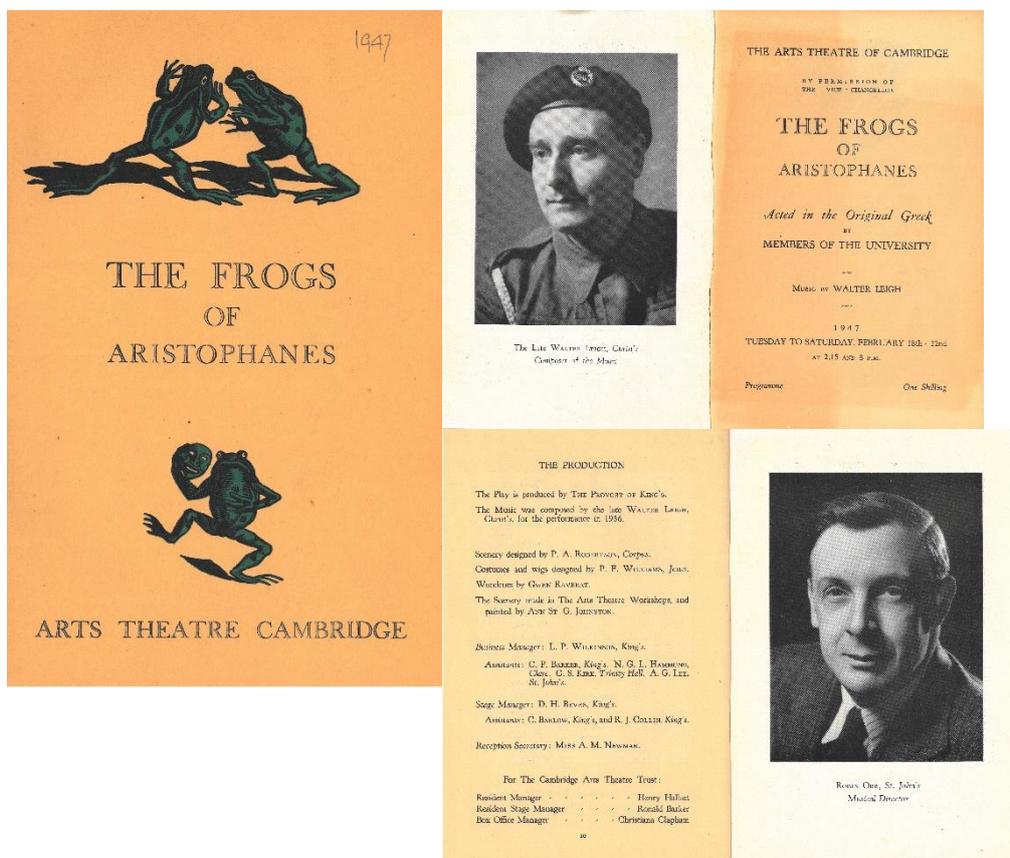


Listen to Professor Simon Goldhill from the Faculty of Classics at the University of Cambridge explain the unique nature of the Greek Play and its importance (39 mins):

<https://soundcloud.com/user-790558708/oral-history-simon-goldhill>

Listen to the memory of Zak Ghazi-Torbati who acted in the Greek Play as a student (25 mins):

<https://soundcloud.com/user-790558708/oral-history-zak-ghazi-torbati>



CAMBRIDGE GREEK
PLAY

"THE FROGS"

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CAMBRIDGE, FEB. 18

Humane learning has lost no time in reasserting itself at Cambridge, where *The Frogs* of Aristophanes is once more staged, declaimed in the original Greek and produced (by the Provost of King's) in accordance with the traditions that govern that university's performances.

A god-like Dionysus in the person of P. D. R. Gardiner (Trinity), with just a hint of Alcibiades in his manner, attended by faithful, more lusty Xanthias (L. R. Dodd, of King's), proceeds on his journey to the underworld to retrieve his poet for a prophetic and rudderless Athens, meeting on the way an amused Hercules, a grim Charon, the frogs with their famous *βραχυνεὶς κοῦε κοῦε*, a landlady unchanged among the shades from the nature (and in this clever impersonation by D. H. C. de Montgomery, of King's, the manner of speaking) of all landladies on earth. The climax is the contest of Aeschylus and Euripides, and it was a measure of the success of this production that this intricate and allusive discussion of aesthetic and technical verse-speaking was also the best theatre. A modern audience has not much difficulty with *ἀνελθὼν ἀπὸ λισσῶν*, nor with the trial in the balance, and it was helped in the poets' parodies of each other by the wit of the late Walter Leigh's music, written for the last production of *The Frogs* in 1936, in which Italian opera, *Sprechgesang* à la Schönberg, and Blues à la Harlem lend additional point to the *τοῦ αἰσθητικῶς* refrain. The two poets were excellently characterized by B. W. M. Young (King's), who mouthed the lines of Aeschylus with solemnity, and capped those of his rival with the inevitable "lost his little oil-flask" and malice enough, and by A. M. Bishop (Clare), who was an exceedingly peppery Euripides, rattling out his lines with true Mediterranean impetuosity.

The chorus of the Initiated suffered a little from being too static; could they not have danced round an altar? The great parabasis in which Aristophanes appeals for a closing of the ranks (*πάντες ἀνθρώπους ἐκόντες συγγενεῖς κτηνώδη*) made its appeal perhaps the more readily because we have heard the same call in our own day from a great master of words. The two leaders of the chorus, C. D. Biddell (Christ's) and J. D. Younie (Clare), declaimed beautifully in the modern pronunciation. Most of the dialogue was spoken in the old Erasmusian pronunciation, and Aeaclus, C. S. Choidas (King's), seemed to be speaking modern Greek, but this discrepancy hardly affected the music of the poetry. The music of chorus and orchestra was in the charge of Mr. Robin Orr (St. John's).

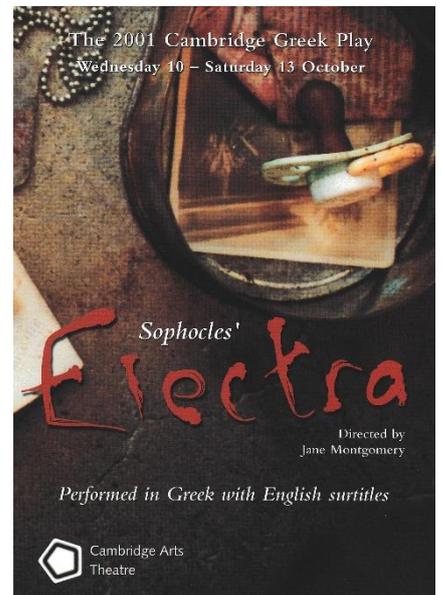


Review and production photo from *The Frogs*,
Cambridge Arts Theatre Archive THM/258/5/1



Programme and production photos from *Electra*, 2001

Cambridge Arts Theatre Archive THM/258/5/4/220



Shakespeare

Cambridge Arts Theatre has a long association with producing Shakespeare, George 'Dadie' Rylands was an English fellow at Kings College Cambridge and a friend of John Maynard Keynes. He was one of Cambridge Arts Theatre's original trustees. He became Chairman of the Theatre after Keynes' death, a post he retained until 1982. Rylands was a distinguished theatre director who pioneered a method of directing Shakespeare which paid scrupulous attention to the sound and rhythm of the original verse, whilst not forgetting the entertainment value which the plays had at the time of their writing. In the 1939 he published a Shakespeare anthology *The Ages of Man* and subsequently supervised the recording of a complete works of Shakespeare for the British Council. Ryland was heavily involve in the University of Cambridge's Marlowe Society. The society produced a Shakespeare play at Cambridge Arts Theatre every year since 1936. RylnDs directed until the 1960s. His influence on the subsequent direction of the performance of Shakespeare was far reaching through the young actors and directors he mentored in Cambridge, such as John Giedlgud and Peter Hall.



Listen to Dr Tim Cribb, Treasurer of The Marlowe Society explains the relationship between the Theatre and the society (44 mins): <https://soundcloud.com/user-790558708/oral-history-tim-cribb>



Photographs from The Marlowe Society's production of Julius Caesar, 1952 (Front Row L-R, Peter Orr as Brutus, Mike Hall as Cassius, Tony White as Mark Anthony) THM/258/5/3/153

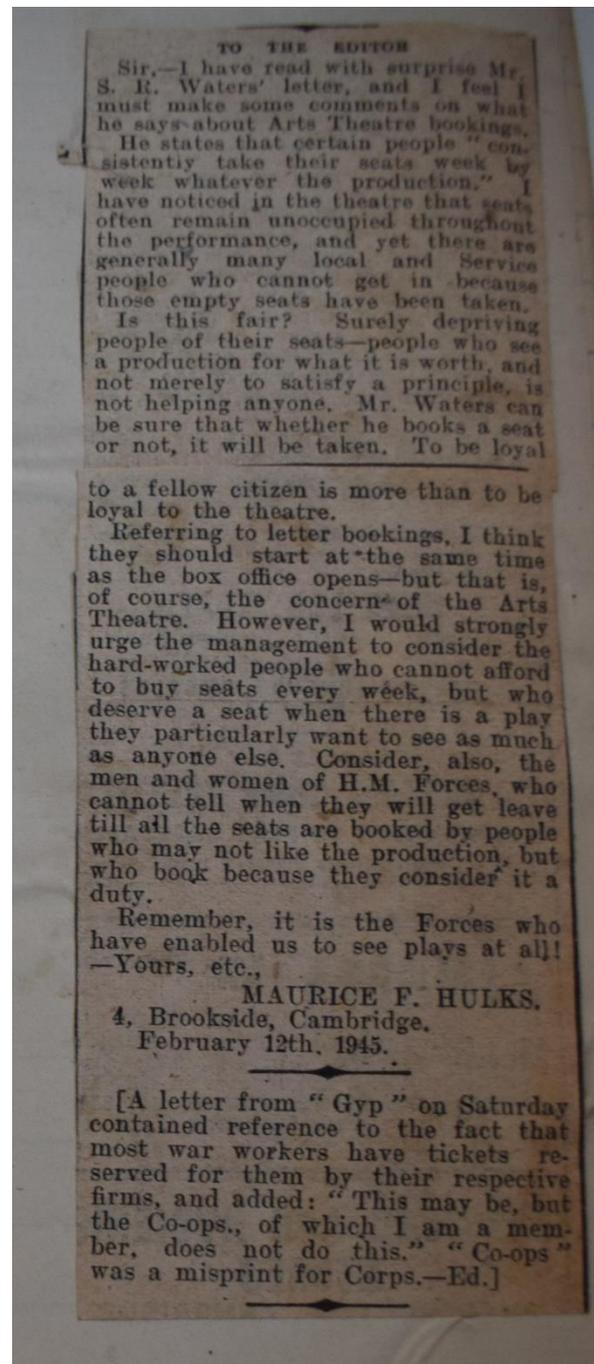
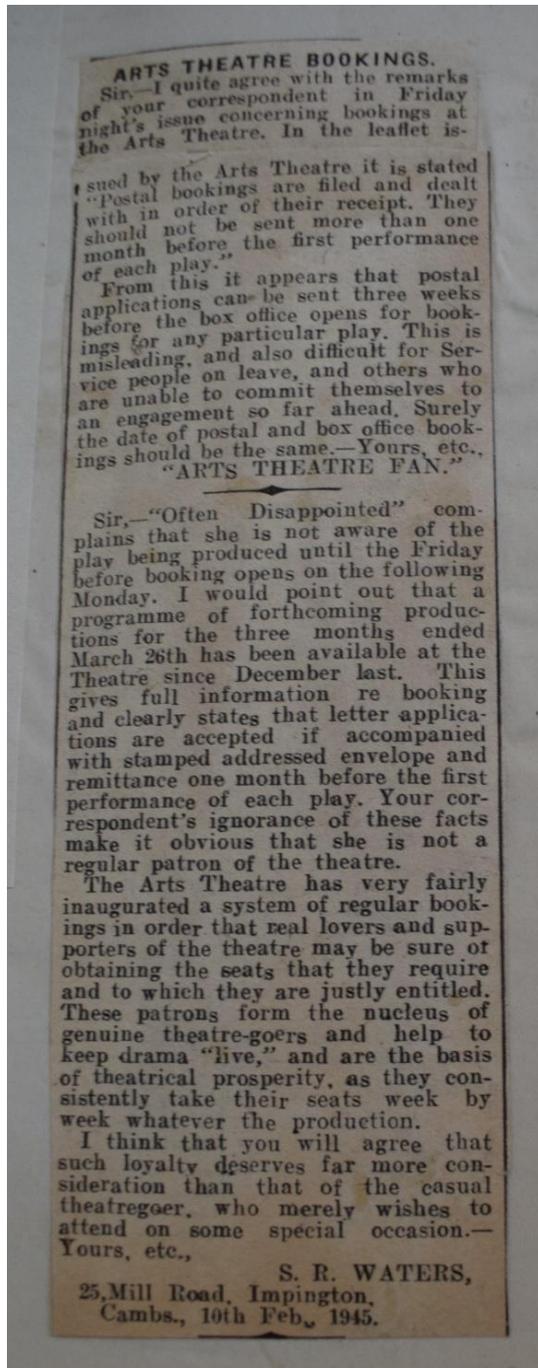


Theatre debates and turning points

Throughout its history Cambridge Arts Theatre has been at the heart of wider discussions about the nature of theatre and its future. Our press cuttings collection details three debates.

1939-45

A debate on ticketing



CAMBRIDGE DA

ARTS THEATRE EXPLAINS

Trustees' Reply to Critics

WE have received the following letter from the General Manager of the Cambridge Arts Theatre Trust in reply to the recent correspondence regarding the booking of seats:

Sir,—The Trustees are grateful to you for publishing the recent correspondence on the subject of Arts Theatre booking arrangements, and for your courteous offer to find space for a statement, which appears desirable in view of misconception revealed in some letters.

I am grateful also to the correspondents quoted by you in last Saturday's Table Talk for reminding your readers that the Arts Theatre owes its existence to Lord Keynes' enterprise in building it, and his public-spirited action in giving it as a going concern to Trustees representing both University and Town. The terms of the Trust Deed under which the Theatre is administered has enabled residents of Cambridge and of a wide area surrounding it to enjoy for what is now several years' programmes and amenities which would otherwise have been impossible.

In considering policy in connection with the sale of theatre tickets, it is well to keep in mind the fact that visiting companies are remunerated by a share of the box office receipts; the visiting manager therefore is vitally concerned in seeing that the sale of

tickets for the performances given by his company are the maximum possible, and if local arrangements to this end are unsatisfactory, the theatre concerned would quickly lose the possibility of obtaining first class companies.

The whole of the net profit remaining to the Trust is used for the furtherance of the drama and the associated arts in Cambridge, including a regular and planned programme of ballets, plays and concerts for the school children of Cambridge, entirely without charge either to the parents or to the Education Authorities.

TRUSTEES' AIM.

The aim of the Trustees is that the Arts Theatre should give the best possible service within its means, and we have tried to maintain peace-time standards, despite the increasing limitations imposed by war-time conditions. There are various short cuts to ease pressure at the box office which have been taken by many theatres throughout the country. A large number have had box office telephones disconnected, while others have ceased to book any but the highest price seats in advance. In the case of the Arts Theatre, no member of the pre-war box office staff remains, and only one member of the present staff of five has been employed on box office work for as long as three months; the remainder are young trainees. All seats are, however, still booked in advance, and throughout the eight hours daily during which the box office is open to the public, one clerk deals exclusively with telephone inquiries.

It is probably not generally realised for how large a public the Arts Theatre has to provide: apart from the Embassy Theatre at Peterborough, there is no other legitimate theatre within a radius of fifty miles. In addition to Cambridge town and county, it serves a large body of regular patrons from the adjoining six counties. The population of Cambridge has increased appreciably since the war, and is now estimated at about 85,000; the town is the Mecca for troops on short pass from many miles around, and for Dominion and American Forces on leave, while alternative means of using leisure time have largely disappeared during the war. The maximum capacity of the Arts Theatre for the normal eight performances in the course of a week is approximately 5,000.

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE.

With the above picture in mind, it is obvious that only a small percentage of the public which the Theatre serves can apply personally for tickets at the box office. The guiding principle of booking policy must therefore be a system which gives everyone an equal start. It is for this reason that postal applications—which obviate a journey to the box office and the probability of a long wait in a queue—have been encouraged, and the old adage followed of "first come, first served."

Some correspondents advance the view that postal applications should not be dealt with until tickets are also on sale at the box office. While with unlimited staff this might be possible, under present circumstances it is quite impracticable, because the two operations cannot be carried out simultaneously.

Postal applications can be dealt with only when the plans and tickets are available, i.e., during the periods the box office is not open to the public. On a recent Monday morning the Post Office—which has its own

would staff the office in Cambridge will of over a thousand letters at a time, by which time there are an appreciable queue waiting for office to open. Numerous letters in that mail had to be dealt with in time for replies to be despatched by the afternoon post. If to the letters arriving on the opening day of booking were to be added the large accumulation of applications delivered earlier, an already difficult task would become impossible.

PERMANENT BOOKINGS.

Other correspondents have expressed objection to the system of permanent bookings under which a patron arranges to have the same seats allotted on a given day each week. Permanent bookings are, however, a normal theatre practice throughout the country, and it would be manifestly unfair to deprive of their tickets patrons who have supported the theatre with encouraging regularity, many of them since its opening, because under present artificial conditions the demand is on average three times the supply. One remembers their loyal support on many occasions in the past when anyone wishing to come to the theatre could walk up to a queueless box office window throughout the week. These permanent patrons receive no advantage in the price of their tickets, as is usual under the abonnement system abroad, and are the backbone of our policy and our prosperity.

Another correspondent alleges preferential treatment of Civil Servants and other organised parties. These also are a substantial guarantee of continuity of success. Nevertheless, all party bookings, many of which had been a regular pre-war feature, were again reviewed towards the end of last year, and organisers informed that in the interests of a fair distribution under existing conditions their normal allocation of seats would, for the time being, have to be reduced by something like fifty per cent. Organisers accepted this unwelcome news in good spirit, and the result is that many very regular patrons now obtain a "party" ticket once a fortnight instead of once a week. On a specific point raised, the numerous Civil Service organisations in Cambridge have between them a total of 51 seats each week. On the other hand, over 500 seats are reserved each week for Army and Air Force units and formations; but again in all these cases tickets have to be taken by rota because the reservations accepted have been about a quarter of the total seats requested.

Before the war party bookings were often allowed at reduced prices, but that is not normally the case to-day.

The last point raised by a correspondent is that seats remain empty because permanent bookings are not taken up. This is not now the case. Some months ago the arrangements were amended and seats reserved under the permanent booking arrangement have to be collected and paid for at least 24 hours before the performance. Seats not so collected are put on sale at the box office at 11 a.m. on the day of the performance.

REDUCING QUEUES.

I trust the above explanations will dispel the impression that booking arrangements are not reviewed regularly, or that every effort is not made to solve present difficulties to the general good. Every sympathy is felt for those who are unable to decide sufficiently in advance which evening they wish to visit the Theatre, but it seems impossible to devise any system which will meet this situation. We have probably done as much as any theatre in the country to devise an organisation which reduces queuing to a minimum. I know there are some people who have a passion for queuing and feel a grievance if they are deprived of a reasonable pretext for it, but surely it is not a good way in which to spend one's time in these busy days.

The system of booking approved by the Trustees is explained in almost every programme, and in every leaflet issued by the Theatre. It appears unlikely that some present disappointment is avoidable if intending patrons will study and follow the information published.

When we look back on our early years and remember how very difficult it was to fill the Theatre, and what patient work was required to build up in Cambridge a large enough theatre audience to escape substantial losses, those of us who have been in from the start must consider it foolish to complain of a joke, and a good joke too, that the grievance of complaint against us should be that our programmes are so widely, and as some seem to think so improperly and indefensibly attractive, having regard to the size of the Theatre—Yours, etc.,

NORMAN HIGGINS,

General Manager,
The Cambridge Arts Theatre Trust.

UNIVERSITY—SATURDAY, MAY 22,

WHY THE THEATRE SLUMP?

By STEPHEN MORSE

CERTAIN plays both at the Arts and the A.D.C., this year have been poorly attended. The audience has consisted only of the "regulars" those sturdy supporters which every theatre has. This has given rise to the theory that perhaps there is a slump in the Cambridge Theatre, in the same way as there is undoubtedly a slump in the West End. It might be interesting to try and analyse the reasons why people go to the theatre in Cambridge—and why they do not!

The most important competitors of the theatre in Cambridge are undoubtedly the four major cinemas in the centre of the town. A good film at two of the big cinemas can draw away audiences very fast from the theatres. The Arts and the A.D.C. compete too for practically the same support. There is also the question of the price of seats. Both the A.D.C. and the Arts charge more for their seats than do cinemas; and this is a definite check to the impecunious undergraduate.

But I believe that the greatest deterrent is the old problem of apathy. It seems that unless the information about a play is thrust down his throat, tickets are bought for him, and it is explained in words of one syllable just what the play is about, who is doing it and all the details, the average undergraduate (if a statistical accident can be applied to such abnormal beings) will not bother to go to the theatre. He does not say to himself or his friends after Hall, "Shall we go to the theatre to-night." He just drifts in the direction of the nearest Grable, Lamour or Hayworth picture. The

the direction of the nearest Grable, Lamour or Hayworth picture. The audiences at the theatre consist almost entirely of those who have booked seats beforehand.

On the average 800 people visit the A.D.C. Theatre each week—which means that one week there may be 600, another week over 1,000. For a well-known play like "Quiet Week-End" there is a full house (214) practically every night, for Shaw's "You Never Can Tell" a house only three-quarters full. The numbers do not appear to depend on standards of acting, nor on who puts on the play. They would seem to depend on the amount of advertising and publicity which precedes a production. The conclusion then is that to make the show a success, at least a quarter, sometimes a third, of the expenses must be for advertising.

The Arts Theatre is rather different. It has the advantage of regular advertisement hoardings and a central position in the town. But even with its established reputation its box office fluctuates far more than the normal box office of the three major cinemas. There is no doubt that the cinema has got a strange hold on the public, which the theatre will find hard to break.

The conclusion which presents itself, therefore, is rather a melancholy one. The standard of acting in a play—particularly in an amateur play, depends to a large extent on the audience. That audience has to be badgered into coming at all. The standard of the show will depend, therefore, to a large extent on the amount of advertising which is done beforehand. But everyone who advertises in Cambridge is trying to outdo the next man, so that we finally reach the stage when Cambridge is covered with paper and hoardings and no one comes to the theatre at all.

But in the final analysis it is a good thing that those who put on shows should have to fight the apathy and ignorance of their potential audiences. Having dragged them to the show gives a sense of achievement which will send up the standard of acting!

OWN COMPANY FOR ARTS THEATRE Move To Counteract Attendance Drop ADMISSION PRICES UP

THE CAMBRIDGE ARTS THEATRE IS TO SPONSOR ITS OWN COMPANY AND PRODUCER, AND ADMISSION PRICES ARE TO BE INCREASED.

These decisions, aimed at combating the decline in attendances, were announced by the Chairman of the Theatre Trustees, Mr. G. H. W. Rylands, at the half-yearly meeting.

Mr. Rylands described the year 1958-59 as a very bad one for the Arts Theatre. There had been a decline in theatre attendances and reduced box office receipts, a rise in the cost of productions and a rise in the cost of running the theatre. The loss sustained by the theatre on productions in the year was over £4,000.

Television was an important factor in keeping people away from the theatre and public response during the year had been disappointing. Only 12 of the plays presented in the year had resulted in box office receipts sufficient to cover the costs. It was particularly disappointing to find Cambridge audiences apathetic towards well-acted, well-presented plays which had proved successful in other towns. A typical example had been the play "Roots," which had attracted sparse audiences in Cambridge but was now drawing enthusiastic crowds in the West End.

Because of the decline in the number of reputable touring companies and the scarcity of good plays available to provincial theatres, the Directors had decided to embark on a new policy to engage a first-class company and producer, to give a season of plays likely to appeal to Cambridge audiences. This season would begin on August 31st.

It had also been necessary to review admission prices and it had been decided that as prices of the Arts Theatre seats had not altered substantially since it opened in 1936, an increase in some of them was justified and, indeed, was unavoidable if the Theatre was to remain a going concern. From August 31st the prices would therefore be:

Evenings (except Monday). — 4s. not bookable in advance, on sale half an hour before performance, 6s.,

8s., 10s. (boxes £2 10s.), bookable in advance.

Monday evenings, Thursday and Saturday matinees (unless otherwise announced).—4s. not bookable in advance, on sale half an hour before performance. 5s. (boxes £1 5s.), bookable in advance.

Price reductions for parties of eight or more would still be offered at the rate of 1s. 6d. on all seats costing 5s. or more.

The Transport Subsidy offered to parties of eight or more would remain, namely:

(a) 6d. a head for a journey for which the return fare by normal public transport to and from Cambridge costs between 1s. 6d. and 2s. inclusive;

(b) 1s. a head for a return journey costing 2s. 1d. to 3s. 6d. inclusive;

(c) 1s. 6d. a head for a return journey costing 3s. 7d. and more.

Mr. Rylands also referred to the increased use made of the Theatre Wardrobe by local societies. This had been enlarged during the year and was now one of the finest in the provinces. Hire charges for both costumes and electrical equipment were very reasonable. He would have liked to have seen many more amateur societies in the county, East Anglia and the Midlands availing themselves of this service.

The Trustees, who include the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor of Cambridge, the Provost of King's College, the Professors of English and Music, and other representatives of both town and gown, endorsed the new policies outlined by the Chairman, and hope was expressed by all of them that new interest and support for the Theatre would be forthcoming in the ensuing year, so that the prospect of a theatreless Cambridge could be dispelled.

We welcome your feedback

High resolution scans of all the archive material found in this pack are available for teaching and other non-commercial uses. Please note the number next to the image you wish to use and email requests to: development@cambridgeartstheatre.com

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We continue to welcome further feedback from users on the email above.