



TYNE
THEATRE
& OPERA
HOUSE

THEATRICAL SCENE PAINTING IN THE 19TH CENTURY

The Artist and the Picture Frame

Friday 2nd August 2024

INTRODUCTION

It is with tremendous pleasure that we welcome you to our second conference at the Tyne Theatre & Opera House. Following our 2023 conference 'Victorian & Edwardian Theatre in Performance', this year we focus in on the role of the scenic artist and their work. We are delighted to have speakers from across the world sharing their expertise, with a spread of papers looking at conservation, the D'Oyly Carte sets, Scottish scenic painters and more. We look forward to a stimulating day!

Since last year the capital project to restore the theatre has continued apace. We are now "on site" - the Bistro bar has closed and is currently in the middle of major restoration programme that forms Phase I of a much bigger project to restore the second "lost" auditorium that once sat alongside the main auditorium. We must recognise the help and assistance of the North East Mayoral Combined Authority, Newcastle City Council and the National Heritage Lottery Fund in helping us to deliver the vision. Without their continued support it would be impossible to deliver this new and exciting community-based space in a building which has been recognised as being of international significance. We therefore look forward to continuing these relationships as the project moves forward – these are extra-ordinary times!

David Wilmore
Capital Project Director, Tyne Theatre & Opera House

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Friday 2nd August 2024

9.30am - 10.00am	Foyer	Delegate arrival & Registration
10am - 10.15am	Auditorium	Formal Conference Opening
10.15am - 12.15pm	Auditorium	Panel 1 – including Q&A
12.30pm - 1.15pm	Grand Circle Bar	Lunch & Networking
1.15pm - 2.15pm	Stage	Stage Machinery demonstration
2.15pm - 2.45pm		Tea break
2.45pm - 4.45pm	Grand Circle Bar	Panel 2 – including Q&A
5.00pm	Auditorium	Conference End & Depart



THE JOURNEY SO FAR...

Our year long 'Drury Lane of the North' project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund was an incredible springboard for heritage work at the theatre. The project focused on the development of a performance calendar covering the years 1867-1919 (which can be searched on the TTOH website), the restoration of our stage machinery both above and below stage, and the investigation of options for restoring the Grand Saloon (our current Bistro bar), built in 1892. For information on the project and its discoveries, visit <https://www.tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk/heritage-project/>. The legacy of this grant allows us to offer events such as the conference we are hosting today and continue exploring our wonderful venue's heritage.

Our team of volunteers have continued to research events at the theatre from 1919-1972 - the 'Stoll' years, when cinema took over. We are delighted that the research team were nationally recognised earlier this year, being presented with the Heritage Alliance's 'Heritage Heroes' award for their contribution to the UK's heritage sector.

Our Stage Machinery team continues to grow as does the work. They have restored the grave trap, replaced ropes and counterweights, and continue to maintain this unique example of Victorian machinery. Most of the cuts are now fully operational, and we are nearly halfway through replacing the stage floor with the softwood that will allow it to move more easily. We are very excited about the heritage performance possibilities that this will offer for the future!

We have also continued to investigate other areas of the theatre with original stencilling being found in the Upper Circle and transferred images of 1930s film posters in our Grand Circle boardroom. Do take the time to see these during the day if you are able.



FLINTS

are proud to support the TTOH efforts to research and highlight the role of Scenic Artists, historic techniques and theatre restoration through sponsoring the

3 day Distemper Painting Workshop

held at the Tyne Theatre and Opera House in July 2024

led by scenic artist and historian Wendy Waszut-Barrett

We are also delighted to be attending the TTOH conference

Theatrical Scene Painting in the 19th Century: The artist and the picture frame

We hope to see you here today!



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PANEL 1: ABSTRACTS, HEADSHOTS AND BIOGRAPHIES



Raymond Walker's interest in stage lighting began in his teens with involvement in amateur dramatic and operatic productions in Manchester. In 2006, he founded Victorian Opera Northwest to make recordings of forgotten British composers. Research into early British staging with the V&A and British Library archives led to the publication of "Backdrop to a Legend" in 2018. Lasting links with Australian theatre designers who contributed to his research were made at the time. Raymond has given lectures on stage scenery for the Victoria & Albert Museum, Buxton and Harrogate Festivals.

The visual aspects of Victorian scenery and how it evolved during the 20th Century

Painting stage scenery in the 19th Century was a busy and lucrative profession. Attractive and realistic sets were sought after and the Victorian painters gave of their best. The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company recorded many aspects of their productions in well-preserved archives. We take a journey through the lives and skills of these painters, their knowledge, and changes in fashion they had to accept in staging and lighting. Their well-kept secrets have now come to light. They joined London clubs, had servants and were able to retire comfortably.



Dr David Wilmore was educated at Newcastle University where he became involved with the restoration of the Tyne Theatre & Opera House. On Christmas Day 1985 the stage house was gutted by fire and he spent the next two years restoring the theatre a second time. He formed **theatresearch** in 1986 and has been involved in many theatre restoration projects including the Georgian Theatre Royal, Richmond [1788], Matcham's Theatre Royal Newcastle upon Tyne [1901], Theatre Royal, Bristol [1766] and Matcham's Gaiety Theatre & Opera House, Isle of Man [1900]. He directed the opera *Ages Ago* for the National Gilbert and Sullivan Company and has also been known to perform his one man show *Matcham's Lost Empires!* Current projects include the restoration of the Tyne Theatre & Opera House, Buxton Opera House and the Grand Theatre Blackpool (all of which engaged the hand of Frank Matcham).

The original portraits from Gilbert and Sullivan's "Ruddygore"..... rediscovered

During the 1980s David worked on the early conservation of the Normansfield Amusement Hall in London. It was at that time, working with his great friend Terence Rees that they stumbled upon the original painted scenery portraits from Gilbert and Sullivan's opera "Ruddygore". This paper tells the story of the research journey and the extra-ordinary sequence of events that led to the scenery finding a home in this small private theatre in Hampton Wick.



TYNE PANTOMIME, 1906-7.



Karen Thompson, ACR, FIIC, FHEA, SF-RET, is a senior lecturer and co-convenor for the MPhil Textile Conservation programme, Kelvin Centre for Conservation and Cultural Heritage Research, University of Glasgow. Karen was project manager for the conservation of the Normansfield Theatre Scenery.

The Normansfield scenery collection and its conservation

The talk will provide an overview of the Normansfield Theatre painted scenery collection and its conservation. This Victorian theatre was part of the Normansfield Hospital in Teddington, London, which houses over 100 pieces of painted scenery. Through the process of documentation and conservation much was learnt about the scenery materials and making. This will be presented alongside providing insight into the conservation decision making and treatments carried out.

PANEL 2: ABSTRACTS, HEADSHOTS AND BIOGRAPHIES



Dr Wendy Waszut-Barrett is a scenic artist and theatre historian. She is the founder of Historic Stage Services, LLC, a firm specializing in painted illusion for the stage. For over thirty years her passion has remained the preservation and replication of scenic art for historic venues. Dr. Waszut-Barrett's current research and projects are posted to her website www.drypigment.net.

Scenic Art: Past and Present

"Preserving the Past" goes beyond the actual care of theatre artifacts; it also applies to the theatrical trades. Although many nineteenth-century scene art techniques were well-documented in theatrical manuals, most have been lost from institutional memory. This paper will examine distemper painting for the theatre, both past and present.



Grit Eckert was born and brought up in the North of Germany and from a young age enjoyed painting and making things, getting involved in theatre work at the age of sixteen. Due to a lack of training opportunities within scene painting she came to London and gained a BA in Scenic Art and a MA in Theatre Practices at the Rose Bruford College. Over the years she has worked across the full discipline of scene painting including teaching and historical research as well as a bit of positive activism in raising awareness of workspaces. She currently works as a freelance scenic artist.

We are still here!!!! Scene Painting – a Historical Study and still a Theatrical Trade

This paper explores the enduring practice of scene painting, linking the Victorian and Edwardian period, and its ongoing relevance in contemporary theatre practice. Anecdotes from my career as a scene painter and educator illustrate the persistence and vitality of this art form. These stories not only connect us to historical practices but also demonstrate ongoing shifts and continuities within the trade. The paper underscores the significance of scene painting as both a historical study and vibrant, dynamic practice that continues to shape theatrical productions today.



Professor Christina Young is Director of The Kelvin Centre for Conservation and Cultural Heritage Research at the University of Glasgow. She has been conducting research for over ten years on the history of scenic art and artists in Great Britain: *The Power To Transform*. Her other research interests include the conservation of modern and contemporary art and painted cloth.

c19th Century Scottish Scenic Painters: Paint Frame to Picture Frame

The foundations and high point in popular culture in the early nineteenth century of visual depictions of the Scottish landscape and culture within the public domain was born out of the burgeoning theatres and academies of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and through the Norie brothers who were instrumental in developing a homegrown dynasty of decorative, landscape and theatrical scene painters. This paper traces their legacy which now can only be imagined through the watercolours, lithographs and oil paintings that brought the Scottish landscape and culture into the galleries and drawing rooms of Britain.

SUPPORT US

It's a joy and a privilege to be able to protect our beautiful theatre, but the running costs of a Victorian venue such as ours are high, and we face the constant challenge of operating a Grade I listed venue sustainably.

There are various ways to support us if you are able. The easiest way to make a small donation is to text TYNETHATRE 3 to 70450 to donate £3. You can also donate a different sum by changing the text, e.g. TYNETHATRE 5 to give £5. Texts cost the donation amount plus one standard rate message. Or why not pop a cash donation into one of our collection points around the building, including our beautiful interactive donation box in the foyer!

You can also leave a lasting legacy of your support and join Sarah Millican, Chris Ramsey, Carl Hutchinson and other theatre lovers who have sponsored a seat in our historic auditorium. For just £150 a commemorative plaque will be attached to the refurbished seat and remain there for the next 10 years. You'll also receive a commemorative certificate and acknowledgement of your support on our website.

For further information visit our website: tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk/support-us
Email: info@ttoh.uk Tel: 0191 243 1171

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You can help more people hear about us by leaving us a 'like' or a comment when you see our posts - it really does make a huge difference and is a great, free way to support us!

Scan the QR code for links to our social media channels and mailing list sign-up form.

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