

The Grand Theatre, Blackpool

A Conservation Statement

1. Introduction

1.1 The preparation of a conservation statement for a building of architectural significance seeks amongst other things to establish the professional standing and context of the building's architect. In this instance however, the work of Frank Matcham is established and recognised as being of both national and indeed international significance. On that basis it is not the intention to repeat the information concerning his career as this is available elsewhere.¹

1.2 Frank Matcham (1854-1920) designed or significantly reconstructed over 150 theatres within the British Isles and is Great Britain's most prolific theatre architect of all time. Furthermore his theatres are now recognised as being iconic designs, which, above all worked superbly creating evocative performance spaces that are still much loved by the theatre-going public of the twenty-first century.

1.3 The rescue of the Grand Theatre from possible demolition driven by local people passionate about the building serves as a perfect illustration of how to 'save' a theatre. This act of salvation can now be seen as a natural move to protect our heritage, yet at the time it was visionary. The work that has been carried out to date on the building has been of high quality, with much informed discussion and research. The external cast-iron canopy which now adorns the main elevation is a perfect illustration of the success to date.

1.4 An opportunity now exists to undertake exceptional restoration taking advantage of the recent advances, knowledge and discoveries about Frank Matcham's work. When the programme of restoration began in the 1980s knowledge about Matcham was still very limited. Restoration of Matcham's *Opera House*, Buxton (1903), *Gaiety Theatre & Opera House* Douglas (1900), London *Coliseum* (1904) has delivered a wealth of new material which can now be drawn upon. Omissions and unintentional mistakes were made in the 1980s. The Trust recognises this and now seeks to rectify these issues. Authentic decoration by definition must encompass original wallpapers, seating, carpets, brassware and glazing, ultimately delivering a true Victorian atmosphere created with a single strategic decorative vision.

¹ Walker, Brian (ed.) *Frank Matcham - Theatre Architect*, pub:Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1982.

2. Local Context

2.1 The Grand Theatre was opened on the 23rd July 1894 at a time when theatre building, and the work of Frank Matcham was at its height. By the time the first *Stage Guide and Directory*² was published in 1912 Blackpool was extremely well provided with theatres.

Name of Theatre	Seating Capacities (c.1912)
Grand Theatre	2,550
Her Majesty's Opera House	2,260
Empress Ballroom	3,000
Grand Pavilion Winter Gardens	3,500
Palace Theatre	4,000
Tower Circus	3,500
Tower Ballroom	6,000
Victoria Pavilion	1,600
North Pier Pavilion	1,600
Central Pier Pavilion	1,000
South Pier Pavilion	unknown
Theatre Royal	800
Queen's Theatre	unknown
Hippodrome	2,000
Total	30,150

2.2 This clearly demonstrates the huge demand for entertainment in Blackpool in the early twentieth century. The buildings cited above do not include the many small music halls and the like that were also thriving in the town at the time.

2.3 Inevitably perhaps, Matcham also had a hand in designing and remodelling a number of the buildings listed above including; *Her Majesty's Opera House* (1889), *Tower Circus* (with Maxwell & Tuke, 1894), *Tower Ballroom* (1899). Matcham's Opera House was rebuilt by Mangnall and Littlewood in 1911 and was replaced with the present Opera House in 1939 by C.H. MacKeith. It is incredible to think that Matcham was not only designing the Grand Theatre in 1893-4 but was also working on his sensational Tower Circus Blackpool at the same time. Clearly by 1894 his theatrical stamp was already very clearly and firmly impressed upon Blackpool.

² Carson, L., *The Stage Guide*, pub:London, The Stage, 1912.

2.4 Blackpool is perhaps the most significant Victorian seaside destination in Great Britain. It still possesses a wealth of its Victorian atmosphere, which includes many buildings associated with the nineteenth century entertainment industry. That aside, high quality listed buildings are in fact rare in Blackpool – many having been demolished during the redevelopment ravages of the 1960s and 70s. The *Grand the Tower* and the *Winter Gardens* represent a unique architectural triumvirate.

3. National Context

3.1 As the most prolific British theatre architect of the day Matcham, during the course of his working career (1873-1913), was able to create and work on over 150 theatres the length and breadth of the British Isles. Today only 24 survive intact, in a recognisable as built condition, and some of these are either under threat or disused. These survivors without exception are now recognised and protected as listed buildings. The work of this single man, and it should be said his dedicated yet largely anonymous personnel who worked in the practice, created a house-style that developed through the years, but was always vibrant, eclectic and above all highly theatrical.

3.2 Within a context such as this it can quite clearly be stated that the *Grand Theatre* represents one of the most complete and important Matcham ‘survivors’. The word complete is used in this context to define a wholesome, and detailed survival incorporating original decorative glass, door furniture, ironmongery, light fittings etc. The level of surviving detail raises the importance of the building, and provides a crucial indication of what the theatre might have looked like when it first opened in 1894.

3.3 The British Isles once boasted a profusion of theatres, scattered far and wide, in towns, cities, and even villages. Today there is a misconception that all cities and most towns still have an ‘old theatre’ - nothing could be further from the truth. When in 1982 *Curtains!!! or A New Life For Old Theatres*³ was published it produced a stark picture of the wanton destruction that had been carried out on Britain’s theatrical heritage:

“Eighty-five per cent of the 1,000 Theatre Royals, Grands, Alhambras and Empires, which flourished in Britain between 1900 and 1914 have been destroyed or irretrievably altered. Under a tenth of this marvellous heritage of popular theatres which once enlivened every High Street are still in use as theatres. This leaves some 70 yet to be reawakened - ‘Sleeping Beauties’ spread throughout England, Scotland and Wales.”⁴

³ Mackintosh, Iain & Sell, Michael, (eds.), *Curtains!!! or A New Life For Old Theatres*, pub:Eastbourne, John Offord, 1982.

⁴ Ibid.

Grand Theatre & Opera House, Blackpool - A Conservation Statement

3.4 This clearly places the *Grand Theatre* in a national context, twenty-three years later the situation is even worse - at the time of writing the *Royal Opera House*, Scarborough (grade II) has recently been demolished, and other theatres identified as survivors in 1982 have been lost, e.g. *Empire Theatre*, Longton - burnt down, *Dunfermline Opera House* -demolished (and it's auditorium exported and rebuilt in Florida), *Birkenhead Music Hall* - demolished.

3.5 Today, there are only ten grade I (grade A equivalent in Scotland) listed theatres in the British Isles⁵:

- Theatre Royal, Bristol (1766)
- Theatre Royal, Richmond, North Yorkshire, (1788)
- Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London, (1811)
- Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds, (1819)
- Theatre Royal, Haymarket, London, (1821)
- Theatre Royal, Newcastle on Tyne (1837)
- Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, (1858)
- Tyne Theatre and Opera House, Newcastle on Tyne (1867)
- Adelina Patti Private Theatre, Craig-y-Nos, (1891)
- King's Theatre, Glasgow, (1904)

3.6 There are forty-four remaining grade II* listed theatres in the British Isles, of which 5 are post 1950s buildings, twelve are in London, and twenty-seven (including the Grand Theatre) dispersed throughout the British Isles. Of these twenty-seven, seven are still designated as 'Sleeping Beauties' and include, the *Olympia* Liverpool, *Victoria Pavillion* [sic], Morecambe, *Festival Theatre* Cambridge, *Palace Theatre* Plymouth, *Empire Theatre* Middlesbrough and *Grand Theatre* Llandudno.

3.7 In 2000 *The Theatres Trust* published⁶ a re-assessment of the theatres first identified in *Curtains!!!* In it the *Grand Theatre* is clearly defined as a building of specific note and, in the grading within the publication receives the highest rating of three-star. The entry for the theatre is worth quoting in part, particularly as it identifies the importance of Matcham's external elevations.

“The auditorium of this theatre, built as a drama house in 1894, is one of Matcham's finest creations, combining intimacy with a sense of imposing spaciousness. He achieved this by stacking the audience vertically in three closely spaced, relatively shallow, balconies which curve

⁵ Dates given relate to earliest substantial remaining fabric - many theatres contain several phases of architecture within their fabric.

⁶ Earl, John & Sell, Michael, (eds.), *The Theatres Trust Guide to British Theatres 1750-1950*, pub:A&C Black, London, 2000, pp.67-68.

well round the sides, separated from the proscenium by only one box on either side at dress circle level. The boxes are each surmounted by an elaborate arched and pedimented canopy rising above the level of the gallery front. Splendid high round-arched proscenium frame, with open plasterwork decoration on the inside of the arch and large oval painted panels in the spandrels, by Binns of Halifax. Magnificent oval ceiling incorporating six painted panels of composers. Opulent plasterwork on balcony fronts, boxes, proscenium and ceiling. One of the best surviving examples of the astonishing density of 'art decoration' in a Matcham house of the 1890s. The only slight disappointment is the rather aggressive colour of the post-1980 house tabs.

Exterior in plain brickwork, apart from the Baroque corner entrance in stone, with spirited, cheerfully 'incorrect' details, topped by a jolly copper fish-scaled domed rising behind scrolly gables with finials and crowned by a colonnetted lantern.

All has been progressively and sensitively restored since the Grand survived a threat of demolition in 1973. The battle for its survival was one of the earliest of a series of events which eventually turned the tide of post-war destruction of theatres (cf. London, the Granville, Waltham Green, demolished in 1971, leading to the immediate listing of many Victorian and Edwardian theatres, and the Lyric Hammersmith, demolished c.1970 and recreated in 1979).

The Grand is now owned by a Trust which has run it as a successful touring house since 1981. The recent reinstatements, additions and backstage improvements (including an 80 seat studio) have greatly enhanced the potential of this magnificent theatre."

3.8 The fact that Matcham was given the opportunity to develop and express two external elevations also containing commercial development is noteworthy, indeed exceptional. Most of his theatres were crammed onto small sites quite often with very narrow frontages and relatively modest architectural statements. The *Grand Theatre* represents Matcham in his pomp, creating a statement from the streetscape, designing a theatre of significance in an expanding, vibrant and prosperous seaside town.

4. Opening Description

4.1 When a theatre opened, especially one by Matcham there was always great press interest and excitement. Fortunately *The Era*⁷, a theatrical weekly newspaper, covered these occasions with great regularity, their correspondent always ready to describe Mr. Matcham's latest masterpiece.

“Mr. T. Sergenson's New Grand Theatre and Opera House at Blackpool was opened on Monday evening by Mr. Wilson Barrett with a performance of *Hamlet*. The building was crowded with a fashionable and very enthusiastic assembly, and on every hand were to be heard expressions of admiration of the handsome theatre and its comfortable internal arrangements. It is beyond doubt one of the finest theatres in the provinces. It was designed by the eminent architect Mr. Frank Matcham, and it is considered his best work. It is situated in the heart of the town, and near to the Promenade. The general style of the interior is similar to that of the gaiety, London, but the distance across the theatre is much greater.

The erection of the New Grand has been watched with keen interest on all sides. The rapidity of its progress is a great tribute to the energy and ability of the contractors, Messrs Cardwell Brothers, while it is another triumph for the architect of Her Majesty's Opera House at the Winter Gardens. The new house is a three tier theatre. The pit has a neat and tasteful dado of tiles. The scenery has been painted by Mr. Dugan. The 'flies' are quite in keeping with the colossal size of the stage itself, and are worked by most elaborate machinery. The proscenium is a real work of art. A fine dress-circle, with a series of comfortable boxes, forms the first tier. The upholstery is in blue English velvet, with plush curtains and draperies, and nothing which tends to luxury and comfort is neglected. Then to the upper circle, which is another distinct tier, where the seats are most comfortable and the view of the stage complete. The gallery comes above as the last tier. A promenade extends along the whole length of each of the three tiers. The refreshment saloons, &c., on each tier, are most spacious and convenient. The preparations for comfort are remarkable. Exit accommodations abound on every hand, and safety has evidently been a prime factor of its design. Wherever wood, or anything combustible,

⁷ *The Era*, p.11, 10th September, 1904.

can be omitted, it has been, and concrete, iron, stone, and bricks are the materials everywhere. The decorations are of the most artistic kind, and wonderfully effective. The superbly moulded ceiling is the work of the Plastic Decoration Company, and splendidly they have done it. Every panel on the arches and walls is decorated with a painting of the most excellent and artistic character by Messrs Binns & Co., of Halifax. The elevation is imposing and effective. The architect has done wonders with the space at his disposal. Facing Church-street is a handsome stone front, surmounted by a well-proportioned, wide, and spacious dome, which is illuminated by electricity. The vestibule and staircases lead to all parts of the building, which in the winter will be heated by hot water apparatus. The ventilation seems as perfect as it can be. The theatre will be lighted throughout by electricity, and to ensure a regularity in the event of the Corporation supply failing, Mr Sergenson has put down a private installation on the ground floor. Patrons of the dress-circle and stalls will be allowed to pass to and from these parts at will. the electric light has been lavishly used throughout the building with charming and brilliant effect. Gorgeous draperies of blue velvet are the chief feature which strikes the eye, while the superbly painted ceiling and panels give an impression of a building devoted to art.

As to the accommodation, the great width of the theatre gives a great area for the pit and stalls, which must give room at least for a thousand. The dress-circle gives another 150, and it will be a favourite portion of the house, with its fine saloon behind. In the upper circle there is room for over 400, and it is estimated that the gallery will hold another 1,000. The total accommodation is said to be not far short of 3,000, so that it is one of the largest theatres outside London. There are no columns to block the view of the stage, and tiers being built on the steel cantilever principle.”⁸

⁸ *The Era*, July, 1894, p.8, col.3.

5. Original Function & Purpose

5.1 It is important to understand that there were several kinds of theatre in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Fundamentally a theatre was designed in a specific way in order to fulfil a certain artistic brief. Depending upon the aspirations of the proprietor and the directors, a theatre could be designed to accommodate various activities e.g. circus, drama, opera, music hall etc.

5.2 Unlike today, proprietors seldom fell into the ‘multi-purpose trap’ - attempting to create a performing space suitable for every kind of entertainment but ultimately creating a compromised design.

5.3 The *Grand Theatre* has a number of important elements that collectively define it as an excellent theatre:

- An auditorium capable of seating 1,100 people by today’s standards
- An exuberant atmosphere with a good actor audience relationship
- A well proportioned stage house- capable of accommodating most kinds of performance
- A building with much of it’s original detail, fixtures and fittings still intact
- A theatre of great architectural and artistic quality, nationally recognised, and grade II* listed⁹

6. External Elevation

6.1 The external architectural elevations as conceived by Matcham remains largely unaltered and in good condition. A number of interventions have taken place over the years but the building remains largely as originally conceived.

6.2 The external elevation is of particular merit, developed with the use of a corner tower elevation. It is undoubtedly one of Matcham’s better external elevations (he so often simply focused his attentions on the interior) and yet as with all Matcham compositions there is an eclectic mix of architectural styles which whilst certainly not classical, provides an air of respectability and invention to the streetscape.

⁹ See listing description in *Appendix 1*.

6.3 The incorporation of a number of shops units, providing useful income for the owner (Mr. Sergenson) allows the massing of the theatre to blend seamlessly with the other commercial developments around the theatre. The loss of the freehold of these shop units is to be regretted, and the ambition of the theatre to purchase them back is important. The internal relationships between the shops and the theatre is currently not understood and needs to be examined in further detail. It is likely that a degree of linkage and intercommunication within the building has been lost as a result of this separation, and the reinstatement of original relationships would undoubtedly be of major benefit to the theatre.

7. The Stage House

7.1 The stage house is well contained within the massing of the main building. Designed and built as a large-scale theatre equipped to accommodate both opera, lyric and pantomime productions. The stage house reflects this ambition being large and accommodating. Modifications have been made since its construction, notably the installation of counterweights, but the general massing of the stage house is as originally conceived.

7.2 Matcham originally installed underneath the stage a significant amount of stage machinery. This has all been removed and the volume converted into technical stores and production support areas. Further research is required to understand the original layout of the machinery which would have been based upon the traditional principles of what was known as the *English Wood Stage*. Fundamentally the substage at the Grand Theatre would have contained large ‘bridges’ or lifts which raise and lowered scenery and performers. It would also have contained a series of small traditional trap doors, probably a ‘grave trap’ (the name derived from the grave scene in *Hamlet*) and two corner traps – typically used in pantomime. Remnants of the *English Wood Stage* are now very scarce and the information still to be found at the Grand needs to be researched recorded and interpreted accordingly.

8. Auditorium

8.1 The auditorium was originally conceived to accommodate, by the licensing standards of 1894 approximately 2,550¹⁰ (as opposed to today's 1,100).

8.2 As a theatre originally designed to segregate the social classes, the public circulation staircases and tiers still reflect this intention. This can be both a fascinating element of a Victorian theatre, and a frustrating element in the operation of a twenty-first century theatre. The challenge is to accommodate both, retaining the architectural elements of separation whilst allowing the public to circulate easily between the various levels.

8.3 The theatre was originally built and operated by Mr Sergenson a local Blackpool entrepreneur with little previous theatrical experience. He ran the theatre for some sixteen years until he sold it to the Blackpool Tower Company in March 1910. With the sale of the theatre came a number of significant changes to the theatre, quite possibly under the direction of Matcham (further research is required here). The alterations included re-decoration, new murals, changes to the seating, rake of the stalls floor and doubtless many others. The theatre therefore presents a daunting conservation challenge: to identify and separate out these two main phases of work. It is clearly essential to understand which elements date from which period prior to any further intervention within the auditorium. Without this overview there is the significant danger that decoration from two different period may be restored immediately alongside one another.

8.4 The problem associated with unravelling this conundrum is further compounded by the lack of original drawings for the theatre. It appears that all the deposited drawings for planning applications to *Blackpool Borough Council* were destroyed in a fire, the Matcham Collection of architectural drawings in the *Theatre Museum* contains nothing of relevance, and the *Blackpool Tower & Winter Gardens Archives*, (a critically important depository not yet fully catalogued or accessible) apparently has nothing. It is likely that original drawings still exist somewhere, Matcham issued many sets to contractors, clients, and Councils, but they will no doubt prove difficult to locate.

8.5 The auditorium is an exuberant affair, reflecting Matcham at his best. The scale and size of the space is a direct reflection of the commercial aspirations of Mr. Sergenson. Yet in 1894 Matcham created a three-dimensional space that provided relative intimacy coupled with an atmosphere that could be enjoyed, shared and cherished by generations. This latter point is something that should not be underestimated, for seldom is a building considered to be within the public psyche, seldom is there a true sense of ownership that transcends both social classes and even generations - theatres however, and especially good ones, carry this out to great effect.

¹⁰ Carson (ed.), L., *The Stage Guide 1912*, pub:London, The Stage, 1912, p.246.

8.6 Seating of the *Grand Theatre* is now a significant issue which needs to be considered within the context of Matcham's original intentions. Seating is both a functional requirement and a major contributor to the architectural ambience of the auditorium. It is therefore crucial that each seating area within the theatre, stalls, dress circle, gallery etc., is considered within the context of Matcham's sightlines and his decorative vision for the building. Inappropriate seating can impose a very negative impact upon an auditorium. Fortunately original seating catalogues have now been discovered which provide excellent information about the style and construction of late nineteenth century theatre seating.

8.7 There are a number of highly significant issues within the auditorium which will require further detailed research, these include; the original decorative orchestra rail, the original layout of the gallery and all the original decorative brassware which was almost certainly provided by *Edwin Showell & Son* of Birmingham.

9. Fibrous Plasterwork

9.1 The fibrous plasterwork used to construct the decoration of the auditorium was supplied by the *Plastic Decoration Company* of London. They were leading commercial decorators of the day, specialising specifically in theatres. Matcham often worked with this company. His robust exuberant style was at its zenith in 1894, and the plaster embellishments of this auditorium are in many ways a reflection of his architectural confidence and his ability to create a large three-dimensional volume which was vibrant, exciting, and cohesive.

9.2 In 1910 the Blackpool Tower Company engaged Felix De Jong and Co., Matcham's great personal friend and ultimately executor to undertake the re-decoration of the auditorium. Under such circumstances it seems highly unlikely that Matcham was not involved – especially since the new owners of the theatre had used Matcham's services on two previous occasions – the *Tower Circus* in 1894 and the *Tower Ballroom* in 1899.

10. Auditorium Decoration

10.1 The auditorium would originally have been decorated to very exacting standards, and would have included specially commissioned murals and artwork, together with high quality wallpapers, wall-hangings and furniture. There were companies who specialised in theatre furnishing, and Matcham was clearly involved in the detailed planning of the whole theatre - including those elements sometimes associated with an interior designer.

10.2 The present decorative condition of the auditorium only partially conveys the original atmosphere. The multi-layering of decoration, specifically the 1894 and 1910 schemes which were overlaid, and have now been brought back albeit partially, reveal an exciting and vibrant auditorium. However before full restoration proceeds it will be critical to understand both the physical and decorative evolution of the building.

10.3 Whilst there are many philosophical considerations associated with the reinstatement of any decorative scheme it will be important to understand Matcham's decorative and design philosophy. The theatre was not simply conceived by the architect from an architectural perspective, his design encompassed the curtains in the auditorium, the carpets, the soft furnishings and even the loose furniture in the saloons. The fact that remnant original ceramic tiles survive in the stalls, that original door furniture, and decorative glass abound within the building simply serves to demonstrate how complete the theatre is - a fact that does not generally follow after a theatre has been in constant use since the day it opened.

10.4 If the auditorium of the theatre is to be fully restored it is essential to develop a full Conservation Plan and paint analysis study. This would help to establish many of the unknown periods and elements of the theatre's decorative evolution. Paint analysis involves the microscopic sectioning of paint layers. It can demonstrate original colour schemes as well as identify elements that have been introduced into the auditorium after the theatre's construction. By developing a stratigraphy of paint layers it often becomes possible to develop a clear indication of later interventions and alterations providing critical information which may have a significant impact upon the way in which the auditorium is restored.

11. Front of House

11.1 The front of house spaces are by Matcham's standards, and indeed those of the late nineteenth century almost spacious. The social segregation principles that were applied to every theatre throughout the British Isles at this time, meant that every area or tier of the theatre had its own separate entrance and exit. The modifications to the foyer carried out in 1910 are important interventions, carried out effectively and convincingly, suggesting once again that Matcham may well have been involved.

11.2 This social segregation is also reflected in the way in which the public bar areas are designed. Once again the theatre is lucky to possess a number of interesting and important public bar areas that are worthy of reappraisal and restoration. The original Dress Circle Bar is a sensational piece of atmospheric architecture, still possessing many of its original fittings. Original bar fittings are now very rare survivors and this area would benefit from a reappraisal which recognises and redresses the missing elements within the space e.g. light fittings.

11.3 In undertaking a re-evaluation of all the public areas it will be extremely important to identify their original purpose. Whilst it might not be desirable or indeed practical to reinstate them as originally designed, it will nevertheless help to identify the original ideas and concepts behind the front of house areas, including the shops and offices. Only when this has taken place, will it be possible to develop new proposals that take account of the heritage, whilst also providing for a theatre-going public of the twenty-first century.

12. Summary

12.1 There is no doubt that the *Grand Theatre* is one of Blackpool's great cultural assets, one of Frank Matcham's greatest masterpieces, and in conservation terms a wonderfully complete example of its kind. Matcham's reputation has dramatically increased since his 're-discovery' in the 1980s. At the time of writing both his *Coliseum Theatre*, London (1904), and his *Empire Theatre*, Hackney (1901) have been recently restored to national and international acclaim. It is now time to turn our attention to the *Grand Theatre* and develop a cohesive restoration and conservation strategy which unravels understands and explains the evolution of this extraordinary and magnificent theatre.

English Heritage Listing Description

Building Details

Address:	Details:
Building Name: GRAND THEATRE	LBS number: 183661
Address: CHURCH STREET	Grade: II*
Parish: BLACKPOOL	Date listed: 26-JAN-1972
District: BLACKPOOL	Date of last amendment : 20-OCT-1983
County: LANCASHIRE	NGR: SD 307 361
Postcode: FY1 1HT	

Listing Text

SD 33 NW BLACKPOOL CHURCH STREET

2/5 Grand Theatre
 26.1.1972
 II*

Theatre, 1894, by Frank Matcham. Stone corner-entrance block of 3 storeys in flamboyant free Baroque, with drum and dome: 3-sided canted facade with round-arched entrances at ground floor; upper storeys have giant pilasters flanking windows which are paired at each side with bullseye above, Venetian in the centre; attic storey of scrolled gables with finials each side; stone drum with paired classical pilasters and domed roof of copper fish-scale tiles, surmounted by cupola, rises through the centre.

Interior: auditorium of 3 balconies, cantilevered and double-curved; semicircular proscenium arch flanked by corbelled curved boxes under semicircular arches, richly crested with pediments and putti; oval ceiling. Fibrous plaster decoration in very ornate Baroque style, gilded and painted: fronts of boxes freely ornamented with cherubs, putti, swags, etc., and painted panels. Pendentives each side of proscenium arch have large oval panels with paintings of muses. Ceiling carries 2 heavily-moulded circular bosses supporting chandeliers, surrounded by 6 large panels painted with portrait medallions, nymphs, putti, garlands, etc.; all enclosed by coved cornice. Dress circle level has ironwork staircase head, and wood-panelled bar with stained glass windows. The whole building, ingeniously providing

much accommodation on a small site, was completed in 7 months from December 1893 to July 1894.

Appendix 2

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Appendix 3

Theatresearch – historic theatre consultants

Practice Profile

Theatresearch was formed in 1985 to undertake the reconstruction of the *Tyne Theatre & Opera House* after a devastating fire swept through this Grade I listed theatre. The consultants working with *Theatresearch* are theatre practitioners who work in the theatre industry, with practical experience of conservation, restoration, research, production management, technical management, stage direction, stage design and theatre design. We therefore bring a fundamental understanding of all kinds of theatre to any project.

Current work includes a £3.6 million extension of the *Palace Theatre*, Redditch, (Bertie Crewe 1913) and other current projects include:

Theatre Royal & Opera House, Northampton (Charles Phipps, 1884)

Theatre Royal & Opera House, Wakefield (Frank Matcham, 1894)

City Varieties, Leeds (George Smith, 1865)

Plaza Cinema, Stockport (William Thornley, 1932)

Theatresearch has a large library and archive which underpins all the work we do, it is our instant resource and contains much important information about theatre buildings which is not available elsewhere. It is a unique resource and one which continues to grow and expand as our research continues.

Theatresearch is a limited company, working in the North of England. We are therefore able to respond quickly and easily to the needs of our clients in the region and positively encourage working and developing relationships with our clients both during and after completion of projects. Above all we love and enjoy our work!