

THEATRE: *Brighton Hippodrome*

Listed Grade II*

Address: 52-58 Middle Street, Brighton BN1 1AL

Local Authority:

Brighton & Hove City Council

King's House

Grand Avenue

Hove BN3 2LS

Tel: 01273 292222

Email: conservation@brighton-hove.gov.uk

www.brighton.gov.uk

Current Leasehold Owner: The Academy Music Group (AMG)

Current Operator/Manager: Vacant

Local Contact: Rob Fraser, Senior Conservation Officer, Brighton & Hove Council

Tel: 01273 292271

Email: Rob.Fraser@brighton-hove.gov.uk

The Theatres Trust Contact: Suzanne McDougall. Tel 020 7836 8591

Email: Suzanne.mcdougall@theatrust.org.uk

Original theatre architect (s): 1897: Lewis Karlake as an ice rink, 1900: Frank Matcham, converted to theatre.

Building Description

The Brighton Hippodrome is an architecturally significant conversion of an 1897 ice rink to a theatre. The conversion retained the restrained stuccoed façade to Middle Street but included an opulently decorated near-circular auditorium. Originally a dual purpose circus/variety theatre, and now possibly the finest surviving example of its type in Britain. The most spectacular feature of the auditorium is the vast ceiling in the form of a panelled tent which covers the whole space and is richly decorated with boldly modelled Baroque plasterwork. At the centre is a balustraded gallery, reminiscent of (but not the same as) the one at the London Hippodrome before it was altered. The 'Palm Court', with its false bridge has undergone some alteration but is an impressive room with paintings which appear to date from the original 'art decorations'. The body of the theatre is intact, with only superficial alterations (the levelling of the auditorium, for example, which 'submerges' part of the lower boxes). It could be readily restored to use.

Theatre Use

The Hippodrome was last used as a theatre in the late 1960s. It was then used as a bingo hall until the 2007 when it closed and was sold to AMG, whose intention is to present live music events.

Occupancy: Vacant.

Building Location

The theatre is in a central location within the town centre.

Risks

Internally, the plasterwork is in a poor state of repair. However the main risk is in converting the theatre for live music, where there are serious sound containment issues which are expensive and difficult to resolve.