

= Theatre Royal , Bath =

The Theatre Royal in Bath , England , was built in 1805 . A Grade II * listed building , it has been described by the Theatres Trust as " One of the most important surviving examples of Georgian theatre architecture " . It has a capacity for an audience of around 900 .

The Theatre Royal was built to replace the Old Orchard Street Theatre , funded by a Tontine and elaborately decorated . The architect was George Dance the Younger , with John Palmer carrying out much of the work . It opened with a performance of Shakespeare 's Richard III and hosted performances by many leading actors of the time including Dorothea Jordan , William Macready and Edmund Kean . A major fire in 1862 destroyed the interior of the building and was quickly followed by a rebuilding programme by Charles J. Phipps , which included the construction of the current entrance . Further redecoration was undertaken in 1892 ; more extensive building work , including a new staircase and the installation of electric lighting , followed in 1902 . Despite performances by casts including Sarah Bernhardt , the ballerina Anna Pavlova and Mrs. Patrick Campbell , the theatre was rarely very profitable . During World War II Donald Wolfitt , Irene Vanbrugh , John Gielgud and Sybil Thorndike appeared , with shows including Noël Coward 's Private Lives and Blyth Spirit , a performance by Ballet Rambert and light entertainment such as Charley 's Aunt , but audiences declined .

In 1979 the theatre was bought by a trust and , following public donations , it underwent refurbishment , with the rebuilding of the stage and the installation of a new taller fly tower for scenery and lighting . In 1997 a new 150 seat theatre , known as the Ustinov Studio , was opened . Further restoration work to the main auditorium was needed in 2010 . In 2005 a children 's theatre known as The Egg was opened . The complex also includes bars and restaurants . The Theatre Royal is host to several annual events , including the Family Theatre Festival and the Shakespeare Unplugged Festival .

= = History = =

= = = Construction = = =

The theatre was erected in 1805 , replacing the Old Orchard Street Theatre which had obtained a royal patent in 1768 enabling the use of the title ' Theatre Royal ' , the first to achieve this outside London . The Orchard Street site became a church and is now a Freemason 's Hall . The new theatre was first proposed in 1802 at several sites in Bath until the current site was chosen in 1804 ; funding was raised by the use of a Tontine , an investment plan named after the Neapolitan banker Lorenzo de Tonti , who is credited with inventing it in France in 1653 . It combines features of a group annuity and a lottery . Each subscriber pays an agreed sum into the fund , and thereafter receives an annuity . As members die , their shares devolve to the other participants , and so the value of each annuity increases . On the death of the last member , the scheme is wound up . Shares which cost £ 200 were rapidly purchased with the prince regent who later became George IV and his bother Prince Frederick among the subscribers . A similar scheme had previously been used for the construction of the Bath Assembly Rooms .

The exterior of the building , with arches , pilasters , garlands and ornaments , which is visible from Beauford Square , was designed by George Dance the Younger who also designed the decorative sections of the interior . The main fabric of the building was by John Palmer , who supervised the construction . The ceiling was decorated with panels from Fonthill Splendens , a mile from Fonthill Abbey , which were painted by Andrea Casali and donated to the theatre by Paul Cobb Methuen . Because of the potential damage from the gas lights , which were installed in 1827 , the paintings were moved by William Blathwayt to Dyrham Park .

The opening night was on 12 October 1805 was a production of Richard III , with an unknown actor in the lead . Though not a success , the theatre soon established a good reputation and thrived under the management of William Wyatt Dimond . Early performances included appearances by the

child actors Master Betty and Clara Fisher , with adult leads from prominent actors on the London stage including Dorothea Jordan , William Macready and Edmund Kean . In addition to Shakespeare and other serious drama , the productions included opera and comedy with Joseph Grimaldi playing the clown in a pantomime of Mother Goose in November 1815 .

Between the 1810s and 1850s there were a series of changes in ownership and management . These coincided with a Puritan revival and a fall in Bath 's popularity ; reductions in receipts were compounded by rising payments for actors from London . As a result , the theatre underwent financial crises and fell into a period of decline . Fortunes began to improve when James Henry Chute , who was the manager of the Bath Assembly Rooms and the son @-@ in @-@ law of the owner Mrs Macready , took over as the manager of the theatre and once again audiences began to rise .

= = = Fire and rebuilding = = =

On 18 April 1862 a major fire destroyed the interior of the building including the stage , scenery , wardrobe and library , leaving just the exterior walls still standing . A new company was formed to rebuild the theatre and a competition held for designs . The winner was C.J. Phipps and rebuilding , which included the new entrance on Sawclose , quickly followed . The present main entrance to the Theatre Royal , in Sawclose , was built in 1720 by Thomas Greenway , and was previously at Beau Nash 's house . Pevsner criticizes the mouldings of window @-@ frames , frieze and volutes of the door @-@ hood brackets as " characteristically overdone " , and mentions Wood citing its " profuse ornament " which was typical of a mason rather than an architect . Chute remained as manager and employed Charles Kean and Ellen Terry to play in A Midsummer Night 's Dream on the opening night , 3 March 1863 .

Initially the reopened theatre struggled to become profitable despite appearances by Henry Irving among others . In 1885 William Lewis took over as the lessee and was followed , in 1892 , by his son Egbert Lewis . They redecorated the theatre in 1892 and attracted larger regular audiences to performances of melodrama and comedy while starting to put on Gilbert and Sullivan operas and other attractions .

= = = 20th century = = =

In 1902 the theatre closed for nine months to enable extensive building work to be carried out in accordance with the terms of the Royal Charter . This involved a new staircase , the installation of electric lighting , a new fire curtain and hot water radiators throughout the auditorium . In 1905 , on the anniversary of the opening of the Theatre Royal , numerous William Shakespeare 's plays were performed by the company of actors led by Frank Benson .

In 1914 the theatre impresario Arthur Carlton , from Worcester , took over the lease . As he was responsible for 14 theatres around the country at the time , he appointed Mrs D. Valentine Munro as the local manager . Performances were maintained during World War I , and in 1916 Sarah Bernhardt portrayed a wounded male French soldier in Du Théâtre au Champ d 'Honneur . In the 1920s there were appearances by the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova and Mrs. Patrick Campbell . During the Great Depression of the 1930s the theatre was not profitable and closed completely for six months . In 1938 the lease was taken over by Reg Maddox , whose family were involved with the theatre for the next 40 years . During World War II the theatre fared better , with appearances by prominent actors including Donald Wolfit , Irene Vanbrugh , John Gielgud and Sybil Thorndike . In the Post @-@ War years , receipts suffered as audiences dwindled in the face of competition from cinema and television . Unsuccessful proposals were made for a trust to run the theatre in 1968 , and in the 1970s , shares in the owning company were bought by the property developer Charles Ware , who sold to Charles Clarke , a solicitor from Bristol . Clarke was responsible for a redecoration of the building , but as profits were still small , in 1976 he sold it to Louis I. Michaels , who ran the Haymarket Theatre in London .

In March 1979 , the dilapidated theatre was purchased by a trust headed by Jeremy Fry for £ 155

@, @ 000 . The following year , an appeal was launched to raise money for renovations , including the complete rebuilding of the stage , installation of a steel grid to hold stage lighting and scenery and a higher fly system , to allow major touring companies , including the Royal National Theatre under Peter Hall , to be booked to perform . The total projected cost was £ 3 @. @ 5 million , of which £ 1 @. @ 8 million was seen as being essential to reopening the theatre . Money and donations in kind were received from the city council , Arts Council England , Bath Preservation Trust , Leche Trust , Historic buildings council , Manifold Trust , South @- @ West Stonecleaning and Restoration Company and many individuals . Work on the building started to designs by Dowton and Hurst . However , as insufficient funds had been raised by 1982 to complete the work , loans were negotiated with the Bristol & West and Lombard North Central with guarantees from local councils . The theatre reopened on 30 November 1982 with a performance of A Midsummer Night 's Dream , featuring a cast from the National Theatre lead by Paul Scofield . The event was attended by Princess Margaret , Countess of Snowdon .

= = = 2010 refurbishment = = =

In October 2009 , the ' 2010 Refurbishment Appeal ' was launched by Camilla , Duchess of Cornwall , Royal Patron of the Theatre Royal Bath , to raise money for a programme of work to preserve the 200 @- @ year @- @ old building , while ensuring that it remained suitable for 21st @- @ century audiences . The £ 3million refurbishment by Fry , the most extensive programme of work since the theatre had been saved from virtual collapse almost 30 years before , included an expanded foyer , improved lift and disabled access to the stalls and royal circle levels , complete refurbishment of the bars and the creation of The Jeremy Fry Bar , in the former cellars of The Garrick 's Head pub , and redecoration of the auditorium . Technical improvements included the rebuilding of the Main House stage , and an extensive rewiring and lighting programme around the entire building , with new fire alarm systems , air @- @ conditioning and lighting , all designed to improve the building 's efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint by some 30 % . The design was by architects of the Fielden Clegg Bradley Studios , and the construction firm Midas was contracted to complete the building work .

A successful campaign , led by writer and novelist Bel Mooney , who had been instrumental in previous fund @- @ raising campaigns for the Theatre Royal Bath , saw almost a third of the money raised through donations and sponsorship , enabling work to begin away from public areas in March 2010 . The theatre 's Main House was closed in July 2010 , to allow the work on the foyer , bars and auditorium to be completed .

The official re @- @ opening took place on Wednesday , 8 September 2010 , just ten and a half months after the original campaign was launched , with the building work being completed on schedule . The ceremonial re @- @ opening was performed on @- @ stage by actors Penelope Keith and Peter Bowles , who were starring in the Theatre Royal 's own production of The Rivals , Richard Brinsley Sheridan 's classic Restoration comedy , set in and around 18th @- @ century Bath . In 2011 , the theatre won a British Construction Industry Award Conservation Award .

The theatre itself is said to be haunted by several ghosts including the Grey Lady , who was an actress centuries ago . She has been seen watching productions in the Grey Lady Box , and she leaves the distinctive scent of jasmine . She has purportedly been seen and scented in recent years .

= = Architecture and features = =

The theatre , along with the neighbouring Garrick 's Head public house , is a Grade II * listed building and is considered a prime example of Georgian architecture . The oldest part of the building is the former Garrick 's Head on St John 's Close . The three storey five bay building , with a basement , has a hipped roof with a part @- @ balustraded parapet . Above the door is a bust of David Garrick , which was made in 1831 by Lucius Gahagan . The Beauford Square side of the building , originally designed by George Dance the Younger , is of five bays with pilasters carrying a

frieze of comic and tragic muses . The central door was the main entrance for the pit and galleries . The east front , now the main entrance which opens onto Sawclose , was altered from a plain six @-@ bay entrance by the addition of the round @-@ arched foyer hiding four of the original bays . The 900 seat auditorium has tiers of ornate plasterwork , with red and gilt decoration , and a trompe @-@ l'œil ceiling and glittering chandelier . It has three galleries in a horseshoe plan , supported by cast iron pillars .

In 2017 the Sawclose area between the current Theatre Royal main entrance and the former Bluecoat School is to be made into a pedestrian @-@ friendly shared space area for pedestrians , cyclists and cars .

= = = Ustinov Studio = = =

In 1997 , a studio theatre was built at the rear of the building on Monmouth Street , called the Ustinov Studio , named after the actor Peter Ustinov . The front of the building is decorated with a bronze winged figure which was designed by his son , Igor Ustinov , entitled Hopefully . The 150 @-@ seat auditorium was originally a space for the youth theatre and small @-@ scale touring productions , but the Ustinov programme soon expanded to encompass classical concerts , stand @-@ up comedy (including high @-@ profile acts such as Bill Bailey , Stewart Lee and Lucy Porter) and in @-@ house productions . To accommodate the technical needs of these productions , a refurbishment was planned to take place throughout 2007 , improving the backstage & technical facilities , the foyer , bar and auditorium . The Ustinov Studio re @-@ opened in February 2008 , with their own production of Breakfast With Mugabe , starring Joseph Marcell , Miles Anderson and Nicholas Bailey .

As of 2015 , the studio is led by the Artistic Director Laurence Boswell . In the 2012 American Season at the Ustinov Studio , Sarah Ruhl 's In the Next Room (or The Vibrator Play) was the winner of the Best New Play ? Theatre Awards UK 2012 and nominated for three Tony Awards . The Ustinov Studio was also nominated for the prestigious Empty Space ... Peter Brook Award 2012 . The Daily Telegraph 's Dominic Cavendish praised the venue as a " constantly bubbling fount of marvels " at the awards ceremony . The Ustinov also received a second consecutive nomination for the 2013 awards .

In Autumn 2013 , the Ustinov presented The Spanish Golden Age Season , three new translations of rarely seen plays . These included the tragedy Punishment without Revenge , and the romantic comedies Don Gil of the Green Breeches and A Lady of Little Sense , which ran in repertory with a cast of ten actors in all three plays between September and December 2013 . It was later transferred to the Arcola Theatre .

In Summer 2014 , the Ustinov Studio presented a new comedy , ' Bad Jews ' , and in November of the same year , a black comedy by Florian Zeller , ' The Father ' starring Kenneth Cranham . Both of these plays have gone on to huge national and international success in following two years , running almost continuously on several tours and West End transfers , culminating in Kenneth Cranham winning the Olivier Award for Best Actor in a Play at the 2016 Awards Ceremony .

= = = The Egg = = =

In 2005 another new theatre was opened behind the Theatre Royal , The Egg , which provides professional theatre productions for children and their families , alongside workshops and youth theatre productions . It includes a cafe , which is also the venue for children 's and family events , and occasional teenage arts events .

= = = Restaurants = = =

The theatre 's Vaults Restaurant provides pre @-@ show dinners and matinée lunches , and a suite of rooms (The 1805 Rooms) are available for functions . The Theatre Royal is also licensed to host weddings and civil partnership ceremonies .

= = Performances = =

Alongside the weekly touring productions which make up most of its programme , the Theatre Royal is host to several annual events , including the Family Theatre Festival and the Shakespeare Unplugged Festival . The Peter Hall Company Season was held from 2003 until 2011 . Many plays start at the Theatre Royal before their official opening in London .