



# TM

Theatres  
Magazine  
Spring  
2017

# Showcase: Storyhouse

Introducing Jon Morgan  
Protecting theatres  
Theatres Protection Fund awards  
Developing the New Diorama  
First class theatre for world's first Garden City  
Roderick Ham, Theatre Architect  
Theatre Peckham, where bike sheds might have stood

Protecting theatres  
for **everyone**

Theatres  
Trust



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We believe that current and future generations should have access to good quality theatre buildings, where they can be inspired by, and enjoy, live theatre.

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# Introducing Jon Morgan



**Jon Morgan joined as Director of the Theatres Trust in January 2017. Here he discusses the theatre buildings and stories that have inspired and influenced him, and why he now finds himself at the helm of Theatres Trust, working to ensure performers, audiences and communities continue to enjoy the magic of live theatre.**

"Get off the bloody stage!" 30 years ago, this was one of the first pieces of 'advice' I received at the start of my career in theatre. It didn't come from an unimpressed critic or an audience heckler, although given the level of acting skill I had previously demonstrated in student productions, it could well have. No, this nugget of wisdom was offered to me by the stage manager at the Orchard Theatre, Kent, when in my first week as house manager I wandered on to the stage during a fit-up, oblivious to all the potential onstage dangers. In fact, I knew very little about theatre management or of the buildings and how they worked, but had somehow landed the job driven by my love of live theatre.

In my teens we took regular school trips to see shows at the brand new National Theatre on the South Bank and the Orange Tree, not to mention numerous West End theatres (thanks to the half price hut!). I continued this at Birmingham University going to the Rep, the Alexandra and the Crescent. Perhaps I didn't register it at the time but it wasn't just the onstage action I loved. Being part of an audience sharing a story in a magical space, which often amplified and reflected the drama on stage, was a key part of the overall experience.



# Theatres Protection Fund

# UK Theatres Small Grants Scheme

**In February 2017 we announced the six theatres that were successful in round nine of the UK Small Grants Scheme. Launched in April 2012, this scheme, supported by the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation and Judy Craymer MBE, awards grants of up to £5,000 to theatres across the UK. It is set-up to address urgent building repairs and help theatres in need and at risk.**

Round nine of the scheme was notable for the sheer number of applications which came from 24 theatres throughout the UK. This made for some very difficult decisions. In the end, we chose to fund some very different projects, but ones which could all demonstrate that our support would really make a difference to their viability. The number of applicants, and the quality of the applications overall, made it very clear that there is a great demand for this scheme, and we very much hope that some of the unsuccessful applicants will apply again.

**The theatres that received funding are:**

## **The Place, Bedford**

The Place received £3,335 to support interior and access improvements. The project involves purchasing a portable ramp to make the stage more accessible to disabled performers and participants, to create a backstage shower room to support the theatre's ambition to present more physical theatre and dance. The 130-seat theatre is housed in a building that was originally a boys club. Over the last four years the theatre has introduced professional touring work and programmes up to 40 events a year covering contemporary theatre, music events, spoken word and family theatre.



## **Plough Arts Centre, Great Torrington**

The Plough Arts Centre received £4,462 for its 'Smartening Up' project which will see the roof, guttering, windows, exterior doors and external lighting repaired. The arts centre receives no regular funding despite sitting in a prominent position within Great Torrington, and welcoming 70,000 visitors in 2015. Improvements to the Arts Centre will have a significant effect on the economy and profile of the local high street where it is located.



**Market Theatre, Ledbury** The Market Theatre received a grant of £5,000 towards a new, purpose-built, multi-purpose studio, which will be used for rehearsal space and as an additional dressing room space – where currently it has neither. Built in 2000, it is a volunteer-run community theatre that programmes live, touring, professional and amateur drama, music, dance and film for Ledbury, and its rural catchment, as well as visitors to the town, with 9,000 paid attendances in 2015.

# Showcase

# Storyhouse

Credit: Bennetts Associates



**Chester's brand-new arts centre, Storyhouse, opens in May 2017. It is a major renovation and extension of the city's Grade II listed Odeon building into an iconic storytelling centre housing two theatres, a 21st century library and an independent cinema. Project Director *Graham Lister* tells the story of how, with strong partnerships in place, he has helped deliver on Cheshire West and Chester Council's vision to place culture at the heart of its economic growth.**

## **All roads were blocked to Chester**

This is a story involving a local authority, an arts organisation and a library service, who come together with a shared vision to do something brilliant!

Picture the scene. It is January 2013. The snow has come down, the wind is blowing and all roads into Chester are blocked. Yours truly is stranded in a motorway service station on the M6 – unable to get any further north. Today is the day when Arts Council England give news to all those who have submitted large scale capital grant applications. My phone rings and the Arts Council provide a response, and sadly not the one we wish to hear.

I break the news to the Council's officers and politicians – the funding application had failed. There is a level of disappointment and dismay, especially cruel for those that had fought hard to identify and ring-fence council funds in excess of £30m.

# Developing the New Diorama



**The New Diorama most recently won The Stage Awards Best Fringe Theatre 2016 and the 2016 Empty Space Peter Brook Award, commended for ‘creating a vital hub for established and emerging theatre companies’. We asked Artistic Director *David Byrne* to explain how they are becoming a vital cultural hub for local artists and community groups.**

**Q. Describe the New Diorama Theatre for us.**

The New Diorama Theatre (NDT) opened in 2010, thanks to funding from a Section 106 Agreement for the Regent's Place development. It is an 80 seat theatre based just off Regent's Park in the heart of central London. The building is glass fronted. There is a small foyer space and a bar/cafe. There is one black box studio space. The seating is fully retractable, leaving a studio space with a possible standing capacity of 150. In winter last year the New Diorama opened a brand new studio, The Garden, providing a vital new community resource – thanks to Theatres Trust London Theatres Small Grants Scheme.

**Q. What is your mission?**

At NDT we specialise in supporting some of the most talented theatre companies from across the UK. Over the last six years, New Diorama has cemented a nationwide reputation for offering the 'gold standard' when it comes to championing emerging theatre companies, with Exeunt describing our work as "the most exciting artist development programme Britain has ever seen."

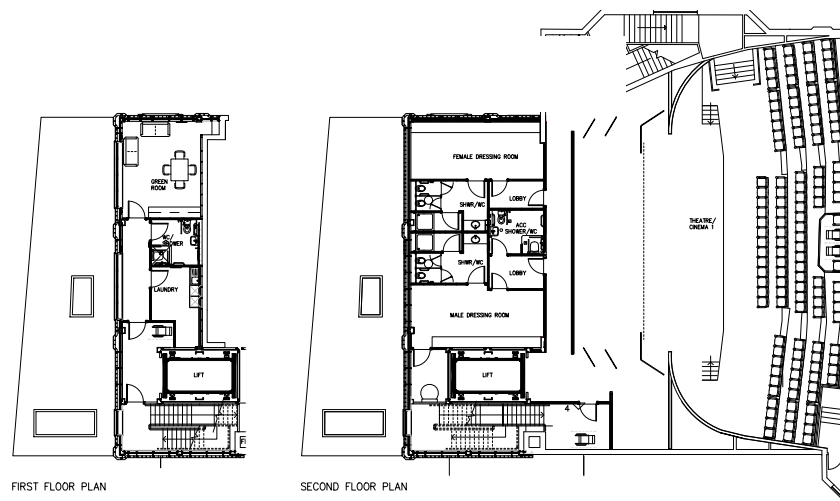
**Q. How do you champion and support emerging theatre companies?**

All theatre companies are different, yet many face the same hurdles: our pioneering and genuinely innovative schemes are designed to overcome the barriers these groups face. We do this through projects like our Cashflow Fund, which provides groups with interest-free cash-flow loans allowing them to tour or take up offers they could never afford upfront, our Female Leadership Fund, which allows our most talented female producers and directors to undertake professional development opportunities that would otherwise be out of reach, and our BAMER project which provides up to 40 weeks development space each year to non-white and refugee artists, completely free of charge and with no-strings attached.

In our experience, supporting artists includes the liberal application of four key ingredients: space, time, money and a healthy dose of cheerleading. And our new studio space will allow us to provide all four.



## First class theatre for world's first Garden City



**In February this year Letchworth Garden City proudly opened the Broadway Theatre following a 12-month building project. Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation's Interim Chief Executive Officer, Colin Chatfield, who oversaw the £4m project, reveals how an iconic art deco cinema has been transformed into a multi-purpose performance space.**

At a time when theatres are going dark, or installing cinema screens to help ensure their survival, it seemed somewhat counter intuitive when Letchworth Garden City decided, three years ago, to create a new performance space.

Created in 1903 as an escape from the dirt and grime of England's Victorian cities the World's First Garden City is a place of unique architectural significance. But its founders were also keen to ensure the town's residents enjoyed a rich cultural life, demonstrated by the many clubs and societies dedicated to wide range of artistic and leisure activities that sprung up and still thrive to this day.

At its inception a charitable trust was established to ensure Letchworth stayed true to these founding principles. This trust was gifted commercial land in the town, the revenue from which has always been used to preserve its unique heritage.

More than 100 years later the modern-day manifestation of the trust is the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and its role remains true to this founding ethos. However, despite the many cultural activities so enthusiastically embraced by its residents the

town had never had a first class theatre to serve its engaged local community.

In 2013 the Heritage Foundation decided it was time to address this gap in the town's artistic offering and began to look into the feasibility of creating a performance space in the town. This was to meet both the needs of the people of Letchworth and to help establish the town as a key cultural hub in the region, alongside the art gallery and cinema that the Foundation already operated.

A range of options were explored from building a completely new theatre to adapting existing buildings in the town before it was agreed to create the space within the town's striking art deco Broadway cinema in the heart of Letchworth.

Opened in 1936, meaning the cinema celebrated its 80th anniversary while building work was going on, the Broadway had already undergone a number of changes down the years. In 1996 it was split from a 1,400-seater single cinema into three smaller screens with the old balcony and circle becoming Screen One, the largest space with a capacity of 450. In 2008 a small 50-seat fourth screen was added by taking over the disused café area in the original circle foyer.

Screen One was seen as the most suitable of the screens to become the new theatre with its capacity making it perfect for touring companies and ambitious theatrical and music performances. The plan was for Screen One to become multi-functional and continue to be the cinema's main screen for blockbuster films releases while being turned over to live performances three or four times a week.

# In profile

## Roderick Ham, Theatre Architect



**Above: Architect Rod Ham showing Dame Sybil Thorndike and her husband Sir Lewis Casson a model of Thorndike Theatre.**

**Credit: Walker Jackson Studios courtesy of the Surrey History Centre.**



### About Roderick Ham

The architect Roderick Ham was one of the leading specialists in theatre design working in Britain between the 1960s and the 1980s. His reputation was established by the Thorndike Theatre, Leatherhead (1969), where he made clever use of a tricky site, with the Thorndike's galleried foyers being especially notable.

Its single-tier auditorium was reprised at Derby Playhouse (1975), but by this date he was also increasingly interested in multi-level auditoria. Unbuilt designs for High Wycombe (1971) and Bedford (1974) were followed by the Wolsey, Ipswich (1979), whose contextual exterior accommodated an intimate auditorium.

An exacting designer, and a principled, generous man, Rod will probably best be remembered for his work with the Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT) in compiling and editing *Theatre Planning*, published in 1972 and its revised and extended follow up published in 1987.

He was a member and then Chairman of the ABTT Planning Committee, which was instrumental in advising the Arts Council and Theatres Trust on proposals for building schemes.

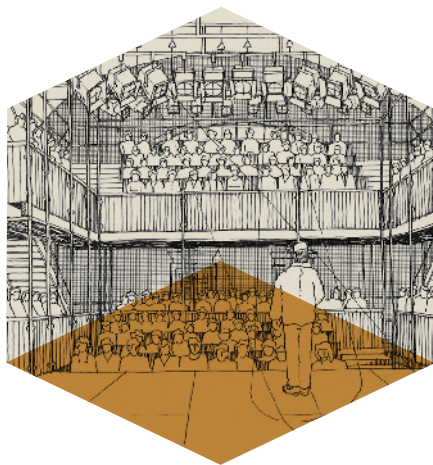
Roderick Ham, a Life Friend of Theatres Trust and one of the leading theatre architects of his generation died on 19 January 2017 at the age of 91.

# In the news

## Oldham Coliseum set for move

Oldham's Coliseum Theatre will move to a modern 550-seat venue on Union Street in the town's Cultural Quarter after securing an Arts Council grant worth £7.1m. It will move from its Fairbottom Street home to a new state-of-the-art facility including a 550-seat main auditorium and a 170-seat studio theatre with improved front-of-house facilities. The new-build project will be a central part of Oldham's Cultural Quarter and will be located on the current Southgate Street car park site, with a frontage on Union Street. This will connect the Coliseum Theatre with the new Heritage and Arts Centre linked with Gallery Oldham and the Library and Lifelong Learning centre. All are sited at a prominent town centre gateway and close to Oldham Central Metrolink stop. The plans are part of an approach approved in September 2015 which commits Oldham Council and its partners to a phased delivery over ten years of a four-stage Cultural Regeneration Programme. Mecanoo are currently producing new designs in order to submit a new planning application. Construction work is anticipated to start in April 2018 with the venue set to open in 2020.

Tricycle Theatre perspective view, 1980  
Credit: Tim Foster



## School theatre to benefit from Kilburn Tricycle Theatre's £5.5m transformation

The Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn High Road will undergo a £5.5m transformation in the summer under plans to create a new cafe for the

high street, increase capacity by a quarter, and refresh the entrance foyer. The project will also quadruple the number of permanent wheelchair accessible seats from two to eight as part of the theatre's drive to make the playhouse accessible to all. New seating in the auditorium will also be adaptable to allow for different staging configurations. The redevelopment forms part of the wider regeneration of Kilburn High Road. The Tricycle Theatre's former auditorium and stage is to be given in its entirety to a school in Kent. The Tricycle was built in 1979, designed by architect Tim Foster, with Iain Mackintosh. Built using a standard scaffold system its form is derived from the courtyard theatre design of the eighteenth century playhouses, such as the Georgian Theatre in Richmond, North Yorkshire, which are well known for their intimacy. Now the 240-seat auditorium will become a new theatre for the Valley Park School in Maidstone. The auditorium and stage will be reassembled in an old gym building.

## Council votes to demolish Scarborough Futurist

On 9 January Scarborough Council voted to approve the allocation of £4m of Council money for the demolition of the Futurist Theatre, a Theatre at Risk. The motion, which included the demolition of the buildings adjoining the theatre and the subsequent necessary stabilisation of the cliff face beyond, was narrowly carried by 22 votes to 21, with 1 abstention. The final design for demolition and a new cliff face retention scheme will be brought to planning in the early summer. There are no plans as yet for a replacement development although theme park Flamingo Land have previously expressed an interest. In the meantime, Historic England have confirmed they will grant a Certificate of Immunity from Listing for the building, meaning the venue cannot be statutorily listed for a period of five years and could therefore be demolished. Local support for the building has grown strong over the last few months and campaigners are continuing to battle to save the Futurist. We are supporting the Save the Futurist campaign group and other stakeholders who would like to see the Futurist Theatre restored for cultural

use. We believe the Futurist can still provide a large-scale theatre for the presentation of musicals, comedy, music and drama in Yorkshire, thanks to its capacity and fly tower, and would be an immense cultural and economic benefit to the people of Scarborough

## Glasgow Citizens redevelopment gets £2.5m boost

Glasgow Citizens' multimillion-pound redevelopment project has received a £2.5m grant from the Scottish government. The money, from the government's regeneration capital grant fund, takes the total raised to date to £15.3m, with an overall project expected to be £20.8m. The theatre plans to redevelop the 20th century additions to the 139-year-old building that are no longer fit for purpose. It will redesign the building around the existing Victorian auditorium as a creative and cultural hub for local communities. Proposals include improved accessibility across the entire building, securing the existing Victorian features as well as building new bar and cafe facilities, rehearsal, learning and studio spaces. The award is a recognition of the importance of the theatre to the local Gorbals community, as one of the few remaining heritage buildings left in the area. It also has significant community and historical relevance for Glasgow. The theatre is actively working with the New Gorbals Housing Association to reverse the physical, economic and social decline of the area. Work will begin on the redevelopment project in 2018, subject to the rest of the funds being raised, with the venue set to open in 2020.

## GO! Together to surrender Plymouth Palace lease

In May 2015 the charity GO! (Great Opportunities) announced it would head up a scheme to restore the Grade II\* listed Victorian theatre, a Theatre at Risk. In early February GO! put a statement on the Palace's website explaining that it faced a crisis situation, partly incurred by a four-fold cost in insurance. And they have surrendered the leases to owner Manouchehr Bahmanzadeh. We remain in contact with the Council and Historic England over the condition of the building.



# Our work



Manchester Factory  
Credit: OMA

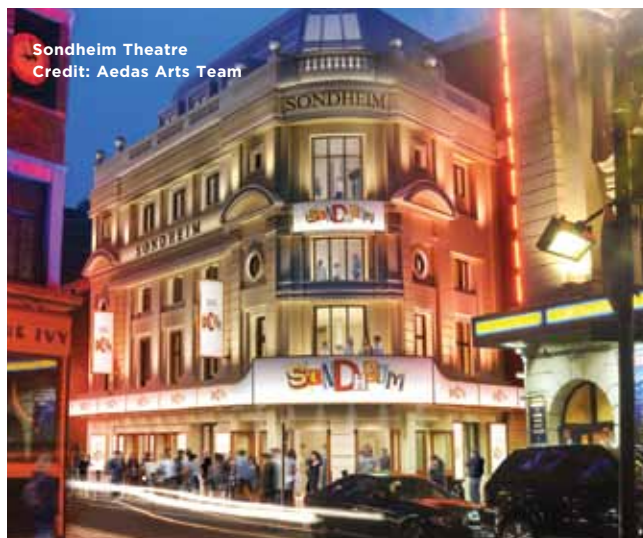
Manchester City Council has granted permission for the development of **The Factory** (114294/VO/2016 and 114370/LO/2016), a new a £110m theatre and arts venue to be built on the former site of Granada Studios (currently the site of the Starlight Theatre). It will be the permanent home of the Manchester International Festival and used for all types of art and culture. The building provides approximately 13,500sq m of new build performance space and also incorporates the adjacent Grade II listed colonnaded railway viaduct. The building is split into four main parts: a large, flexible ground floor foyer space servicing the entire venue and capable of staging its own pop-up events; at first floor level, a more traditional 1,600-seat theatre with stage house that backs onto the enormous 5,000-standing capacity 'warehouse'; and a back of house tower block. The 'warehouse' is to provide ultimate flexibility of space and can be subdivided to provide two smaller venues or linked to the theatre to provide an Opera XL experience. The many different configurations and performance possibilities also allow for events to be staged simultaneously or as one single multi-event. Two new public spaces called Factory Square and Festival Square will also be created around the new building. The maximum capacity of the venue is approx. 7,300. We are now working with the International Festival through the value engineering process to refine the design before construction begins.

Detailed plans for the new **Think Tank Studio** theatre space in Streatham Hill have now been submitted (LB of Lambeth, 17/00212/DET, pending). The new studio is being provided as part of the redevelopment of the former Gaumont Theatre. The original application

approved the construction of a 500sq m theatre shell. The auditorium space provided is 16.5m long x 8.55m wide with a height to the underside of the lighting grid (at its lowest point) of 4.7m. This equates to a floor area of 140sq m and approximately 120 seats. We have been working with the Council and developer for a number of years, assisting in the development of an operators' brief and in the tender process, which resulted in Think Tank being awarded the lease to manage the new facility. The detailed plans include provision of a rehearsal studio, café/bar, offices and three dressing rooms, in addition to the auditorium. The fit-out is funded by a payment of £408,000 provided via the Section 106 agreement.

The Trust strongly objected to proposals for the substantial demolition and change of use of both the **Broadway Theatre, Peterborough** (16/02096/FUL, pending) and the **Regent Theatre, Bournemouth** (former Odeon) (7-2016-891-AA, pending and 7-2016-891-Z, refused) for residential development. Both theatres had recent heritage listing applications turned down by Historic England, but are located in heritage conservation areas. We argued that neither application demonstrated that the theatres are not viable, or that there is no longer a community need for such assets. The Broadway Theatre has a particularly strong case for remaining in theatre use, as Peterborough's Cultural Strategy identifies the need for a large capacity touring theatre in the City that would be met by reopening the Broadway. Bill Kenwright Ltd also provided a statement showing their recent winter seasons at the theatre were financially successful, reaffirming the viability of the theatre. The second Regent Theatre application was refused on its impact on the conservation area.

The Trust supported a proposal for significant alterations and additions to the **Ambassadors Theatre** (LB of Camden, 2016/4869/P and 2016/5032/L, pending) to convert it into a new style of theatre venue to be named the **Sondheim**. The Ambassadors originally opened in 1913 and was designed by W G R Sprague. With 375 seats, it is one of the smallest playhouses in the West End. However, its compact design meant



Sondheim Theatre  
Credit: Aedas Arts Team

# Theatre Peckham

where bike sheds  
might have stood

Images courtesy of  
Theatre Peckham

