

Birmingham **Hippodrome**

School Project FAQ's





History of the Birmingham Hippodrome

1890: First edition of ordnance survey maps show back to back housing covering the entire Birmingham Hippodrome site.

1895: The Assembly Rooms on the corner of Hurst Street and Inge Street are erected.

1899: The Tower of Varieties and Circus opens on 9th October 1899. It was constructed for Henry and James Draysey in a circus format with seating encircling the performance ring.

1900: The auditorium is reconstructed, incorporating stalls seating, dress circle gallery and boxes. Now names the Tivoli Theatre of Varieties and was the first venue to offer 2 shows nightly as a variety theatre – with the emphasis on music-hall.

1903: Renamed The Hippodrome .A rocky period of closures, openings, (closed for three years from 1914 due to WW1

1924: Purchased by Moss Empires and remained in their control for around 55 years. Refurbished the theatre with a new entrance so that people didn't have to queue outside for their tickets in the rain and replaced the circle and balcony with one large circle.



1957: The start of the annual Christmas Pantomime

1963: Renamed the Birmingham Theatre by Moss Empires.

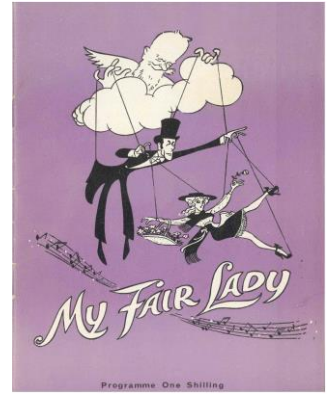
1963 : Saw the advent of rock 'n' roll and lots of music performances including the Beatles, they came in March at the bottom of the bill and then back in November twice as sell out headline performers! There was so much hysteria around the theatre they had to come in dressed as policemen to avoid the crowds!

1964 : There was no panto this year – instead there was a six month run of My Fair Lady with Birmingham born Tony Britton (Fern Britton’s dad!) – It was a box office smash!

1972: Name reverts back to the Hippodrome.

1979: Birmingham City Council purchase The Hippodrome for £50,000 from Stoll Moss Theatres and lease it to the present Birmingham Hippodrome Theatre Trust – a registered charity, the profits of which are re-deployed in the advancement of the Birmingham Hippodrome.

1981: A fifteen year programme of reconstruction costing £2million pounds begins with a new dressing room block and the removal of the stage rake ,fly tower, orchestra pit, renovated auditorium, and new catering facilities. Reopened with Jesus Christ Superstar.



1983: Expansion of the fly tower and orchestra pit is enlarged, making it the largest lyric stage out of London, enabling major musicals, opera and ballet productions to be staged.

1986: New frontage to the Hippodrome is constructed.

1990: Purpose built accommodation for Birmingham Royal Ballet is constructed, with four dance studios and support facilities.

1992: The stalls sightlines are improved by re-raking and reconstructing the auditorium floor.

1996: Adjacent land is purchased.

1999: Work commences on the £30 million Hippodrome Redevelopment Project – a partnership between Birmingham Hippodrome, Birmingham Royal Ballet and DanceXchange. The project is supported by The Arts Council of England with National Lottery Funds, Birmingham City Council, European Regional Development Fund and generous donations from the public.

2001: The Birmingham Hippodrome Theatre re-opens on 13th November, providing the best facilities for theatre and dance. We have had a number of big productions since the theatre re opened 10 years ago including; Disney’s Beauty & the Beast, Miss Saigon, Starlight Express, My Fair Lady, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang ,Mary Poppins , We Will Rock You, Les Mis , Sound of Music, Hairspray and coming in 2013 Phantom of the Opera and Disney’s Lion King

Over the years some of the biggest names in showbiz have performed at the Hippodrome, including Kenneth Brannagh, Laurel & Hardy, Frankie Howard, Tommy Steel, Barry Manilow, Frank Sinatra, The Beatles, Joan Collins and Honor Blackman.

Birmingham Hippodrome Today



Birmingham Hippodrome is a receiving house. A receiving house is a theatre which does not produce its own shows in-house but instead receives touring theatre companies, this can be for one night, one week, one month or even several months. The incoming company may receive a share of the box office takings or a minimum guaranteed payment.

Owned by Birmingham City Council and leased to Birmingham Hippodrome Theatre Trust on a 125 year lease. The Birmingham Hippodrome is also a registered charity. **We are unsubsidised** and do not receive revenue grants from Arts Council England or Birmingham City Council. However, we regularly apply to both these organisations for support towards special creative, education and access projects.

Our resident partners are **Birmingham Royal Ballet**, formerly Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet, who came to the city in 1990. We present all of **Welsh National Opera's** repertoire.

In 2010/11, we welcomed **523,219** paying visitors making us the most popular single theatre in the UK. Ticket sales totalled **£15,088,265** (our best year since reopening in 2001) and we presented **392** performances.

We are now the third most visited attraction in the area after Drayton Manor and Cadbury World.

70% of our audience comes from outside Birmingham and of those, 50% come from outside the West Midlands

Following an extensive £34m redevelopment between 1999 and 2001, Birmingham Hippodrome now ranks as one of the finest theatre complexes in the world. It encompasses the beautifully refurbished 1,847 seat auditorium together with the largest stage in the UK outside of London, plus extensive backstage and technical areas.

The Front of House accommodation was also completely rebuilt and now encompasses large spacious foyers, including a 120-cover Restaurant. Adjoining the Front of House areas are 8 new hospitality and meeting rooms, new studio spaces and office accommodation got DanceXChange, one of 9 national Dance Agencies. Also new to the development is the Patrick Centre, a 206- studio theatre and the Jerwood Centre for the Treatment and Prevention of Dance Injuries.

Birmingham Hippodrome shares its building with Birmingham Royal Ballet and DanceXchange. Birmingham Royal Ballet moved to Birmingham in 1990. DanceXchange are a dance agency, one of only 7 in the UK.

We co-produce **International Dance Festival Birmingham** with our partners DanceXchange. The third festival in spring 2012, is financially supported by Advantage West Midlands, Birmingham City Council, Arts Council England and the European Regional Development Fund, sponsored by Brewin Dolphin.

Patrick Centre

The Patrick Centre was completed during our award-winning redevelopment, endowed with a generous gift from The Patrick Trust. An adaptable studio theatre seating just over 200 people, it is fully accessible with air-conditioning and state-of-the-art technical equipment.

The Patrick Centre is home to DanceXchange. DanceXchange is one of nine national dance agencies committed to presenting and promoting the best in dance and bringing together artists, companies, educators and venues to benefit people of all ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds.



The Patrick Centre for the Performing Arts is used for research, rehearsing and creating new work, professional development, education and performance. This new studio theatre is a great space to bring any small scale production to fruition ready for touring. It is a totally adaptable room that can be set out as a traditional performance and auditorium with raked seating or as an installation style space.

Foyers



We have four large foyer spaces front of house. Level 1 -Stalls, Level 2 - Front Circle, Level 3- Middle Circle and Level 4 - Upper Circle. On every level but level 4 there is a bar. On Every Level there is a small “egg” (shop) selling ice creams, programmes, drinks and snacks. On Level 2 there is a deli bar and on Level 3 the Circle Restaurant. For some shows the foyers are used as performance spaces prior to the show on the main stage. We have had singing, dancing, break dancing , djs and mc’s all performing in these spaces.

Circle Restaurant, Deli Bar and StageSide



The **Circle Restaurant** is the perfect place to start your evening at the theatre. Our stylish Circle Restaurant, located just a short walk from your seats, offers a relaxing dining experience with tempting, modern menus and an extensive wine list. Our menus are adapted for each show and take advantage of seasonal produce. Wherever possible, we source our produce from local suppliers through our partnership with Heart of England Fine Foods (HEFF).

If you are short on time or looking for a quick and tasty bite to eat before the show, our **Deli Bar** offers the perfect solution. Situated on Front Circle Foyer, in front of our main entrance, the Deli Bar offers a selection of hot and cold dishes as well as a variety of delicious homemade sandwiches, desserts and hot and cold drinks.

Stageside is just over the road from our stage door on Thorp Street, a casual brasserie style experience with a lively bar and quick service. Ideal as a place to meet friends before or after your Hippodrome visit, you might even bump into cast members and musicians as it’s a popular post-show haunt. Pop in for a coffee or a drink, or a tasty dish or two from our simple modern British menu, all at attractive prices. You can also book Upstairs at StageSide for a private reception for up to 60 guests.

Backstage



The proscenium arch of the theatre (the frame around the stage) is 26ft high and 42ft wide.

When a show is in progress, the Hippodrome is using enough power to light small town!

There are around 42 flying bars in the fly tower above the stage and these are used to hang scenery, props, backdrops and lights. In total there can be up to 3 tonnes of weight hanging above the heads of the cast!

The main stage has a get-in lift which can hold a weight of 40,000kgs, **the same weight as 10 adult sized Asian elephants!**

The safety curtain is constructed out of a rectangular steel frame, covered on the stage side with flat steel sheets and on the auditorium side with metallised fire resistant cloth.

The safety curtain prevents fire or smoke from spreading from one part of the building to another. In the event of a fire the curtain will drop into place within 30 seconds, and is guaranteed fire proof for at least 20 minutes.

The safety curtain weighs an astounding 6.5 tonnes!

The Hippodrome owns more than 200 different types of stage lighting, but this only supplements the lighting of a show. Most production companies can bring along up to 500 of their own.

The Shows



2010/2011 Musicals formed 46% of our performances, Pantomime 19%, Ballet 14%, and Opera 3%. Other performances include drama, dance and comedy.

25% of our tickets were sold at concessionary rates for education, access and audience development. **16,262** discounted tickets were issued to schools, including 1,543 free tickets for teachers. **22,324** discounted tickets were purchased by patrons with disabilities.

Around 8 tickets sales staff are in their phone room from 08:30am in the morning until 9:00pm at night and **they take over 1,000 calls a day to book tickets**. You can now also book tickets online at our website, www.birminghamhippodrome.com

The average price of a theatre ticket is around £20. A top price ticket this season would cost you £50, to see the Welsh National Opera. The cheapest ticket you could get would be £11.50, during pantomime.

However, Birmingham Hippodrome does not actually get 100% of the ticket price. The tickets are based on what is known as a **'box office split.'** This is usually 75:25 and this means that Birmingham Hippodrome will receive 25% of the tickets price, with the remaining 75% going to the producing company. **So, for a £40 ticket, we only get £10.**

Our new free outdoor programme **Six Summer Saturdays** played to an estimated **100,000** people last summer.



Mission and Aims

OUR MISSION

To provide the **best theatre experience possible**.

OUR AIMS

To provide a performance programme of the highest quality, featuring the finest UK and international companies and productions.

To continue attracting the largest audience to a single theatre in the UK.

To be accessible to everyone, engaging with people of all ages and backgrounds.

To provide valued service to all our visitors.

To ensure our business practices are as safe, sustainable and efficient as possible.

To utilise the widest range of skills and talents in employment and governance and provide a progressive workplace, actively promoting personal development, equality and fairness.

To play a leading role in Birmingham's economic and cultural development.

To build sufficient resources to maintain independence, achieve organisational objectives and enable ambitious development.

We will become an internationally recognised 'Cultural Enterprise'.

*Alongside our resident partners, we will establish Birmingham as an **International City of Dance**.*

*As a key anchor of the city centre's southern expansion in a regenerated **Southside**, we will attract more visitors, more often to an area with an improved environment and identity.*

*We will grow our **physical and creative capacity** to produce new performances and new experiences, and expand the breadth of our business.*

BIRMINGHAM'S CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS GENERATE ...

£271 MILLION+
PER YEAR TO THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

2 MILLION ATTENDANCES
AT PERFORMANCES, EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS EVERY YEAR

£40 MILLION
IN ADDITIONAL VISITOR SPEND, ANNUALLY

Source: Birmingham Arts Partnership's report and manifesto, *Birmingham's Cultural Capital* which can be downloaded at www.birminghamartspartnership.co.uk

For our full prospectus [CLICK HERE](#)

FAQ'S



- **How many staff are employed at Birmingham Hippodrome?**

We employ around 100 staff on permanent contracts and approximately 250 staff on a casual basis.

- **What is the management structure at Birmingham Hippodrome?**

Our organisation is divided into four distinct departments each headed by a director. These are Finance & Resources, Hospitality & Service, Technical & Security and Marketing & Development. Within each department we have managers, supervisors and staff level employees. Stuart Griffiths is our Chief Executive.

- **How does Birmingham Hippodrome make money aside from the Box Office?**

There are many other departments that generate sales for the Hippodrome these include: Hospitality & Events, Front of house via interval refreshments, show merchandise, programmes and catering department via restaurant & bars

- **How long has Birmingham Hippodrome been established for?**

The theatre has been established since 1899

- **What is Birmingham Hippodrome's equal opportunity policy?**

The Theatre Trust believes in and is committed to equal, fair and proper employment opportunities at Birmingham Hippodrome and will implement procedures and take effective steps to ensure that this is successful. The Theatre Trust is committed to ensuring that applicants, employees and the public are treated solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential without any unjustified discrimination on any of the following grounds:

Race (including colour, nationality, citizenship and ethnic or national origins)

Disability

Gender

Sexual Orientation

Marital status

Age

Trade union activity, membership or non-membership
Religious belief
Socioeconomic background
Status as an ex-offender

- **What type of arts provider does the organisation fit into?**

We present musicals, dance performances, occasional drama pieces and comedy acts.

- **What sorts of activities go on regularly, occasionally and how wide is the range?**

The programme is split into weeks. We have 9 weeks of Birmingham Royal Ballet throughout the year, 3 weeks of Welsh National Opera, a summer show that will run for 12 weeks for example Mary Poppins, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang & We Will Rock You, pantomime for 6 weeks and weekly or fortnightly shows that fit around - these are either dance performances, musicals or comedy shows.

- **How is the theatre funded?**

Birmingham Hippodrome is self funded – with a charity status.

- **How does the programme differ from other organisations?**

The main difference to our programme compared with other organisations is that we are a presenting theatre. All the shows we have come ready to perform whereas producing theatres produce their own shows. Many producing theatres tend to have more drama based shows in their programme where as we have very few. The majority of our shows are musicals which (commercial)on tour from London.....

- **To what extent does the location of the organisation reflect on its programme and aims?**

Birmingham Hippodrome is located within the centre of a modern and culturally diverse city. Due to Birmingham's diverse population our aim is to present a variety of shows, within our programme that will target a broad market audience.

- **Birmingham Hippodromes Aims**

New Audiences

To be a leader in innovative approaches to audience development. Use education / outreach activity to deepen the relationship with existing audiences and plant the seeds for the future to inspire young people that theatre is relevant, interesting and exciting.

- Create, develop, discover and retain new and more diverse audiences
- Develop Loyalty and frequency of attendance
- Increase young people's engagement
- Improve and Increase access so that we can attract as wide a range of people as possible regardless of ability and status

Enhance Profile

Work to raise the profile of the theatre and its work in collaboration with other cultural and creative organisations.

Enhance our international profile through the programme and our work.
Develop the building as a visitor attraction and corporate facility
Seek to attract an increased number of visitors, attract them more frequently and encourage them to arrive earlier and stay later or visit for

reasons other than attending shows.

- Expand the building and its facilities/attractions both commercially and educationally. Enhance the customer experience.
- Expand our virtual offer, through enhanced use of technology
- Play a leading role in the continued regeneration of the local area around us
- Extend our service and facilities to ensure the Hippodrome is the prime city venue for business support, events and hospitality

Brand Expansion

- Using the Hippodrome brand in other areas e.g. retail, publishing, web content
- Expanding the business e.g. off-site catering / corporate events
- Extend the programme to include programming arts/public events away from the theatre and a wider range of events generally
- Use digital media to provide opportunities to expand into broadcasting and/or web-based activity

