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12 July 2017

David Glasgow
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Dear David

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ARISING FROM CONSULTATION RESPONSES
PLANNING APPLICATION REFERENCE: 2016/4869/P

Thank you for the various comments that you have provided in relation to the above application in the past weeks. The comments have been considered comprehensively by the applicant and the design team as well as the applicant's technical advisors, and in this letter I set out our response, with additional information enclosed where appropriate and where we think this will helpful.

The issues addressed in this letter relate to:

1. The significance of the remaining stage machinery within the Ambassador's Theatre;
2. The proposed width of the new theatre;
3. Public Safety;
4. Construction Traffic;
5. Servicing and 'get-in' and 'get-out';
6. Cycle Parking; and
7. Other miscellaneous issues.

1. The Remaining Stage Machinery

You have received correspondence from the Victorian Society in which they suggest that the remaining stage machinery at the Ambassadors is of some particular significance. A specialist report has been commissioned by the applicant to investigate whether the stage machinery has any particular historic interest. That report concludes the surviving stage machinery is of no real interest.

That the stage machinery is of no particular special interest is a position shared by Theatres Trust.

The significance of the surviving stage machinery is set out in the accompanying report by Theatresearch (**Appendix 1)**. The following paragraphs summarise that report.

Stage machinery towards the end of the 19th Century in West End Theatres was largely based upon the 'English Stage' tradition. This typically involved two corner traps at the front of the stage arranged symmetrically either-side and just in front of a larger 'grave trap' positioned centre stage.

Upstage of the traps were positioned a sequence of 'bridges' and 'cuts'. The former were wooden platforms that could be raised, the latter, slots through which scenery could be passed to mask the bridges.

A deep cellar would be located beneath the (raked) English Stage to accommodate the necessary sub-stage machinery. Above the stage was a fly floor (over-stage machinery was controlled from here) and the whole stage house would be surmounted with a grid through which scenery ropes were threaded. Above this would be drum and shaft mechanisms to aid with the movement of scenery.

The specifics of the machinery in each theatre was designed with the intended use of the theatre in mind. For instance, theatres staging demanding operas were built with commensurately more complex stage machinery than those used for drama. Theatres were often built for a specific genre in mind and therefore the equipment provided was consistent with that genre.

Following the turn of the 20th Century, the demand for spectacle and sensation waned and the writings of commentators such as Bernard Shaw became more important – these latter works were less demanding in terms of staging and machinery. Also, the same period saw the arrival of cinema competing for the income of the general public and so the ability and desire to fund lavish theatrical productions diminished.

Thus, it was common for new theatres in the early 20th Century to be provided with a stage structure that could be fitted out by others at a later date as and when necessary. As a consequence, many theatres of this period were not equipped with fully functioning stage machinery.

It is certainly the case that the stage machinery that was provided during the construction of the Ambassadors Theatre was a product of the type of production that was anticipated to be staged at the venue.

The Ambassadors, far from having complex stage machinery was very much designed with this new genre of drama and economy of theatre productions in mind. Importantly, the theatre was never provided with a sub stage area typical of the wooden English Stage and therefore at a very simple level the ability to install significant or interesting stage machinery was substantially impeded. Stage joists that support the stage floor have not been grooved to accommodate slider traps. To quote the Theatresearch report:

> *"in other words a half-hearted attempt was made to create substage that could accommodate some form of scenic potential that was never actually realised".*

While the lift description referred to 'one frail single trap,' no evidence of that trap has been found. It is likely that it may have been a production specific trap that was present at the time of listing and then later removed. Sprague's designs show no corner traps in the theatre. The list description has since been altered to remove this reference[1]

Above the stage, the grid is identified as being unremarkable. A drum and shaft mechanism still exists which has relative scarcity value, but this is the sole element that has any interest and Delfont Mackintosh will attempt to find a location for the drum to be put to continued use (although such artifacts are very rarely used in modern productions) or store the equipment off site. An appropriately worded condition could control this.

In terms of the hemp flying system (also alleged by Victorian Society to be of significance) the Theatresearch report does not identify this as of any particular historic significance:

> *"Hemp flying is still used in the West End, but only as a point of last resort. There are serious implications for any theatre management wishing to utilise these principles e.g. manual handling regulations and the limited physical lifting capabilities of the system. Most theatres throughout the country no longer operate hemp flying systems because they are no longer fit for purpose. Modern productions demand modern lifting capabilities well beyond the safe working loads that can be achieved with hemp flying. On that basis the retention of hemp flying principles (as opposed to original equipment) potentially limits the*

[1] The Victorian Society attempted to have the Ambassadors regraded at category II*. **Appendix 2** contains Historic England's report which concluded that Grade II was the correct listing and that the building was not of sufficient interest to warrant a listing at Grade II*. The list description was however amended as a result, and removes the reference to the trap.

product that can be presented on the stage and in consequence jeopardises the very existing of the theatre."

The stage machinery as a whole is ordinary and redundant. The extent and type of the stage machinery is not of such importance that it warrants an upgrade in the listing status of the building, nor is the stage machinery identified as of such significance that its retention is warranted. This is very different to the stage machinery that still exists at the St Martins which is a more intact example, or the machinery at the Palace which is of singular importance (see below).

With regard to modern as well as historic intervention in theatres Susie Barson (2003) notes:

> *"Up to and through the 19th century fire was a great and ever present risk to theatres; they regularly burned down and were generally rebuilt from scratch. Improved fire and safety regulations mean that far fewer buildings have since been lost in this way, and many aging theatres have been repaired, refurbished and adapted, often with little readily discernible impact. Others have gone – demolished or converted – and there should be no illusion that there was ever a static golden age when change was not in the air. Over the last few years, however, pressure for more radical change within the buildings has been increasing.*
>
> *There are perennial questions of attendance levels and economic viability, staging costs and the recouping of investments as well as issues of legislative change. Theatre owners need to provide better access and circulation; they also want to be able to provide improved sightlines, more comfortable seats and ambient temperatures, along with better ancillary facilities. Backstage old machinery has become redundant and can be deemed a health and safety hazard even if it not in the way. The staging of ambitious production in spaces that were not designed for large heavy sets, with elaborate sound and light equipment, has also caused problems."*

Historic England (2003) describes the challenge of remaining stage machinery and concludes its section:

> *"All the surviving pre-1920 stagehouses have undergone incremental change or renewal, but a surprising amount of original or early stage machinery has survived, often obsolete and left in situ only because removal would have involved unnecessary expenditure. The impact of health and safety legislation and the need for broader modernisation is bringing about transformations of the older backstage areas. Renewal is of the essence in the history of the West End theatres. Yet, as the theatre historian George Roswell has observed: "caught up in the urgency of its fortunes, the theatre today, as always, is concerned principally with the present. It may dream of the future, but it has no time for the past. Nevertheless, the past is part of the same design as the present, and the future will be fashioned from both"*

Surviving stage machinery is not, therefore, rare anyway, and the need for adaptation requires a flexible approach to backstage areas.

We note with regard to the backstage areas in theatres, there have been cases where the stage machinery has been removed, through a recording and planning condition, in order to facilitate the updating of the theatre, as in the case of another of Sprague's theatres The Strand, now Novello Theatre. In addition, the stage house at the Lyceum, Wellington Street has been rebuilt, and the stage house at the Victoria Palace Theatre has been granted consent for rebuilding (in progress).

<u>Comparison to stage machinery of particular significance elsewhere</u>

For completeness, we provide a brief comparison to those theatres where stage machinery is identified of being of particular importance. Where stage machinery is singled out of special importance it is because:

- It is of a particularly significant or rare type or has a particular antiquity;

- It is particularly complex and intact;
- It is associated with a particular designer or patron.

If we look at the Palace Theatre for instance, with regard to the stage machinery the list description states:

> *"Substantial relics of the machinery above and below stage of unique interest in London being a mixed wood and iron system designed by Dando for the D'Oyly Carte's elaborate opera productions."*

Clearly this stage machinery is of a much larger scale than what we see at the Ambassadors Theatre. It is also mentioned as being of unique interest, and additionally having a named designer and patron. In Earl's description of the stage machinery he states:

> *"The relics of Walter Dando's huge elaborate opera machinery, above and below the stage, are unique in London and of considerable archaeological significance. The wood and iron installation occupying a deep cellar and mezzanine, has had all its moving parts taken away, but what remains is a forest of framed timber with traps, chariot slots etc, Restoration could only be achieved at prodigious cost and would provide little practical advantage, but expert recording is called for if removal is contemplated."*

The stage machinery is a contributory factor to the building's high grading (Grade II*), however, it should be noted that the machinery is of interest in its own right, as a unique example of 'considerable' importance. The machinery also has a particular association with a named designer and patron.

At the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, As well as the antiquity of the theatre and its fine interior, the stage machinery is noted for its importance in the building. However, the scale of this machinery is a noted as part of its listing. The list description for the Theatre states:

> *"Elaborate and important installation of Asphaleia stage machinery etc."*

This is a particularly significant piece of apparatus and is not indicative that significance should be attached to all items of stage machinery that are to be found in theatres. Christopher Baugh in his book Theatre, Performance and Technology and the Transformation of Scenography (2013) describes this type of apparatus – used most famously used in the Budapest Opera House – indicates its complexity:

> *"The Asphaleia system incorporated into the Budapest Opera House in 1881, and vigorously advocated elsewhere in Europe, proposed a fully mechanised stage, supported, in sections, on hydraulic platforms that could enable entire scenes, consisting of three dimensional 'practicables', to be raised or lowered from beneath the stage. The additional Aspheleia proposals consisted of embracing the stage with a curved cyclorama, and the ability to suspend scenery as and where desired, whilst the hydraulic lifts and the subsequent electric stage bridges collectively pronounced the demise of the systematic codification of the scenic world into grooves, and their flat, sliding shutters. (Haugh, p.21)"*

The significance of these items of stage machinery is undisputed, and the difference between these and the incomplete machinery at Ambassadors (and the difficulty that would be associated with installing working machinery) is clear.

At the St Martins, of lesser importance than the examples quoted above, the stage machinery is identified as being a feature of note. The list description states:

> *Stage machinery: nearly complete example of Edwardian (1916 wooden stage, marred only by alterations made to accommodate dimmer room in the sub-stage space. Represents one of the final stages in the development of timber stage machinery in England and an exceptional example.*

This also is obviously more significant than at the Ambassadors in that it provides a working and almost complete example of Edwardian stage machinery, compared to the incomplete example at the Ambassadors.

2 – Proposed Width of the New Theatre

In your email of 20th March 2017, you have requested additional information to justify the proposed width of the theatre, noting that this element of the proposal is objected to by your highways colleagues.

The highways comments dated 2nd March 2017 state:

> *"The loss of established public rights of way and public highways should be considered only if it is to the benefit of the public at large and not purely for private development. We requested justification from the applicant for this loss but have not received explanation as to how the loss of this space would be of benefit"*

We are disappointed by the characterisation that the proposed development does not provide any public benefits. The public benefits are explained at length in the Planning and Heritage Statement that accompanied the application. I refer you to Section 3 of that Statement, and in particular paragraphs 5.71- 5.95 which provide a detailed commentary on the public benefits that arise from the proposals. I will not repeat those benefits in detail in this letter, but summarise that the benefits that emerge are:

- It meets a demonstrable need for a dedicated transfer house facility to accommodate productions from the subsidised sector;
- It enhances the ability of subsidised production companies to enhance their revenue;
- It will increase audience exposure to productions that might otherwise have a limited exposure;
- It makes a particular contribution to the richness and diversity of Theatreland;
- The internal environment and accessibility is improved in the proposed theatre;
- The environment of Tower Court will be significantly enhanced;
- The theatre will create opportunities for employment and community programmes; and
- It provides much needed, centrally located rehearsal rooms.

Both the Theatres Trust (the Government's statutory advisors on issues affecting theatres) and Historic England both agree that the project delivers substantial public benefits. These benefits, in their view, are sufficient to outweigh the substantial harm to a Designated Heritage Asset arising from its substantial demolition.

We raise the point about the Designated Heritage Asset because the NPPF is clear that the threshold of benefits in such situations is very high. Paragraph 132 states that 'great weight' should be given to an asset's conservation. It goes on to state that substantial loss of significance should be 'exceptional'. This is the very highest threshold in planning terms. Paragraph 133 states that in such cases, public benefits that outweigh that loss should be 'substantial'.

Thus, the highest public benefits test has been set in relation to the demolition of the listed building, and the Government's experts are of the view that there are wide ranging public benefits that meet that test. Thus we do not consider it fair to characterise the proposed development as failing to provide any public benefit, or that the applicant has not explained the public benefit.

The public benefits above arise from a development which would result in the loss of the area of Tower Court. There is no similar 'exceptional circumstances' test set out in policy in connection with the loss of public realm. We accept that there is a balance to be struck and the loss of part of Tower Court is a material consideration, but it cannot be given the very great weight that is accorded to other planning material considerations such as substantial harm to a designated heritage asset. They are not equivalent and the same strict test is not applicable. Such an approach is not supported by policy. However, if that very stringent test is met at the very highest threshold, it must follow that a similar conclusion would be reached in connection with other matters not subject to such a high threshold of assessment.

Notwithstanding the above, I set out a further explanation as to why the development cannot be narrowed, while still delivering the public benefits above. Put another way, if the development is narrowed, then the building would no longer fulfil its proposed function as a dedicated transfer house to serve the subsidised sector and the benefits above would not be delivered.

As set out in our application submission, the proposed theatre is intended to be adaptable and to provide a variety of flexible staging arrangements. There are no such adaptable theatres in the West End, and key to the suitability of the project to act as a transfer venue from the subsidised sector, is the critical ability to stage thrust and in-the-round production arrangements. If these cannot be delivered, productions would need to be redesigned and re-staged before they could be accommodated, which is entirely contrary to the objectives of the proposed theatre.

Put simply, the proposed theatre must be able to accommodate productions originating in the subsidised donor theatres, and thus the stage must be of a comparable size.

John Riddell of Theatre Consultants has prepared a report (**Appendix 3**) comparing the proposed staging arrangements at the Sondheim to various 'donor' theatres in the subsidised sector. You will see that, even though the general objectives of the proposed theatre will be met in the current configuration, and width, the proposed Sondheim is still compromised in various ways relating to its width, relative to those donor theatres.

For instance:

1 – Compared to the Young Vic, the Sondheim stage will be slightly shorter than the Young Vic, but when arranged as a thrust stage, will have significantly fewer audience members either side, and fewer audience members at the rear when arranged in the round.

2 – Compared to the Everyman, the Sondheim stage will again be narrower, and have significantly fewer audience members to the side.

3- The Donmar – the same considerations apply as at the Everyman

3 – The Belgrade B2 – As per the Everyman and Donmar, and the Sondheim will also have significantly fewer audience members at the rear if arranged in the round.

The analysis demonstrates that the Sondheim, in fact, already has an imbalance in audience distribution at the sides of the stages compared to the examples assessed in the report when arranged as thrust stage or in-the-round. Thus the design of the Sondheim in terms of its width is compromised to a greater or lesser degree compared to the ideal situation. The report concludes:

> *"Consequently, it can be clearly seen that the proposed size of site is just about acceptable though with limitations. Ideally additional width to both sides of the stage and auditorium is desirable. Failing to increase the width by the modest amount proposed is the current scheme would make thrust and in-the-round formats unusable and cast doubt on the feasibility of the development."*

If the depth and width of the stage was reduced, it would limit the productions which can be easily transferred into the Sondheim.

In preparing the application, we sought the advice of experts in the minimum depth of seating and stage width either side of the stage in such arrangements and function. I reproduce that in **Appendix 4** for your reference.

There is no opportunity to decrease the width of either the audience areas or the stage itself. Aside from the staging arrangements, a narrowing of the footprint of the theatre would have substantial implications on its internal arrangement as well. Compromised items would be:

- The provision of a lift (and consequent accessibility considerations to both front *and* backstage areas – this is the only location that can achieve this requirement);
- Crossover access for actors;
- Escape stairs at each level (which need to be a particular width to ensure compliance with regulations); and
- The provision of accessible WCs;

Thus the function and accessibility of the building would be seriously compromised with even a modest narrowing.

I hope that this section reiterates and demonstrates the extent of public benefits arising from the scheme, and explains why the footprint of the theatre cannot be narrowed, or indeed, is already at the narrowest that can be contemplated this unique project, to deliver acknowledged public benefits.

Effect on Operation of Highway

In general terms we note that the highways comments appear to have not had any regard to the extensive technical application information submitted in relation to pedestrian comfort which concludes that there would not be any material adverse effect on the pedestrian environment and operation of the highway.

Further to pre-submission discussions, the submission includes for a Pedestrian Comfort Level Assessment undertaken in accordance with the Tfl Guidance 'Pedestrian Comfort Guidance for London'. The Pedestrian Comfort Level Assessment, tested the unlikely event that the Ambassadors Theatre and the neighbouring St Martin's Theatre would let out patrons at the same time, for which it is noted that this does not occur at present (and would be easily avoided in the future). The results of this showed that all assessed locations were identified as being comfortable, with less than 5ppmm and less than 13% restricted movement. This rating indicates that at all assessed locations, the pedestrian environment is very comfortable with plenty of space for people to walk at the speed and route they choose. The assessment does demonstrate clearly that the proposals allow for future growth. The full details of the sensitivity test is contained in paragraphs 6.6 to 6.8 in Appendix D to the Transport Statement.

In the extreme sensitivity test which was undertaken concludes that at all assessed locations, the pedestrian environment is very comfortable. It is also noted that even with the reduction in overall footway width, all seven assessment locations continue to exceed the minimum width for low flow areas of 2.9m. Therefore, it is not considered that the proposed reduction in highway space would be detrimental to the Council's Transport Network.

I can also confirm that the bins in Tower Court belong to St Martins Theatre and following consultation with the owners, it has been established that they can be stored internally within the St Martins Theatre, and that is the intention following the development of the Sondheim.

On an objective basis therefore, there is no basis for an objection on the grounds that the pedestrian environment will be materially worsened.

The planning application is also clear that there would be a requirement for a Stopping Up Order. Thus any planning permission would be the subject of securing a stopping up order, which would then ultimately be a decision for the Council to take on the balance of merits – the requirement for a stopping up order should not be a reason of itself to refuse the application.

3 – Public Safety

Various comments have been raised by your Highways team in connection with public safety and sightlines. We observe that some work has been done by your highways colleague and presented in their Figures 1 and 2. However this is not in accordance with any established methodology, and the thickness of the lines used obscures any clear conclusion from this analysis. We consider that limited weight should be accorded to it.

On the other hand, the applicant has met with the Secure by Design officer in the Metropolitan Police and they have not raised any comments related to crime safety resulting from sightlines or the narrowing of Tower Court. This, as the comment of an expert, should be afforded weight.

In any event, we do not follow the logic of the concerns expressed. One could still see along the whole alley even if the development were to proceed.

It seems a false distinction to use worsened sightlines in the northern end of the alley when passing from West Street as a reason that people would not use the southern section of Tower Court. Passing along Tower Court from West Street, once pedestrians reach Tower Street, the sightlines along the northern section are restored (the development of the theatre is by this time behind them and are thus not worsened when viewed from Tower Street.

A Safety Audit was also undertaken as part of the application and contained as **Appendix E** to the Transport Statement. The Audit raised no issues in relation to forward visibility along Tower Court. The Audit raised a requirement to ensure that refuse containers are relocated so as not to block the footway (discussed above) and that the existing lighting column is relocated to the side of Tower Court.

Security Advisors IJA have also prepared additional information on sightlines and risk of crime in Tower Court, as per the attached at **Appendix 5**.

4- Construction Traffic

We note the comments received in connection with Construction Traffic. As a general observation, any planning permission would be subject to a S106 agreement that required the approval of a Construction Management Plan prior to the commencement of development.

We note the comments on the revised Earlham Street layout. We have sought the advice of TTP who prepared the CTMP that was submitted with the application. They have responded as follows:

> *"We will need to re-test any revised layout, I do not think this hugely impacts our strategy in terms of vehicle access, with the majority of vehicle activity still proposed to be undertaken on West Street. Tower Street, which connects with Earlham Street, is very narrow and therefore we have always been of the view that we are likely to be restricted to using smaller vehicles on this section of carriageway.*
>
> *Our initial assessment suggested that larger vehicles and the majority of activity would be undertaken on West Street, with access from the north via Shaftesbury Avenue and access from the west via Charing Cross Road and Litchfield Street. The analysis demonstrated that larger vehicles could attend the site, albeit with specific parking suspensions required depending on the vehicle type. We also included two options whereby vehicles either waited fully on West Street, or partly on the footway and partly on the carriageway. This second option requires the footway to be suspended but would allow sufficient space on-street for other vehicles to pass, which would therefore help to ensure that local businesses would not be affected and that local streets would not become blocked. Once a contractor has been appointed, it will be necessary to determine what vehicle types are required and when they will need to attend the site. It is acknowledged that the local road network is constrained however our analysis shows construction activity can be accommodated subject to appropriate management and mitigation measures. Notwithstanding this, I would still expect a number of specific details to be agreed with the Council in advance of construction beginning on-site."*

As you will understand the precise way of developing the site would need to be considered once there is a contractor on board, and then the details would be subject to approval of the planning authority in the usual way. We don't see any particular reason in the context of the above that this site should be treated any differently from the usual approach to construction traffic.

5 – Servicing and Get-In/Get-out

In terms of servicing, please see the accompanying Delivery and Service Plan. We are not anticipating that there is to be any greater intensity of daily servicing deliveries than at the present time. In early 2016 Theatre Projects carried out a survey of current servicing activities at the Ambassador's theatre and at Wyndham's and Noel Coward theatres. The latter two were chosen as they are operated by Delfont Mackintosh Theatres with shows in the theatres for an average 12-16 week run.

They surveyed a variety of activities including:

- Show days and times
- Stage door opening hours
- Front of house staff call times
- Refuse management regimes and collection times
- Frequency and timing of food and beverage deliveries
- Frequency of planned building maintenance, facade and window cleaning
- Frequency of small parcel deliveries

They found no significant difference in the profile of activities between these venues. As there will be no real change to the catering offer when the Ambassador's becomes the Sondheim, there is nothing to suggest that the servicing activities will be any different than they are at present.

In terms of get-in/get out, it should be noted that the application site is in current theatrical use. Although Stomp has been resident in the theatre for a number of years, a situation could arise whereby show change overs take place with the same frequency as the proposed Sondheim. Obviously the current situation and planning use and effect on the operation of the highways is material, and there is an opportunity to improve the existing situation.

It should also be noted that the get-in/get-out arrangements for the Sondheim must accommodate the needs of the donor subsidised theatres. As you will recall, one of the objectives of the new theatre is that stage equipment can be accommodated at the theatre without it needing to be rebuilt or redesigned, which would in many cases represent an onerous cost to be borne by the originating theatre. Thus one of the principal objectives of the theatre would not be met if it imposed onerous servicing requirements on the originating productions. An example may be if sets were required to be broken down so that they could be delivered by smaller vehicles. Thus the enclosed Servicing and Management Plan has been prepared in consultation with the originating theatres.

Thus a show changeover is anticipated 3-4 times per year using a 12m articulated vehicle. Usually, the show changeover would commence immediately after the last Saturday night performance and be completed by the Sunday. Only one vehicle would be present at a time. Two options are presented to allow for unloading and loading from Tower Street. Tracking diagrams demonstrate that the turns into Tower Street can be achieved. Some parking suspensions would be required on Earlham Street and Tower Street (the alternative is temporary road closure). Two options are presented for the parking location of the lorry on Tower Street.

We would anticipate that a full servicing plan would incorporate community liaison – the theatre's calendar will be known approximately a year in advance and therefore advanced notice and communication to neighbouring residents and businesses could be undertaken. We anticipate that a fully detailed and agreed Servicing and Management Plan could be agreed with the Council by the means of a planning condition or S106 agreement. We consider that the attached document demonstrates how servicing could be achieved, and we will welcome further discussions with the Council on this subject.

6- Cycle-Parking

At present there are 2 sheffield cycle stands located in Tower Court, which are located in the centre of the alleyway. These are being relocated to either side of the alleyway, and therefore there is no proposed loss of cycle parking. There is also additional cycle parking available opposite the theatre on the corner of West Street and Litchfield Street, where 8 sheffield stands (16 cycle parking spaces) are available.

The cycle parking stands are repositioned as part of the development proposals, so that they run parallel to the buildings instead of perpendicular. This has been accounted for within the Pedestrian Comfort Level Assessment, in accordance with the Tfl criteria including for buffers. The Sensitivity Test rating for the areas were cycle parking is proposed are 'A', which indicates that at all assessed locations, the pedestrian environment is very comfortable with plenty of space for people to walk at the speed and route they choose. This is demonstrated in Section 6 of Appendix D to the TS.

The highways comments state:

> *"London Plan requirements with the proposed 65 full time staff and a maximum set up of 475 seats are 9 long stay cycle parking spaces and 16 short stay (25 spaces in total)."*

The applicant will be happy to provide additional on-street short stay cycle parking in discussion with the planning authority. This could form the basis of a Section 106 agreement.

The requirements above are based on 65 *full time* staff. While we referred to 50-65 employees in the Planning and Heritage Statement, we did not necessarily mean that these would all be full time. We have taken the opportunity to look at other theatres in the ownership of the applicant to consider what a realistic number of employees on site at any time might be.

Given that front of house, security and bar staff work only 30 hours a week or on a part time basis, the likely full time equivalent employment level will be closer to 52. On the basis of the standards quoted, this reduces the policy requirement to 6.5 spaces.

It should also be borne in mind that all employees work over a 6 day rather than a 5 day week, and work on a shift basis (for instance, box office staff, management, stage door staff all work on a shift basis), the number of people present at any time is more spread out over the week, thus reducing the demand for cycle parking spaces. Shower and changing facilities will of course be available to cast members who chose to cycle to work.

In terms of long stay cycle-parking, the application proposes three cycle parking spaces. While we acknowledge that this is below the requirement quoted in the highways comments, the explanation above regarding the width of the theatre should also explain the reasons why there simply is not enough space internally to provide additional cycle parking facilities.

In order to mitigate the breach of policy, the applicant will be content to consider other means of promoting car free travel. While the applicant will be happy to enter into a work place travel plan as part of a S106 agreement, this could also include an enhanced provision of off-site parking (e.g. contributions to a cycle hire scheme) or making folding bikes available to staff. We would welcome an open discussion on this point.

7 – Other Miscellaneous Issues

We note your request to update the Planning and Heritage Statement to reflect the adoption of the new Local Plan, and the revised Planning and Heritage Statement will follow under separate cover.

You also raised the point regarding your new basement policy. We have asked Conisbee to review and they are content that the information previously submitted and advise that the new policy does not raise any implications in terms of the supporting material already prepared.

During the pre-application audit process Campbell Reith Hill requested further information with regards the BIA which we duly issued to them. All of the policy points were covered and the submission of this additional information closed out the queries raised by CRH. As we have been through the audit process already and the response received from CRH we believe we do not need to update the documentation.

I hope the above addresses all your outstanding queries, pending further information on servicing arrangements. If there is anything further you wish to discuss regarding this project, we will look forward to doing so. In the meantime I would be grateful if you could provide your views on the likely committee date to consider the application.

Yours sincerely

Tim Miles
Partner
Montagu Evans LLP

Appendix 1

The Ambassadors Theatre

The Historic Context of the Stage House

March 2017

by

theatresearch

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The Ambassadors' Theatre

An Analysis of the Original Stage House

1. Introduction

1.1 The Ambassadors Theatre was designed by the theatre architect W.G.R. Sprague [1865-1933] and opened on 5th June 1913 with a play entitled *Panthea* by Monkton Hoffe which ran for only 15 nights.

1.2 The theatre forms an architectural streetscape relationship with the St. Martin's Theatre, also designed by Sprague for a different client which opened three years later in 1916.

1.3 Whilst the same architect was employed to design both theatres they are mutually exclusive yet inextricably linked. The Ambassadors with its modest footprint and current seating capacity of 446 compares against the slightly larger St. Martin's with a capacity of 550. Yet it is clear as we shall see that Sprague's two clients provided different briefs which significantly influenced the design of the theatre's technical facilities and by implication the intended product that was to be placed upon their respective stages.

2. The Architect

2.1 William George Robert Sprague was a key architect during the theatre building boom, his first recorded commission being the Shoreditch Olympia (with theatre architect Bertie Crewe) in 1889. Sprague is a particularly interesting player in the theatre building boom because like Crewe as opposed to Frank Matcham he straddles the period which covers both the theatre building boom and the advent of large scale cinema construction. However, unlike Crewe, Sprague never made the transition between the two architectural genres but did continue to design theatres, his final commission being the Streatham Hill Theatre in 1929.[1]

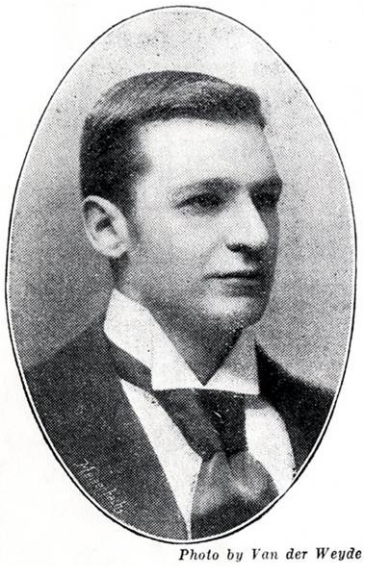


Photo by Van der Weyde

MR. W. G. R. SPRAGUE.

[1] Photo: *The Era*, 27th May 1905.

2.2 The extensive details of his theatre building career have already been examined in detail by John Earl in his *Ambassadors Theatre Heritage Statement.* [2]

3. Theatre Regulation

3.1 The focus of this report examines Sprague's approach to technical theatre design and the relationship between architectural form and purpose, and the consequential impact upon the technical equipment contained within the stage house.

3.2 In this respect it is fascinating to examine Sprague's comments in an interview associated with the introduction of the new London County Council regulations;

> "Do you agree with the London County Council edict abolishing the three-tier house?"
>
> "Taking all things into consideration I think the Council are right. I am not in love with the three-tier house. From a point of view of safety, the Council are to be congratulated on their decision to in this respect. We want easier gradients from the circles, and in a two-tier theatre you bring your gallery people nearer the street, and make your exits so much more accessible all round. It is better, also, for the line of sight, and, from our special point of view, much more comfortable to plan. Another thing is this: Strange as it may seem, in the planning of a two-tier house there is no loss of accommodation from that which you get in a three-tier establishment, because in the latter you cannot have so many rows of seats as in the former."
>
> Is it fair to ask you whether, in your opinion, the regulations of the London County Council, taken as a whole, are of a sensible character?"
>
> "I consider the L.C.C. regulations very good indeed, and I have found the Council to be most reasonable in adopting suggestions that may be made in cases where their own regulations are difficult to comply with, either in the matter of site or detail of building. By their regulations they have caused theatres to be of the nature of public buildings, and have improved frontages and appearances of these and other erections immensely. Under the old order, before the present Council came into existence, one could enter a building with just a narrow entrance from the main street, the greater portion of the establishment being hidden at the back of the thoroughfare, and having very bad exits. I certainly consider the Council have created a dignity for the theatre which it never formerly possessed."[3]

[2] Earl, John, Ambassadors' Theatre, Heritage Statement, 2016.
[3] *The Era*, 27th May, 1905.

3.3 The introduction of the 1902 and subsequent London County Council regulations heralded the advent of new stage construction techniques specifically designed to reduce fire risk in the stage house. Much of the regulation was associated with fire prevention associated with electrical installations but there were also changes associated with the use of construction materials. In particular theatre stages were encouraged to be constructed from hardwood in order to reduce their potential flammability. This included the stage surface which had to be a minimum thickness of 1¼" constructed from English Oak.

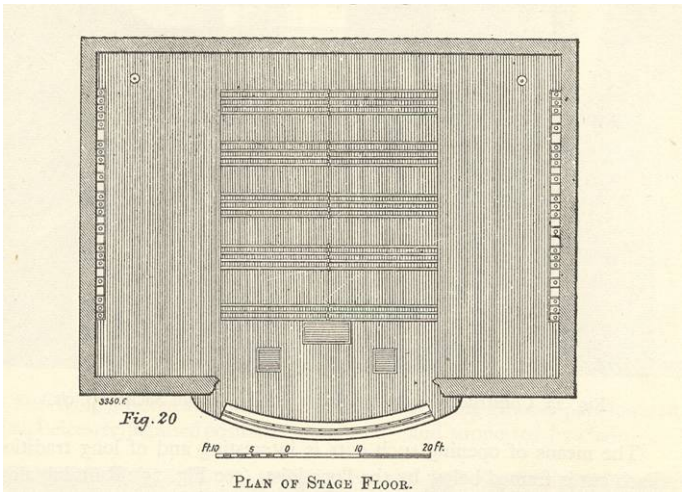
3.4 The Ambassadors Theatre was designed and constructed in accordance with this new regime of regulation, and it is fascinating to see how Sprague responded to it.

3.5 However, before looking at this in further detail it is essential to understand a little more about the context and traditions of late nineteenth and early twentieth century stage machinery within the British Isles.

4. The English Wood Stage

4.1 The traditions of stage machinery in the British Theatre were based upon the principles of what was known as the English Wood Stage. These traditions were developed over more than three hundred years and reached their zenith towards the end of the nineteenth century.

4.2 Stage machinery installations of this kind were undertaken by specialist companies, often families e.g. the Grieve's of Drury Lane. The techniques and "tricks of the trade" were carefully guarded secrets and in consequence very little was written down until the architect and theatrephile Edwin O. Sachs published his three volume treatise *Modern Opera Houses and Theatres* [4] sequentially between 1896-8. Whilst Sachs detested the old fashioned English Wood Stage he described it in some detail in order to provide context for his advanced technological proposals.



PLAN OF STAGE FLOOR.

[4] Sachs, Edwin O., *Modern Opera Houses and Theatres*, 3 vols., pub: B.T. Batsford, London, 1896-8.

4.3 The stage plan shown above clearly demonstrates a typical stage machinery layout of the nineteenth century – possessing two small corner traps at the front of the stage set symmetrically around the grave trap, which was always positioned centre stage.

4.4 Many nineteenth century illustrations were reproduced in the Victorian journals of the time, and all reveal a standard form of construction. The trap relied upon counterweights to raise the performer to stage level and was a fundamental building block of any Victorian substage.

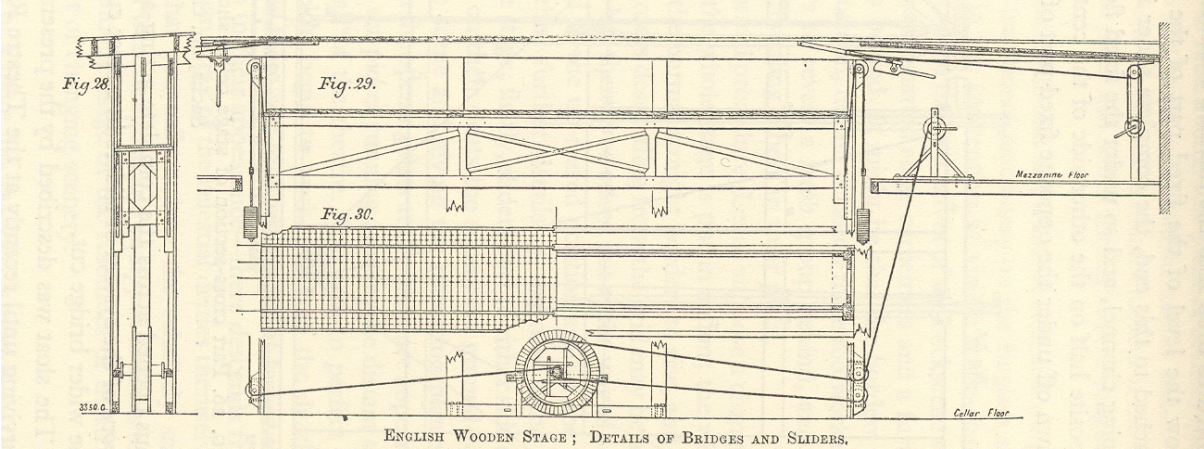
The Ascent of the Corner Trap
[From: *The Graphic*, December 23rd 1908]

4.5 The name of the grave trap was derived from its use in the grave scene from *Hamlet*. It consisted of a small trap platform which was counterbalanced and sometimes assisted by a timber drum and shaft which provided mechanical advantage. The trap was usually used as a 'slow-rise' device from producing spectral appearances, but it could also be used for fast-rise if the situation demanded it.

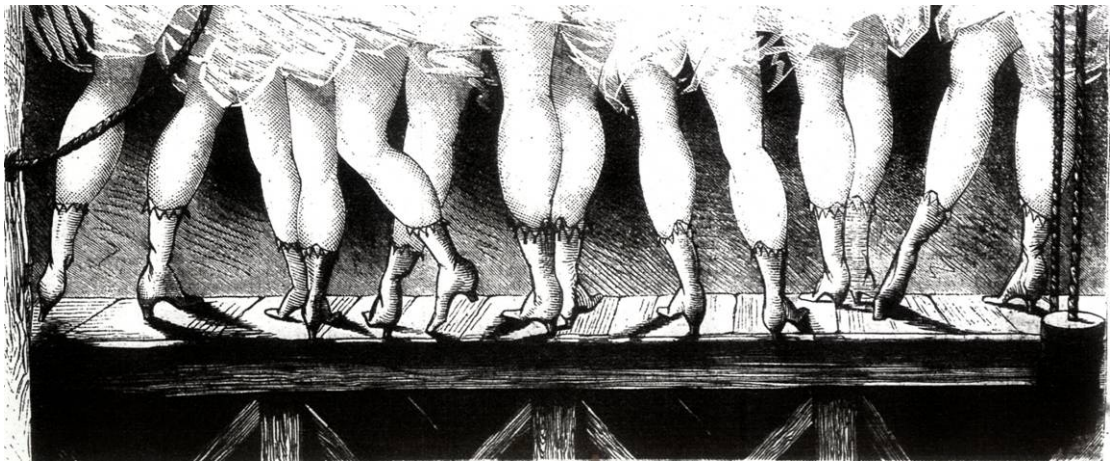
37. The Grave Trap in *Hamlet*
[From: *The Graphic,* January 24th 1880]

4.6 Upstage of the smaller traps is a sequence of "bridges" and "cuts" – the bridges being large wooden platforms that could be raised from the substage to stage level – often loaded with three dimensional scenery and chorus girls. Infront of each bridge two-dimensional scenery could be raised from substage level to cover or "mask" the

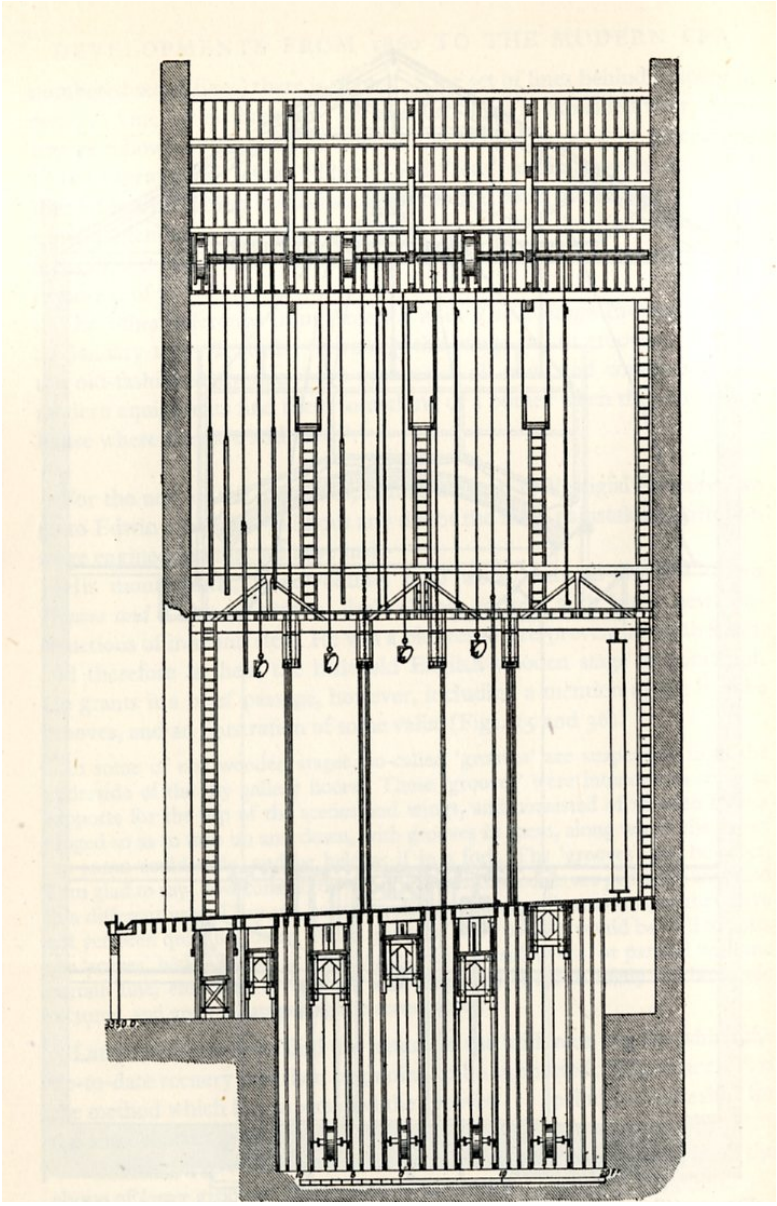
pedestrian timber framework of the bridge to provide a scenic interpretation of whatever was required e.g. a rocky outcrop or a grassy knoll.



Example of a Bridge and Associated Slider Mechanism
[From: Sachs op.cit.]



Chorus Girls Ascending on a " Scenic Bridge"
[From: *The World's Work*, 1882.]



Longitudinal Section of a Typical English Wood Stage
[Sachs: op.cit.]

4.7 Sachs' longitudinal section of a typical English Wood Stage is extremely instructive and clearly demonstrates the multi-levels of the stage house. A cellar level deep beneath the stage to accommodate the complex substage machinery together with a mezzanine floor immediately beneath the level of the stage floor. The stage surface is shown as in nearly every nineteenth century theatre as being set at a rake or slope which was designed to improve the sightlines from the auditorium. The first British level stage was installed at Her Majesty's Theatre in London in 1897.

4.8 Above the stage Sachs shows a level fly floor, from where the overstage scenery was controlled from. The whole stage house was surmounted with a grid or gridiron, being a slatted floor through which the plethora of scenery suspension ropes were threaded. Mounted above the grid are shown a series of drum and shaft mechanisms designed to provide mechanical advantage in order to reduce the physical effort required to raise and lower the heavy scenery.

5. Historical Context

5.1 The late nineteenth century theatre stage house was always designed in response to the intended use of the theatre. In other words an opera house was equipped with machinery capable of mounting the scenically demanding operatic repertoire of the period, whereas a drama house would be much more likely to be equipped with a rather more modest suite of equipment.

5.2 Provincial theatres often needed to present a varying programme which meant that there were equipped with machinery which would only be used periodically in opera, pantomime and melodrama productions. A theatre in London however was often built for a specific theatre genre, and the equipment provided was therefore commensurate with the preferred artistic policy.

5.3 During the late nineteenth century the theatre-going public had an apparently insatiable thirst for sensation drama and spectacle, a genre which demanded significant amounts of costly scenery, machinery and equipment. The Theatre Royal, Drury Lane under the management of Sir Augustus Harris did much to promote this kind of spectacle but many of the other London theatres attempted to cash-in on this scenic fashion.

5.4 However, with the advent of the twentieth century the demand, and indeed the ability of the theatre managements to fund such expensive productions introduced a step change in British Theatre. Spectacle, sensation and melodrama became old-fashioned and the writings of such commentators as Bernard Shaw and Gordon Craig introduced the concept of a "new drama" – which coincidentally was much less demanding upon the theatre manager's costs. The arrival of early cinema undoubtedly influenced these changes whilst also introducing even greater competition for the public's disposable income.

5.5 In consequence theatre design diversified to take account of these changes and theatre construction rapidly decreased after 1914 as a direct result of both the First World War and the arrival of larger modern cinemas.

6. The Ambassadors Theatre Stage House

6.1 When the Ambassadors Theatre opened in 1913 *The Era*[5] reported that, "the stage is a relatively large one." The reality however was that it was comparatively modest compared to many other West End theatres. The first Stage Guide to be published after the theatre's construction did not appear until 1950[6]. However the dimensions of the stage had clearly not changed since 1913 and were cited as:

Proscenium opening: 24ft 6ins.

Minimum depth from setting line: 20ft 6ins.

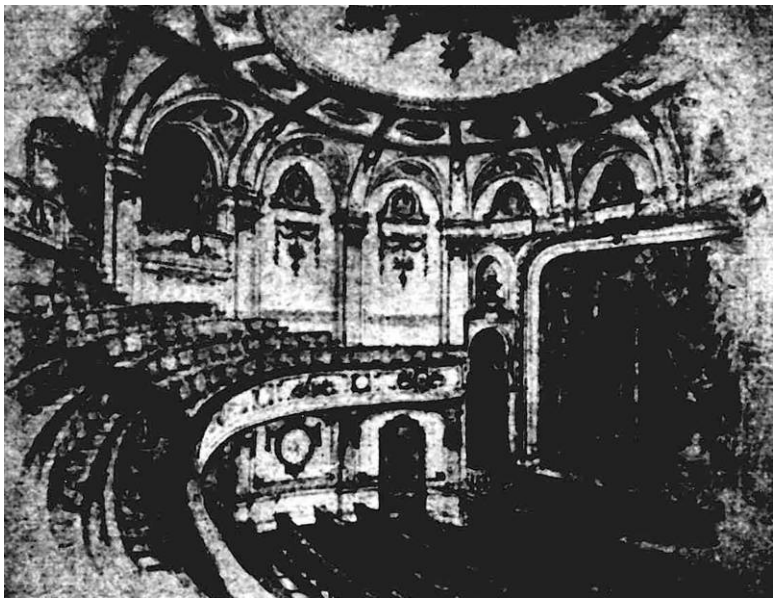
Height under fly galleries: 18ft.

Width between fly galleries: 29ft 6ins.

Height of grid from stage: 34ft.

Further comments stated: No counterweight gear

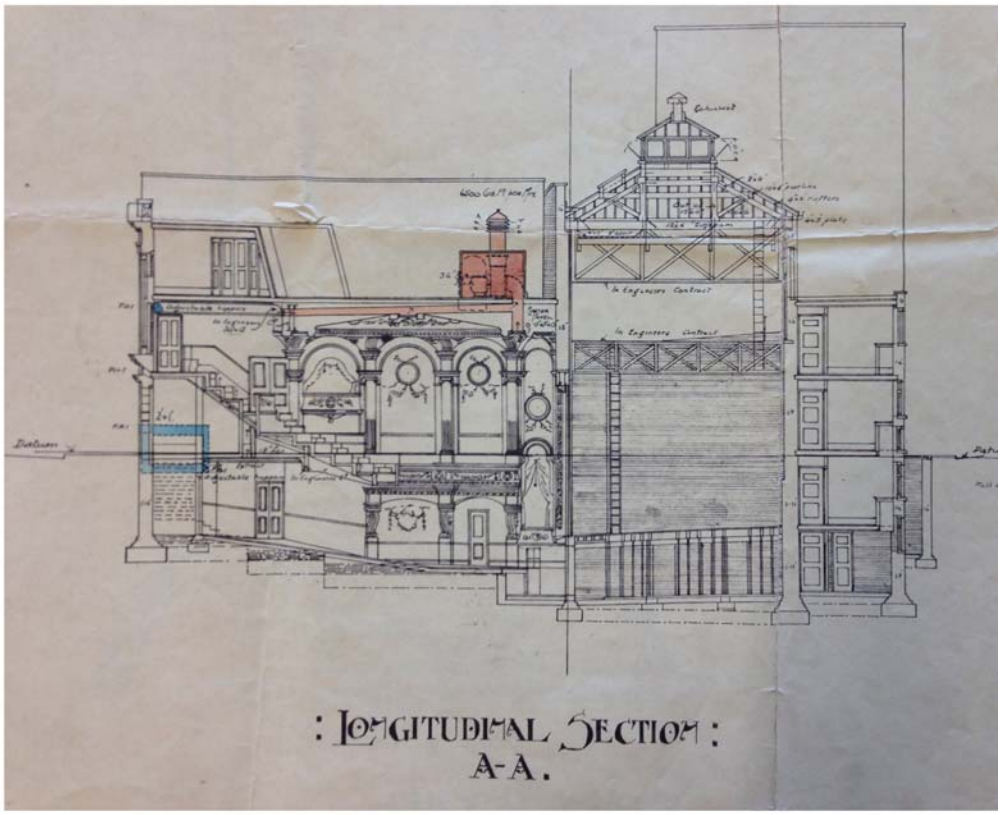
6.2 *The Era*[7] had also reported that, "the stage is planned to suit almost any kind of production," this could have been no more than publicity hype because the size of the stage and equipment that the theatre was provided with were ideally suited to the simple straightforward productions typical of the "new drama" that was becoming so fashionable in 1913.



From: *The Era,* 7th June 1913, p.10, cols.3-4.

[5] *The Era*, 7th June 1913, p.10, col.3.
[6] *The Stage Year Book incorporating The Stage Guide 1950*, pub: Carson & Comerford, London, 1950, p.256.
[7] *The Era*, 4th June 1913, p.5, col.4.

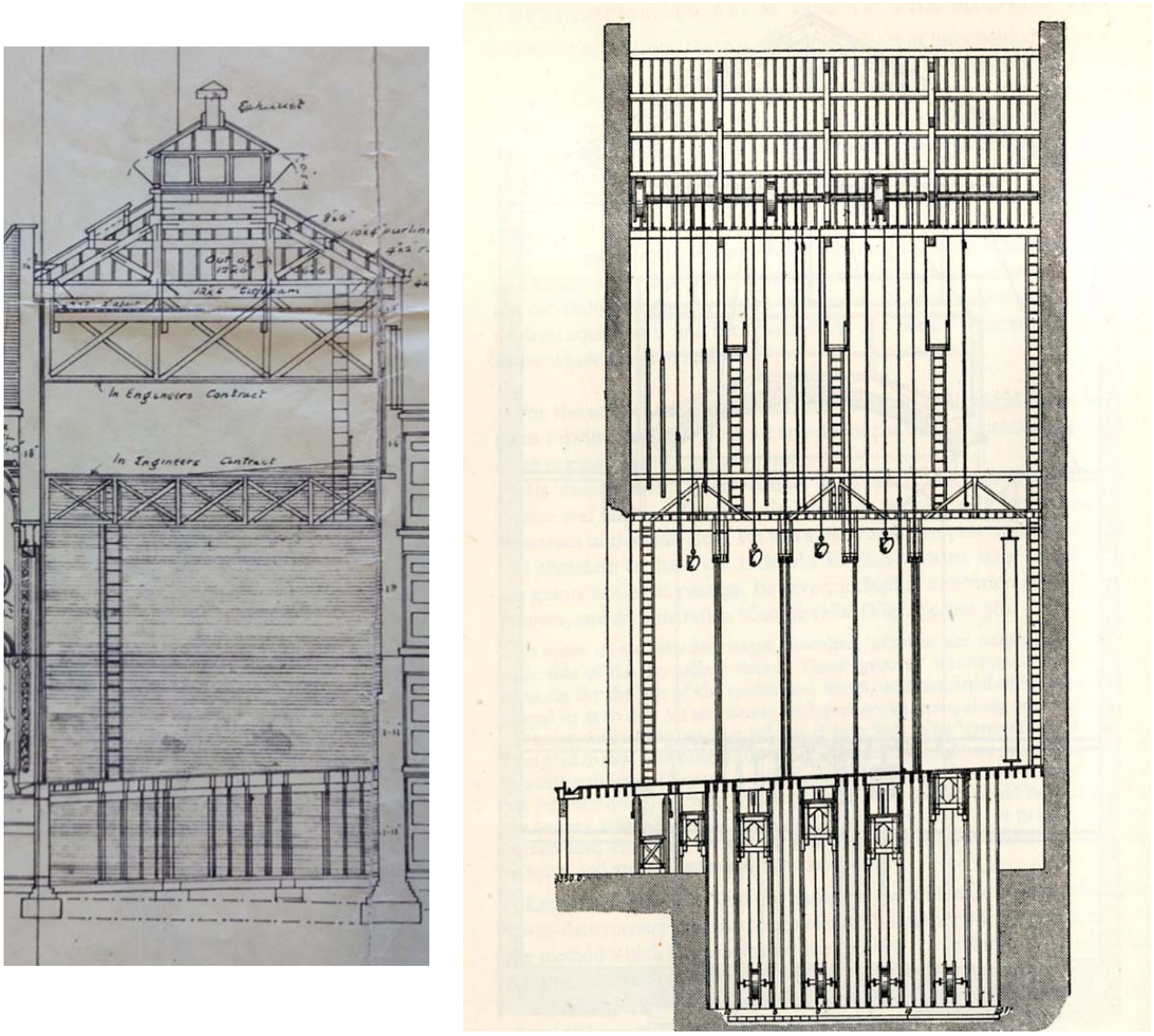
6.3 Sprague's long-section of the Ambassadors Theatre provides a very useful indication of what was designed in 1913.



W.G.R. Sprague's Longitudinal Section

6.4 The Longitudinal section as prepared by Sprague demonstrates the compact nature of the theatre and the relative special comparison between stage house and auditorium. The enlargement of the stage house itself also provides an indicative layout of the substage. It indicates that, unlike the traditional English Wood Stage the theatre was never provided with a cellar level for elaborate substage machinery. Sprague does however provide an indicative layout for the substage structure and by implication a suggestion of what the various elements might be used for.

6.5 During the early years of the twentieth century new theatres were provided with a stage structure that could "be fitted out by others" at a later date, should a particular production require it. In consequence many of these theatres were never actually fully equipped with substage machinery – the fashion for spectacle had already waned and the economics of theatre would and could no longer support it.



Comparative Longitudinal Sections

Amabassadors Theatre (left) Typical English Wood Stage (right)

6.6 The above comparative sections provide a clear indication of the limited technical capabilities of the Ambassadors Theatre. An examination of the stage house was undertaken during March 2017 in order to ascertain precisely what had been installed in 1913 and what remains today.

7. The Substage – 2017

7.1 The stage structure of the Ambassadors Theatre remains largely as installed in 1913. In response to the London County Council regulations the joists and timber supports are all constructed in hardwood. The stage floor has been modified over the years in response to the requirements of many productions but many areas remain as originally built. The stage floor appears to have been constructed from 1¼" thickness hardwood tongue and groove boards. In some areas the stage sliders can still be seen with timber battens screwed onto the underside of the tongue and groove boarding.

7.2 It is quite clear however that the theatre was never equipped with a full working English Wood Stage. The lack of a substage cellar would have proved a severe hinderance to the stage carpenters but in any case the stage joists that support the stage floor show no signs of ever having being grooved to accommodate working slider traps – an essential feature for any working trapped stage of the period. In order to raise scenery from the substage it was necessary for the stage to be opened by sliding the trap covers offstage under the fixed stage wing floor to each side of the stage. It is quite clear that this was never present and that any traps that were required could only be opened by manual lifting them out – in other words a half hearted attempt was made to create a substage that could accommodate some form of scenic potential that was never actually realised.

7.3 An examination of the surviving substage structure indicates that the intended scenic layout was configured as shown in the table below:

Comments	Extant 2017	Intended Purpose
Proscenium Brick Wall		
	3" Joist [1913]	
	8" Gap	No Scenic Context
	3" Joist [1913]	
	15" Gap	No Scenic Context
	3" Joist [1913]	
	19" Gap	Scenic "Cut"[8]
	3" Joist [1913]	
Later steel joist inserted	17" Gap	Scenic "Cut"
	3" Joist	
Underside of stage single battened	11" Gap	Scenic "Cut"
	3" Joist	
Underside of stage double battened	38" Gap	Scenic "Bridge"[9]
	3" Joist	
Underside of stage single battened	11" Gap	Scenic "Cut"
	3" Joist	
Underside of stage single battened	11" Gap	Scenic "Cut"
	3" Joist	
Underside of stage double battened	37" Gap	Scenic "Bridge"
	3" Joist	
Transverse Steel Joist Inserted Here		
	8¼" Gap	No Scenic Context
	2½" Joist	
	10" Gap	No Scenic Context
	2½" Joist	
	10" Gap	No Scenic Context
	2½" Joist	
	10" Gap	No Scenic Context
	2½" Joist	
	10" Gap	No Scenic Context
	2½" Joist	
	7" Gap	No Scenic Context
Rear Stage Brick Wall		

[8] The Scenic Cut could have been used for raising two-dimensional scenery but would have required sliders, windlasses and sloats – these elements were never installed.
[9] The Scenic Bridge would have required a drum and shaft, windlass and sliders to make it fully operational. In any case the lack of a substage cellar would have rendered the installation unworkable.

Underside of Scenic Bridge Stage Floor Showing Double Battens
[photo: **theat*re*search**]

7.4 The floor of the stage cellar consists of a raked concrete screed floor which reflects the stage rake laid out at approximately 1:24. This was a traditional slope used by stage carpenters and reflects a slope of ½" for every foot.

7.5 The Historic England listing description for the theatre cites; "one frail single trap, no other machinery survives."

7.6 No evidence of this substage trap was found during the inspection. It is likely that this may have been a later production specific trap that has been subsequently removed. Sprague's 1913 plan of the stage shows no indication of any corner traps.

Underside of Stage Floor Single Batten
[photo: **theat*re*search**]

8. Fly Floors & Hemp Flying

8.1 The stage house was and still is equipped with two fly floors, one above each side of the stage. They should be considered as interesting though not significant because the fly rail is an early rolled iron lattice riveted truss surmounted with timber top rail and timber cleats for securing the ropes. Prior to 1900 the fly floor truss was usually made of timber but by 1913 iron and steel was commonplace within the theatre.

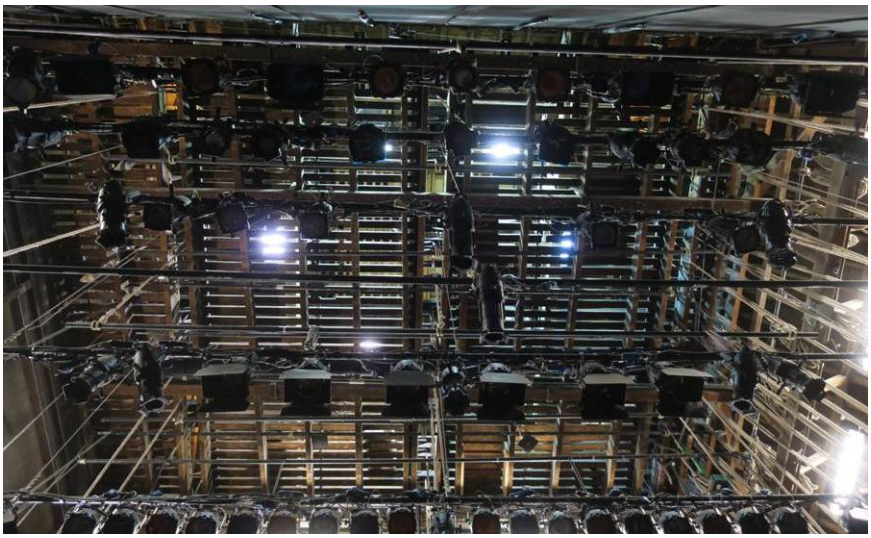
Detail of Fly Rail Construction (above)
[photos: **theat***re**search*]
Detail of Timber Fly Rail Cleat (below)

8.2 The theatre continues to operate at present (supplemented by some modern technology) the original traditional system of hemp flying. However in this instance there is little that remains from the original system – the ropes, the flying bars, and the pulley blocks have all been replaced as might be expected within the environment of a working theatre. Insurance requirements necessitate load testing and certification which renders much of what had originally been installed in an early twentieth century theatre unworkable.

8.3 Hemp flying is still used in the West End, but only as a point of last resort. There are serious implications for any theatre management wishing to utilise these principles e.g. manual handling regulations and the limited physical lifting capabilities of the system. Most theatres throughout the country no longer operate hemp flying systems because they are no longer fit for purpose. Modern productions demand modern lifting capabilities well beyond the safe working loads that can be achieved with hemp flying. On that basis the retention of hemp flying principles (as opposed to original equipment) potentially limits the product that can be presented on the stage and in consequence jeopardises the very existing of the theatre.

9. Gridiron

9.1 The gridiron from which all the scenery is suspended is constructed from timber in the traditional manner.



View of the Gridiron from the Stage
[photo: **theat*re*search**]

9.2 The grid is unremarkable save for the survival of a now disused single drum and shaft mechanism. The ratio of the circumference of the drum to the circumference of the shaft provided a mechanical advantage ratio which assisted the in the lifting of heavy scenery whilst also reducing the number of stagehands required to carry out the operation. Survivals of this kind are becoming increasingly scarce and in any proposed redevelopment this item should be salvaged for display or re-use elsewhere.

Drum and Shaft at Grid level
[photo: **theat*re*search**]

10. Context & Summary

10.1 The technical installation at the Ambassadors Theatre was as has been demonstrated extremely limited. This was unquestionably influenced by the change in attitudes towards "the drama". The introduction of the LCC regulations undoubtedly influenced the use of materials in the design of the stage house, but there was clearly still a degree of uncertainty about the way in which the theatre industry would develop. Although the St. Martin's Theatre was finally completed three years after the Ambassadors Theatre in 1916, it was provided with an extensive and comprehensive system of stage machinery based solely on the by then archaic principles of the English Wood Stage. As we have seen by 1913 the Ambassadors Theatre had al but rejected this kind of installation. However, the St. Martin's Theatre substage installation was fully equipped with bridges, sloats, drums and shafts and all the requisite equipment that might have been expected in a theatre built as early as 1860. Hydraulic stage equipment had been installed at the Lyric Theatre on Shaftesbury Avenue in the 1880s, the Theatre Royal imported hydraulic equipment from Vienna in the 1890s and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden installed electrically driven scenic equipment in 1901.

10.2 Other interesting stage machinery installations included the Royal English Opera House (now the Palace Theatre) in 1890 – influenced by the French system of scene-changing and designed by an English engineer named Walter Dando. Yet for all its innovation the installation it was seldom used and as with so many West End theatres the substage became a storage area rather than a scenic area after the First World War.

10.3 Contextually the stage house at the Ambassadors Theatre is interesting in so far as it demonstrates the end of the English Wood Stage – it is interesting but only for what wasn't installed rather than for anything survives. It is difficult to see under such circumstances how a case could be made for retention – although it should certainly be carefully recorded as the final chapter in the evolution of what was known as the English Wood Stage.

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Appendix 2

Case Name: Ambassadors Theatre, London

Case Number: 1445136

Background

We have been asked to assess the Ambassadors Theatre, West Street, London, currently listed at Grade II, for upgrading to Grade II*.

Asset(s) under Assessment

Facts about the asset(s) can be found in the Annex(es) to this report.

Annex	List Entry Number	Name	Heritage Category	HE Recommendation
1	1379185	Ambassadors Theatre	Listing	Amend List

Visits

Date	Visit Type
07 March 2017	Full inspection

Context

A planning application has been submitted for the demolition of the existing Grade II-listed theatre building behind the retained West Street façade and part of the Tower Court façade, and redevelopment of the site for a four storey plus mansard roof storey theatre building (uplift of 1,067 sqm) with one storey upward extension of the retained façade, excavation of a basement and installation of a roof top plant.

The building adjoins St Martin's Theatre and 24 West Street, which are also listed at Grade II, and is near several listed buildings on Upper St Martin's Lane and Earlham Street. It is just outside the boundary of Covent Garden Conservation Area.

Assessment

CONSULTATION
Consultation reports were sent to the applicant, the owner, the Conservation Adviser to the London Borough of Camden, the Greater London Historic Environment Record Officer, The Victorian Society and The Theatres Trust.

The Victorian Society responded that it would like to see more information about the architect of the Ambassadors Theatre in the text. Some additional information has been added to the History section.

The Theatres Trust responded saying that it largely agreed with the History and Details in the Consultation Report but that the last paragraph of the report concerning stage machinery needed clarification and correction. The Trust agreed that the Ambassadors Theatre has special architectural and historic interest, reflected in its Grade II listing, but Sprague's tight design resulted in a theatre that is compromised in the way that it functions. It commented on the stage machinery that while the stage was designed for traps to be installed there is no evidence of the stage ever being equipped with traps, bridge or sub-stage machinery, nor was a sub-stage cellar provided for the later installation of sub-stage machinery. With regard to the grid and flying machinery little of this remains, with parts replaced to meet modern safety standards and therefore rarely used these days. The wooden grid survives, though unremarkable, and the drum and shaft mechanism above. The Trust recommended that this paragraph should be updated to reflect the new evidence in the attached Theatresearch report, and the Details section of the List description has been updated accordingly. The Theatres Trust also commented that it recognised the special historic interest and would not support any

move to de-list the building but did not consider that the Ambassadors is a more important or significant example than Sprague's other Grade II-listed West End theatres. Therefore it recommend that the Ambassadors Theatre retains its Grade II listing and that the description be updated to remove references to the stage trap and reflect the findings of the Theatresearch report. The paragraph on stage machinery has been amended and the issue of grading is discussed below.

The Ambassadors Theatre's owner responded that he saw no realistic basis for considering the Ambassadors Theatre worthy of an upgrade from Grade II to Grade II*. He commented that it was significantly less impressive than many of Sprague's other theatres, with a poor front-of-house and a somewhat uninspiring auditorium. None of the stage equipment is particularly unusual or special. Those theatres, by Sprague or others, which have a Grade II* (or Grade I) listing are of immensely more value and importance and sadly The Ambassadors Theatre does not compare favourably to them in terms of its external or internal appearance, or its decorative schemes, nor its importance in its townscape and setting.

Montagu Evans sent a report on the Ambassadors Theatre on behalf of the owners stating why they considered it did not merit upgrading and including a comparison of the Ambassadors Theatre with other Sprague theatres and Grade II* and Grade I theatres by other architects. They also enclosed a copy of Theatresearch's report on the Historic Context of the Stage House, which had also been submitted by The Theatres Trust. Points raised in the Montagu Evans report are discussed below.

No further responses were received to our consultation letters and report.

CRITERIA/DISCUSSION
The Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings (DCMS, March 2010) sets out how the Secretary of State determines whether a building or structure is of special interest and merits listing.

Further guidance for listing theatres is found in the Historic England Listing Selection Guide for Culture and Entertainment. This states that for theatres completeness of design enhances the case for listing – the survival of a proscenium arch where there was one is generally essential – and it is worth checking the degree of alteration carefully, especially of foyers, as theatres of this era may have been opened up to achieve movement between levels that was not originally possible. The architectural quality of the exterior is often elaborate; even so, English theatres are distinctive for being tucked away, with often only a small façade on an expansive street frontage. Internally, a theatre should retain a palpable overall sense of space. Theatres from the 1860s and 1870s were relatively modest in scale. However the rich and fruity interiors of the years 1890-1914 survive disproportionately and the best, such as those by Frank Matcham, W G R Sprague and Bertie Crewe (the three leading theatre architects of the period), will most likely be listed at a high grade. The guidance states that credit should be given to minor decorative elements within the auditoria and foyers and that survival of stage equipment is always significant. Historical associations, such as scenes of first performances or associations with visiting artists, will be of lesser consideration.

The designer of Ambassadors Theatre, W G R Sprague (1865-1933) was one of the three leading theatre architects of the period 1890-1914. He designed 36 complete theatres and rebuilt six theatres by other architects. Only 12 survive, all listed. London's West End contains eight of these, one of which is listed at Grade II*, the others at Grade II. The only two theatres by Sprague in England currently listed at Grade II* are the 1899 Wyndhams Theatre, Charing Cross Road and the 1897 Sheffield Lyceum.

The Ambassadors Theatre was built in 1912-13 on a small wedge-shaped site which had twice already been rejected as a site for a theatre because of access problems caused by the narrow surrounding streets. Permission was finally granted on condition that Tower Court was widened from 13 to 20 feet, which made the site even smaller. Also the height of the theatre was restricted by Ancient Lights acquired by neighbouring properties. Within this tiny site Sprague was able to fit a complete theatre including a foyer with box office, bars, auditorium seating about 500, offices and three floors of dressing rooms; it is the smallest of Sprague's West End theatres. However the site restrictions led to overflow problems, which seem to have been relieved by an extended exterior canopy, and sight-line problems with some seats. Sprague's design included both the Classical style exterior and the complete interior decorative scheme, described in contemporary accounts as in Louis XVI style with ambassadorial crests and a colour scheme of Parma violet, ivory and gold.

The focus of exterior decoration was concentrated on the principal West Street elevation and its curved corner onto Tower Court, containing the entrance foyer. The stuccoed classical style design is of three storeys and five bays along West Street with a further similar bay to the corner. Features include a balustraded parapet, pilasters under segmental pediments, some circular windows and mahogany half glazed doors under a metal and glazed canopy. The remaining elevations are of brick and are plain and of less

aesthetic value. The exterior is a competent design and unaltered but other Sprague theatre exteriors are larger and grander than the Ambassadors Theatre and are also stone faced rather than stuccoed.

The interior plaster decoration throughout is executed to Sprague's design. The circular foyer has pilasters below a decorative plastered ceiling and the circle bar above has similar decorative features. The auditorium has a fine circular high relief decorated plaster ceiling with a central chandelier, a panelled border with roundels and a deep cove penetrated by arches springing from fluted Ionic pilasters. The richly framed and festooned roundels have coloured armorial decorations in the arch tympana thought to be ambassadors shields. The Circle has a horseshoe-curved balcony front with panelled and festooned plaster-work decoration, and there is a narrower section raised up at the back with a smaller similar balcony. Its ceiling has large fielded panels. The Stalls side walls have oval decorations with festoons, containing looking glasses, although, according to an old photograph in the Metropolitan Archives, they originally held paintings. The flat basket-arched proscenium arch is crowned by three armorial decorations, flanked by fluted Ionic pilasters and there are tall single splayed round-headed boxes with urn decoration above and closed balustrading below. The plaster decoration, particularly of the ceiling of the auditorium, is of high relief and it is a good quality and elegant interior decorative scheme.

Additional interest is provided by the survival of some original stage machinery. At the time that the Ambassadors Theatre was built in 1912-13 the English Wood stage with stage traps and hemp flying was being superseded by new technology for installing scenery and special effects. Surviving stage machinery at the Ambassadors Theatre includes two fly floors and the traditional system of hemp flying, although the ropes, flying bars and pulley blocks have been replaced. Because of modern health and safety standards this system can rarely be used now. There is a timber gridiron for suspending scenery, but other theatres retain these, and a disused single drum and shaft mechanism, which is now considered a rare survival.

However the attached detailed report by Theatresearch shows that some other West End theatres have better survival of original stage machinery. For example Sprague's companion theatre to the Ambassadors, St Martin's Theatre, completed three years later in 1916, retains a comprehensive system of stage machinery of the English Wood stage fully equipped with bridges, sloats, drums and shafts. This was the older technology and examples of new technology installed in the late C19 include: the Lyric Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, where hydraulic equipment was installed in the 1880s; The Theatre Royal which had hydraulic equipment from Vienna installed in the 1890s; and the Royal Opera House which installed electrically driven scenic equipment in 1901. By comparison the surviving stage equipment in the Ambassadors Theatre was old technology and had never been a very complete example of the English Wood stage. According to Mike Kilburn's 'London Theatres' (2002) original backstage equipment is also found in the Gielgud, Queens Theatre, and Her Majesty's Theatre.

Degree of completeness is an important consideration in the grading of theatres. The Ambassadors Theatre appears virtually unaltered externally with the possible exception of the external iron and glass canopy which may have been added or extended later. The interior is also little altered. The foyer and circle bar retain their original decorative scheme. In the auditorium the decorative scheme remains intact although the stall seats were replaced in 1924 and the circle seats in 1929 by Sprague and Barton. The Montagu Evans report states: the auditorium has been altered because the original colour scheme has been painted over; the orchestra pit has been sealed; a sound desk has been inserted into one of the boxes; some of the seating has been removed around the edge of the dress circle balcony and the spaces are filled with speakers and technical equipment, and the current production has raised the stage, which has further restricted the view from the rear of the stalls. However many of these alterations have been made to suit the current production at the theatre and could be reinstated for a different type of production.

The Ambassadors Theatre certainly has special architectural and historic interest as a little altered pre-1914 theatre by one of the major theatre architects of the era, which has an interesting theatrical history as the West End debut of many famous artists, and the original home of 'The Mousetrap', the world's longest running show, and group value with St Martin's Theatre, designed by the same architect. However it needs to be compared with other theatres by Sprague and other architects to determine whether it merits upgrading to a higher grade.

Wyndhams Theatre of 1889, the only West End theatre by Sprague currently listed at Grade II*, is clearly in a different league to the Ambassadors Theatre with an impressive seven bay Classical style Portland stone frontage and an interior with decoration of high quality. The Lyceum, Sheffield of 1897, also Grade II*, is the only completely surviving Sprague theatre outside London with a fine auditorium.

Sprague's other West End theatres are listed at Grade II. The Albery, St Martin's Lane of 1903 (now the Noel Coward Theatre), has a similar Classical Portland stone elevation to Wyndhams but the French neo-Classical

interior decoration including painted decoration was by Claude Ponsonby, not Sprague, and is of high quality. Like the Ambassadors this theatre was also described as a miracle of compression on a restricted site.

Next in date are the Strand and Aldwych theatres of 1905 designed as a mirror image pair, on either side of the Waldorf Hotel. They also have very impressive four storey Classical style frontages with pediments and circular corners and fine interiors.

The Gielgud (formerly the Globe Theatre) and Queens Theatre of 1907, another mirror image pair, were designed in Free Baroque style with Portland stone elevations with corner domes but the Queen's Theatre façade and front of house was rebuilt in 1958-9 after war damage. Both retain Louis XIV-style auditoriums and some original stage machinery. The Gielgud has an impressive foyer

The last of Sprague's West End theatres is St Martin's Theatre of 1916, adjoining the Ambassadors Theatre, which has an impressive Classical style ashlar frontage, hardwood auditorium with glazed dome and stage machinery comprising a nearly complete example of a wooden stage fully equipped with bridges, sloats, drums and shafts.

Other Grade II-listed London theatres designed by Sprague are the Coronet Cinema, Notting Hill Gate of 1898 which retains the elaborate exterior and interiors despite the change of use, the Camden Palace Theatre of 1900-1, now a nightclub, which retains a high quality auditorium and has historical associations with Ellen Terry, and Streatham Hill Theatre of 1928-9 by Sprague and W H Barbon, an unusually late example of a Sprague theatre.

This comparison of Sprague's theatres shows that his two Grade II* theatres are of exceptional quality and many of the Grade II-listed theatres have much more impressive Classical or Baroque style exteriors, faced in ashlar not stuccoed, fine interiors and some retain a greater survival of stage machinery than the Ambassadors Theatre.

Comparison with Grade II* theatres in London by architects other than Sprague is also important. The Old Vic, with frontage and wooden roof structure of 1816-18 by Rudolf Cabanel of Aachen, has an auditorium mainly by J T Robinson of 1871. The Lyceum, Wellington Street has an exterior of 1832-4 with an auditorium of 1904 by Bertie Crewe. The Criterion, Piccadillly Circus, of 1874 by Thomas Verity is one of the most important examples of mid Victorian theatres in Britain and has exterior, auditorium and public spaces of excellent quality. The Garrick, Charing Cross Road of 1889 by C J Phipps and Walter Emden, has a high quality auditorium retaining original features, foyer and staircase. The Palace Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue built as the Royal English Opera House by T E Collard and G H Holloway for Richard D'Oyly Carte in Northern Renaissance style, is architecturally unlike any other London theatre, and has a fine auditorium and stage machinery both above and below the stage designed by Dando for the D'Oyly Carte's elaborate opera productions. Her Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket of 1896-7 by C J Phipps replaced other theatres dating back to Vanbrugh's 1704-5 building and is said to retain stage equipment. The Coliseum of 1902-04 by Frank Matcham is a gigantic theatre in Free Baroque style which also retains a disused original triple revolve and an original cyclorama track. The London Palladium of 1910 by Frank Matcham is an unaltered example and one of Matcham's finest theatre buildings. The Victoria Palace Theatre of 1911 by Frank Matcham is a fine, exceptionally well-preserved, theatre with high quality faience clad exterior in the Edwardian Baroque style and a lavish interior with historic joinery and decorative fittings.

Many of these London Grade II* theatres have a longstanding theatrical history on the site and the Ambassadors Theatre of 1913 is later than any of them; they have a high quality exterior and interiors with a high quality decorative scheme and the Ambassadors Theatre is rather let down in comparison by its more modest exterior. Stage machinery can be a contributing factor to the grade but some of these theatres have a more extensive survival of original stage machinery than the Ambassadors Theatre.

To sum up, the Ambassadors Theatre certainly meets the criteria for statutory listing at Grade II for: its special architectural interest as a 1913 theatre designed by W G R Sprague - one of the most important late C19 and early C20 theatre architects; for the completeness of its design, as both the exterior in Classical style and interior in Louis XVI style were designed by Sprague and include foyer, circle bar, auditorium and some backstage features; for its degree of survival, and for group value with St Martin's Theatre adjoining to the south-east and 24 West Street adjoining to the north-west. However because of its late date, more modest size and quality compared with Grade II* theatres by Sprague and other architects and the survival of better original back stage features in other theatres it does not merit upgrading to Grade II*.

In recommending the extent of designation, we have considered whether powers of exclusion under s. 1 (5A) of the 1990 Act are appropriate, and consider that they are not, which is clear in the proposed List entry.

CONCLUSION
After examining all the available records and other relevant information ,and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the criteria for listing at Grade II are fulfilled but not upgrading to Grade II*. Therefore the Ambassadors Theatre is recommended to remain at Grade II but with an amended List entry.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION DECISION
The Ambassadors Theatre, designed by W G R Sprague and built in 1913 in Classical style with a Louis XVI interior, is not recommended for upgrading to Grade II* for the following principal reasons:
* Date: late date compared with Grade II* theatres by Sprague and other architects;
* Exterior: little altered but modest in scale and quality compared with Grade II* theatres by Sprague and other architects;
* Interior: little altered but Grade II* theatres by Sprague and other architects have more lavish interiors;
* Survival of backstage fittings: a number of other theatres have greater survival of original backstage features.

Countersigning comments:

Agreed. Careful analysis of the Ambassadors Theatre and comparison with other theatres by the same architect and also other more highly graded theatres in London, clearly demonstrates that it is rightly listed at Grade II for its special architectural and historic interest in a national context, and that an upgrade is not justified.
V Fiorato, 1 June 2017

Annex 1

List Entry

List Entry Summary
This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: Ambassadors Theatre

List Entry Number: 1379185

Location
Ambassadors Theatre, West Street, London, WC2H 9ND

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
Greater London Authority	Camden	London Borough	Non Civil Parish

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 16 March 1973
Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information
The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS
Legacy Number: 478552

Asset Groupings
This List entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List Entry Description

Summary of Building
Theatre, opened in January 1913, designed by W G R Sprague in Classical style with Louis XVI style interiors. The builder was Kingerlee and Sons. The Stalls were re-seated in 1924 and the Circle in 1929 by Sprague and Barton.

Reasons for Designation
Ambassadors Theatre is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

* Architectural interest: as an 1913 theatre designed by W G R Sprague, one of the most important late C19 and early C20 theatre architects;
* Completeness of design: both the Classical style exterior and the interior in Louis XVI style were designed by Sprague and include foyer, circle bar, auditorium and some original backstage features;
* Degree of survival: both exterior and interior are little altered;
* Historical interest: the theatre saw the West End debut of many famous artists including Ivor Novello, Hermione Gingold, Paul Robeson, Margaret Lockwood and Vivien Leigh and it was the original home of 'The Mousetrap', the world's longest running show;
* Group value: adjoins St Martin's Theatre of 1916, also by Sprague (Grade II) and 24 West Street (Grade II).

History

The Ambassadors Theatre was designed by the theatre architect W G R Sprague (1865-1933) and opened on 5 June 1913. Sprague (1865-1933) was one of the three leading theatre architects of the period 1890-1914 and designed more than thirty theatres during his career, including eight in London's West End

A new theatre had been proposed for this site in 1898-9 but had been twice rejected because of the narrowness of the surrounding streets, particularly Tower Court. In 1912 Sprague applied on behalf of Herbert Jay to build 'a comparatively small theatre' for 506 seated patrons and 40 standing, mainly for amateur productions. He argued that although the streets were narrower than normally allowed for access to a theatre there would be access to the site on three sides if the narrow Tower Court, only 13 feet wide, was included. Permission was granted on condition that Tower Court was widened to 20 feet, which made a restricted site even smaller. The height of the theatre was restricted by Ancient Lights acquired by neighbouring properties.

Sprague's plans, which included the interior decorative scheme, date from April 1912. An additional floor of dressing rooms was added during construction and the theatre opened on 5 June 1913. The auditorium was described in contemporary accounts as in Louis XVI style with ambassadorial crests and a colour scheme of Parma violet, ivory and gold.

A sprinkler system was added in January 1914. The stalls seats were replaced in 1924 and the circle seats in 1929 by Sprague and Barton. Apart from re-decoration the auditorium remains virtually intact. The theatre can currently seat 408.

From the start it was used for professional performances, specialising in small ensemble pieces and also revues, which were pioneered here by Charles B Cochran in 1914, and ran through the Second World War. Performers who made their West End debut in plays here included Ivor Novello and Hermione Gingold (both 1921), Paul Robeson (1925), Margaret Lockwood (1934) and Vivien Leigh (1935). In 1952 'The Mousetrap' opened here and remained until 1974 when it transferred to St Martin's Theatre next door. The building was also in occasional cinema use.

Details

Theatre, opened in January 1913, designed by W G R Sprague in Classical style with Louis XVI style interiors. The builder was Kingerlee and Sons. The Stalls were re-seated in 1924 and the Circle in 1929 by Sprague and Barton.

MATERIALS: the frontage to West Street and the corner to Tower Court is stuccoed, the remainder of brick in English bond. There is a metal and glazed canopy to West Street and the corner with Tower Court. The roof is concealed by a parapet.

PLAN: a splayed almost triangular site with a circular foyer at the corner of West Street and Tower Court, a circular bar above and stairs leading off. The auditorium comprises stalls and circle, the proscenium arch is 24 feet 6 inches wide with a box each side, and the stage depth is 20 feet 6 inches. The stairs, offices and lavatories adjoin Tower Court. There are three storeys of dressing rooms behind the stage along Tower Street.

EXTERIOR: the West Street elevation is of three storeys and five bays with a balustraded parapet with ball finials and a deep moulded cornice. The central three bays are separated by pilasters and have deeply recessed flat-arched casement windows. The slightly advanced end bays have channelled pilasters under segmental pediments, circular openings on the second floor and flat-arched casements to the first floor. The ground floor has a continuous metal and glazed canopy, deep moulded cornice and alternate mahogany double doors and casement windows. The curved corner between West Street and Tower Court has

mahogany half-glazed doors and triple casement windows above flanked by pilasters. The stuccoed southern bay of the Tower Court elevation is identical to the southern bay on West Street.

The remainder of the Tower Court elevation is in brick and plainer, the southern end of three storeys and a semi-basement with three elliptical-headed windows, the central part of two storeys with two elliptical-headed windows and a tall opening for loading scenery, and the northern part of three storeys with two elliptical-headed casement windows and a narrow stage door.

The Tower Street elevation has a taller three storey southern bay with an elliptical-headed casement on each floor and a lower three storey and semi-basement section of four bays with elliptical-headed windows and an elliptical-headed fire door.

INTERIOR: the interior plaster decoration is in Louis XVI style. Public areas have mahogany doors. The circular foyer has pilasters below a decorative plastered ceiling. The circle bar above is similar. The auditorium has a circular high relief decorated plaster ceiling with central chandelier, a panelled border with roundels and a deep cove penetrated by arches springing from fluted Ionic pilasters. The richly framed and festooned roundels have coloured armorial decorations in the arch tympana. The Circle has a horseshoe-curved balcony front with panelled and festooned plasterwork decoration, and there is a narrower section raised up at the back with a smaller similar balcony. Its ceiling has large fielded panels. The Stalls side walls have oval decorations with festoons, containing looking glasses, but, according to an old photograph in the Metropolitan Archives, originally held paintings. The flat basket-arched proscenium arch is crowned by three armorial decorations, flanked by fluted Ionic pilasters and tall single splayed round-headed boxes with urn decoration above and closed balustrading below.

Original stage machinery includes two fly floors and the traditional system of hemp flying, although the ropes, flying bars and pulley blocks have been replaced. There is a timber gridiron for suspending scenery with a now rarely surviving but disused single drum and shaft mechanism.

Selected Sources

Books and journals

Andrews, Richard , The London theatres Guide, (2007)

Barson, Susie, Kendall, Derek, Longman, Peter, Smith, Joanna , Scene/Unseen, (English Heritage 2003), 22

Earl, John, Sell, Michael, The Theatres Trust Guide to British Theatres 1750 - 1950, (2000), 98

Kilburn, Mike, London Theatres, (2002)

Stuart Gray, A, Edwardian Architecture A Biographical Dictionary, (1988), 335-336

Map

National Grid Reference: TQ3000781007

The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - 1379185_2.pdf

Former List Entry

List Entry Summary
This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: AMBASSADORS THEATRE

List Entry Number: 1379185

Location
AMBASSADORS THEATRE, WEST STREET,

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
Greater London Authority	Camden	London Borough	

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 16 March 1973
Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information
The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS
Legacy Number: 478552

Asset Groupings
This List entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List Entry Description

Summary of Building
Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation
Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History
Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

CAMDEN

TQ3081SW WEST STREET
798-1/105/1713 (North East side)
16/03/73 Ambassadors Theatre

GV II

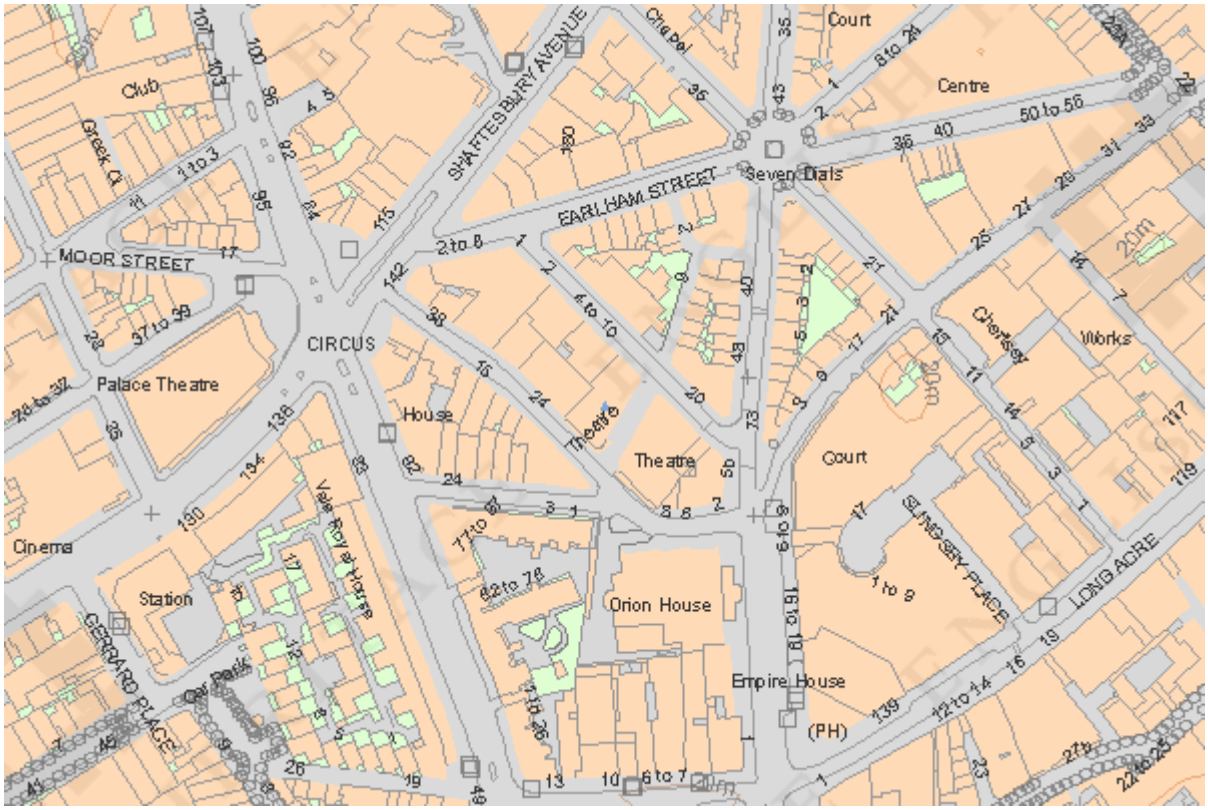
Theatre. 1913. By WGR Sprague for a syndicate. Built by Kingerlee and Sons. Stucco.
EXTERIOR: low elevation of 3 storeys, 4 bays. Ground floor entrances with continuous canopy. Centre with 4 pilasters & deeply recessed windows, above & below a central moulded string course. Slightly advanced end bays with banded pilasters and circular opening on 2nd floor, crowned by segmental pediments. Cornice, balustered parapet with ball finials. Right-hand end corner on curve with flanking, slightly advanced repeat of the end bay.
INTERIOR: not inspected but noted to retain a small auditorium, with seating for only 450, the decoration in Louis XVI style with fluted Ionic pilasters around walls, supporting round arches containing small roundels with ambassadorial crests. Circular decorated plaster ceiling. Dress circle with curved balcony front with plasterwork decoration, and part of the same tier at the back is another small circle raised up. Within the proscenium tall narrow round-headed boxes with balustered balconies. Rectangular proscenium arch with rounded angles. Stage machinery: one frail single trap, no other machinery survives. Small lobby with first-floor bar over. A small but exquisite design.

Listing NGR: TQ2999881002

Selected Sources

Map

National Grid Reference: TQ 30008 81005



The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - 1379185_1.pdf

Appendix 3

1323 - Sondheim Theatre
London, UK

STAGE AND AUDITORIUM COMPARATIVE STUDY
April 2017

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Sondheim Theatre

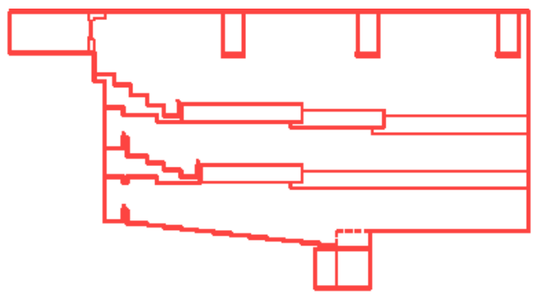
Introduction

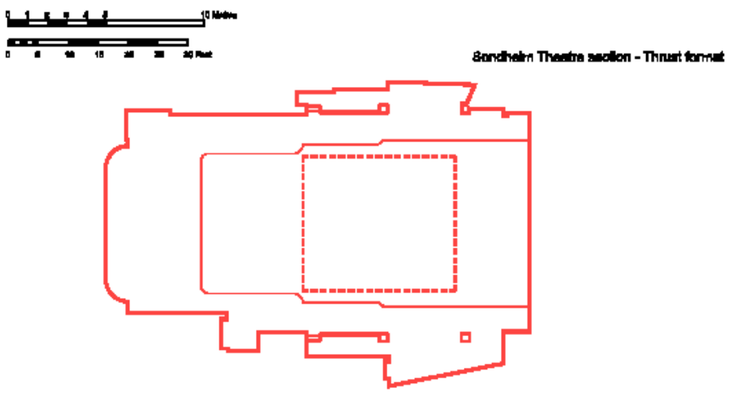
Theatre Projects has produced a series of comparative overlay drawings examining the proposed Sondheim stage and auditorium size against those of benchmark venues. These venues include those from which work may transfer to the Sondheim for a West End run. In an original study in November 2015 we compared the Sondheim in end-on, thrust and in-the-round modes, however this report has extracted the latter two modes for consideration only as the end-on configuration, although still tight, works successfully and is not a matter of contention; it is the mode in which the theatre has always operated.

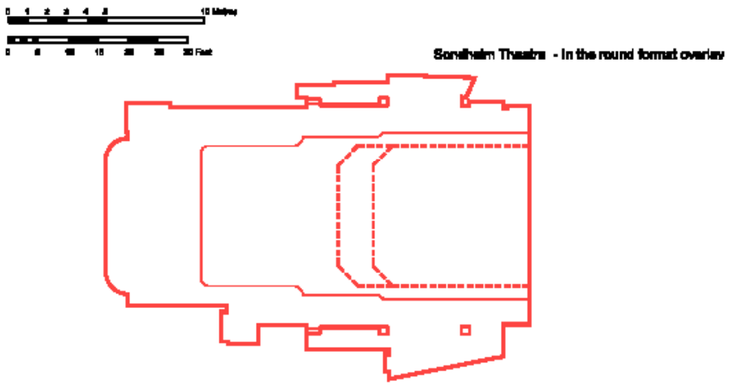
Thrust and in-the-round modes, however, are critical to the plan for the redevelopment of the theatre. There are many adaptable theatres in London but none in the West End, a key driver for the project is to provide a space where shows originally conceived in such formats can be presented to the West End audience in the manner intended. At present, shows designed and performed in-the-round or thrust undergo redesign and re-rehearsal so they can fit into end-on houses. This is not only costly and time consuming, but denies the West End audience of the opportunity to see the performance as conceived by the creative team.

The benchmark venues considered for thrust include the Young Vic, which is regularly transfers into the West End, and classic thrust theatres the Swan in Stratford and the new Everyman, Liverpool and other relevant examples like the Donmar and B2 at the Belgrade, Coventry. The in-the-round venues also include the Young Vic, the Royal Exchange, Manchester and the Orange Tree, Richmond.

Our assessment of the conditions are offered on the final page.







Design Review - Comparatives

The following pages show a series of comparative drawings, most in plan and section, with the Sondheim proposed thrust or in-the-round outline overlaid in red on top of similar modes in benchmark venues. For reference, the base overlays are shown on the opposite page. The outline of the stage is shown as a dotted red line.

The other venue is shown in grayscale with its stage area highlighted in orange.

In many cases alignment between the two venues is quite natural so we see the stages line up quite neatly. In some cases we have realigned to establish the best fit.

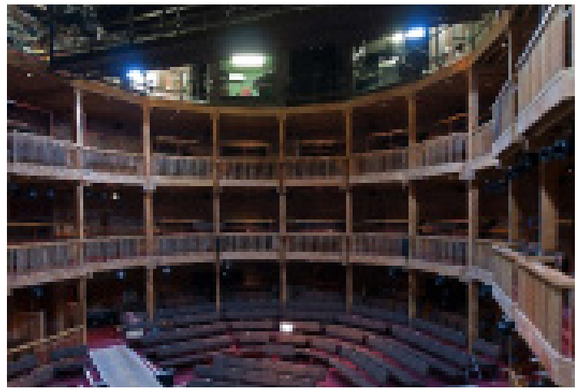
The first few pages show multiple examples with some particular venues pulled out and shown at a larger scale later.

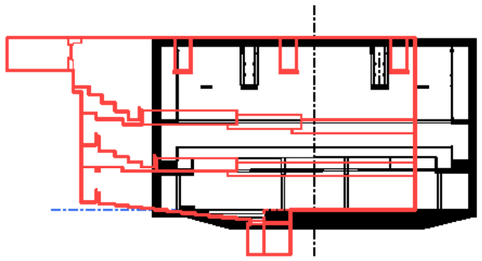
All drawings indicate the seating capacity for the venue in that mode.

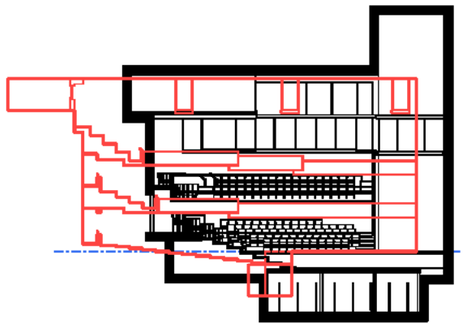
The larger drawings include information on the split in seating when in thrust or in-the-round to demonstrate the proportions of audience in each zone.

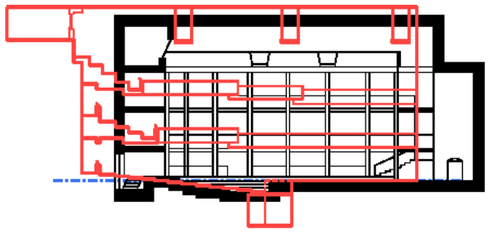
The comparatives help us to get a sense of the proposed Sondheim layout and how it fits with known venues in end-on, thrust and in-the-round formats.

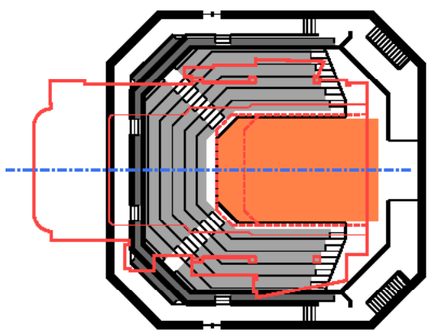
Thrust stage formats



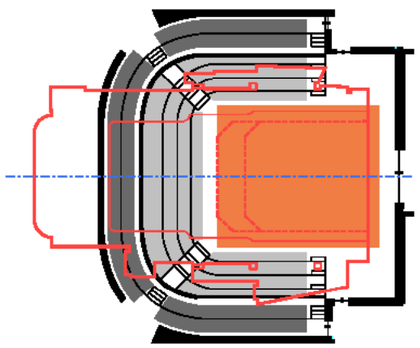




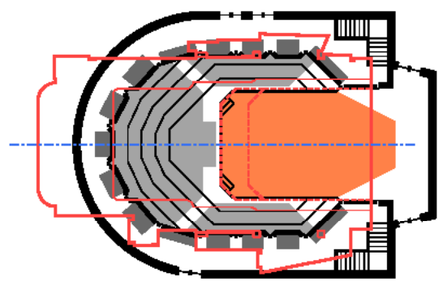




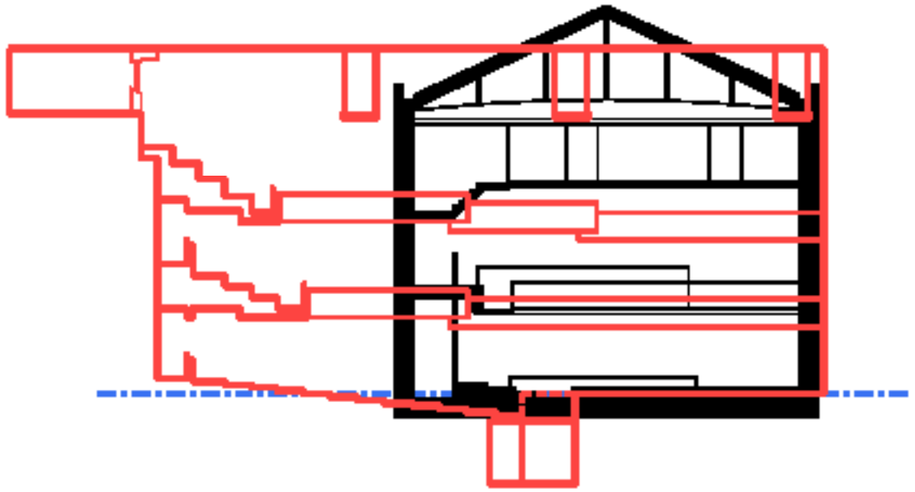
Young Vic Theatre, London
Thrust Capacity - 350



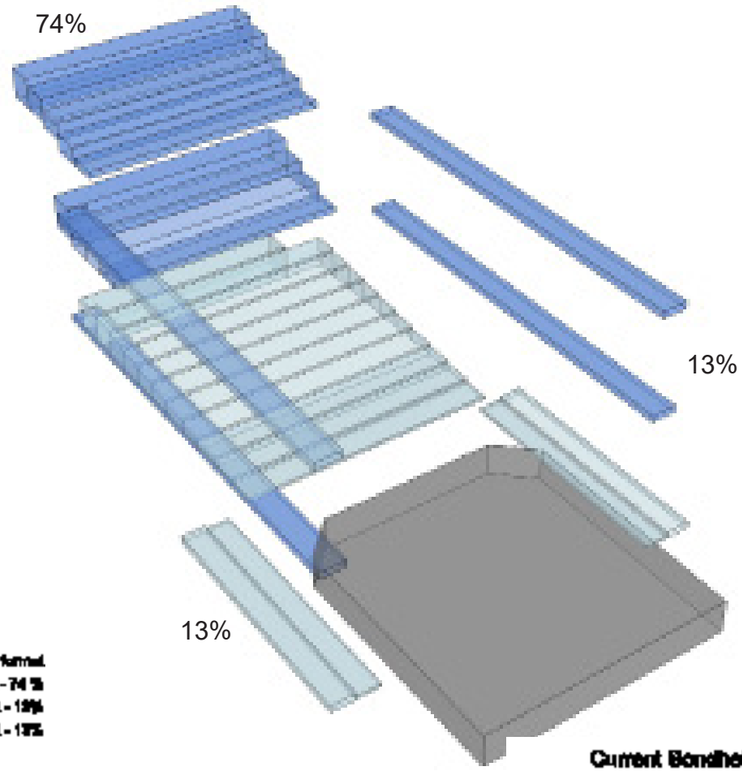
Everyman Theatre, Liverpool
Capacity - 405



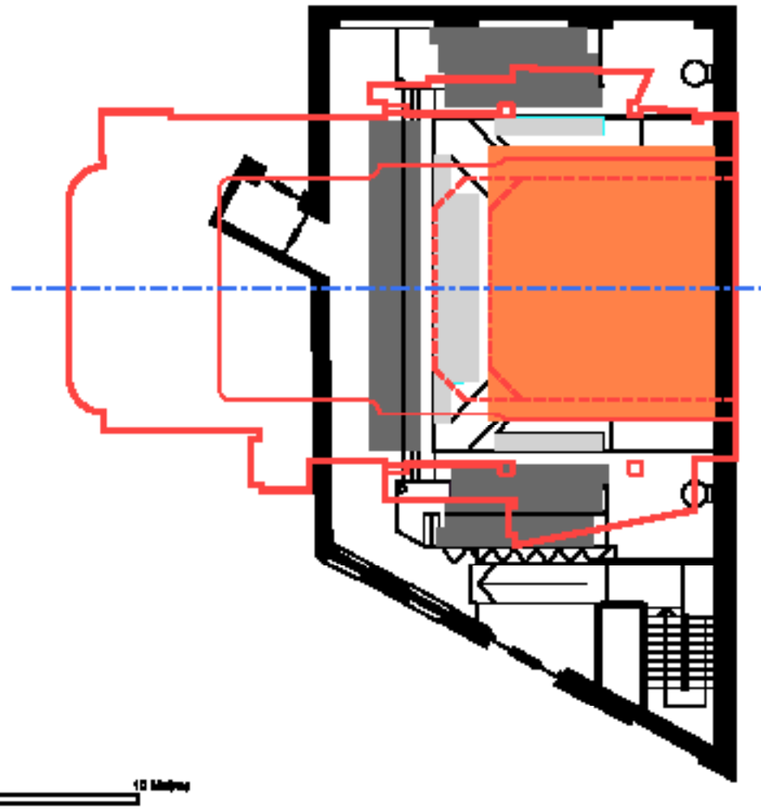
Swan Theatre, Stratford upon Avon
Capacity - 460

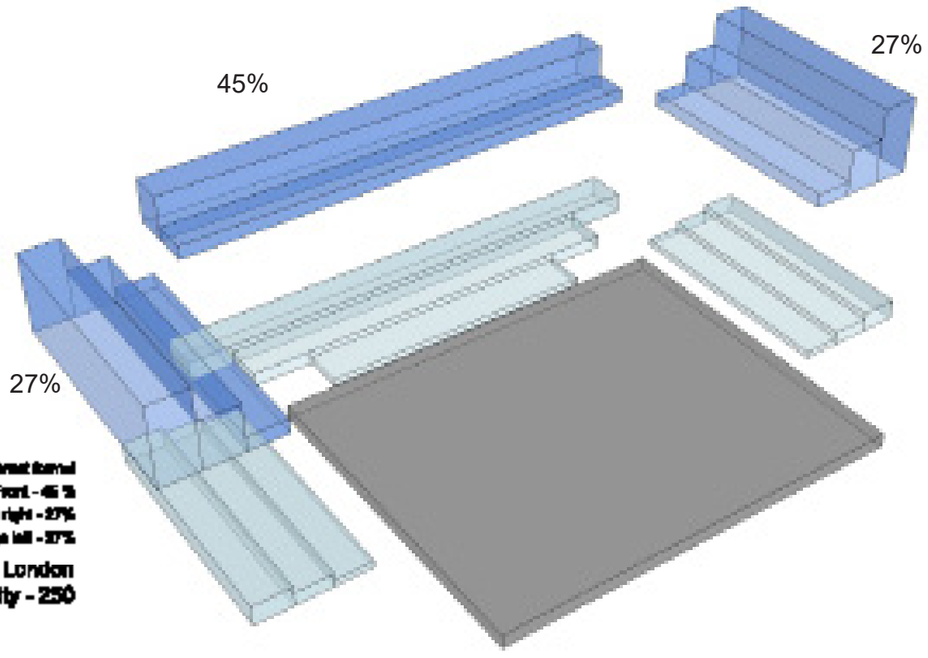


The Donmar is significantly different in its proportions with greater width provided by the venue overall. This enables a greater proportion of the audience to be positioned on the sides of the stage. If a production from the Donmar were to transfer to the Sondheim stage it would be experienced in a different way due to the altered distribution of the audience.

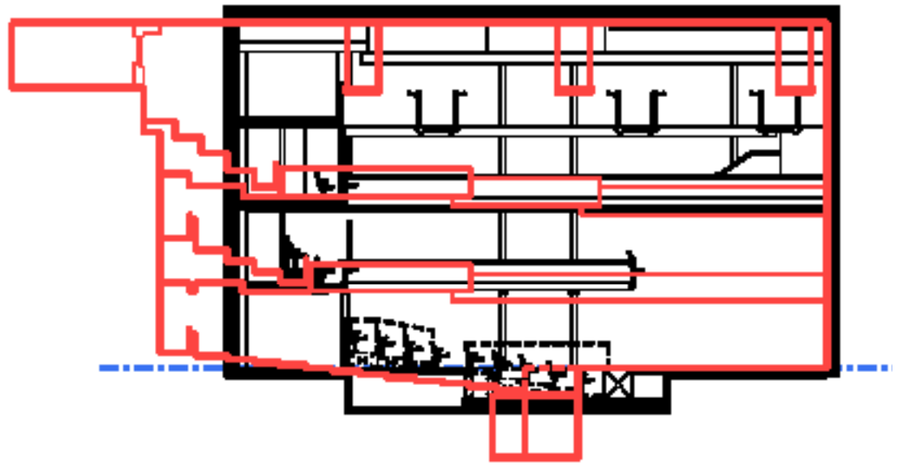


Current Sondheim Theatre proposal

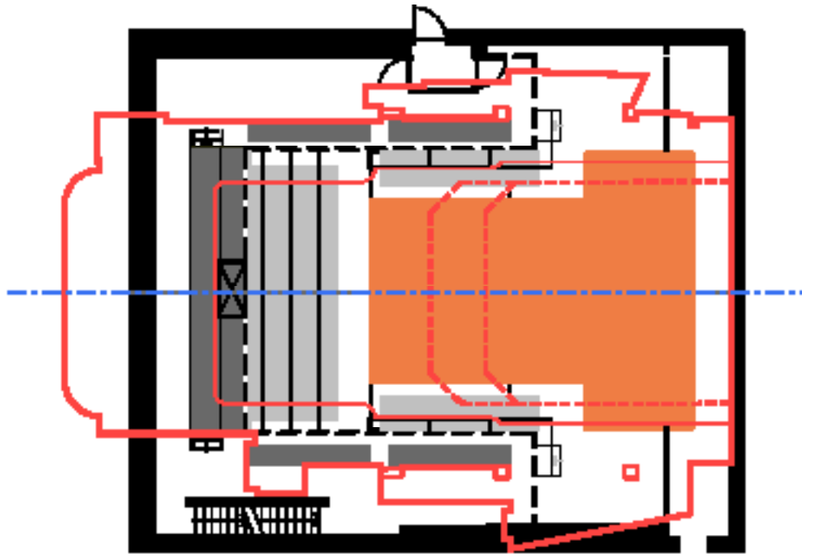


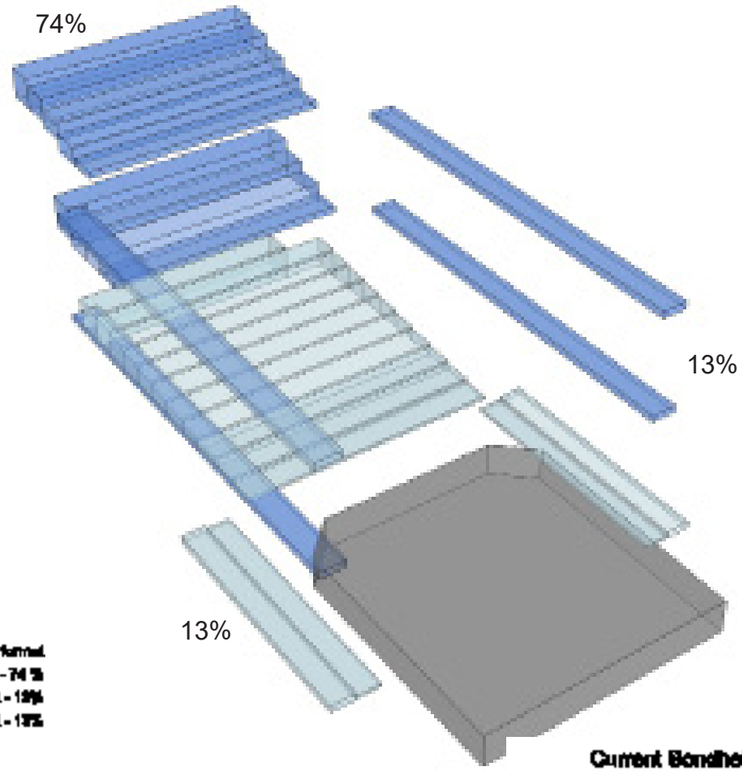


Donmar Warehouse, London
Capacity - 250

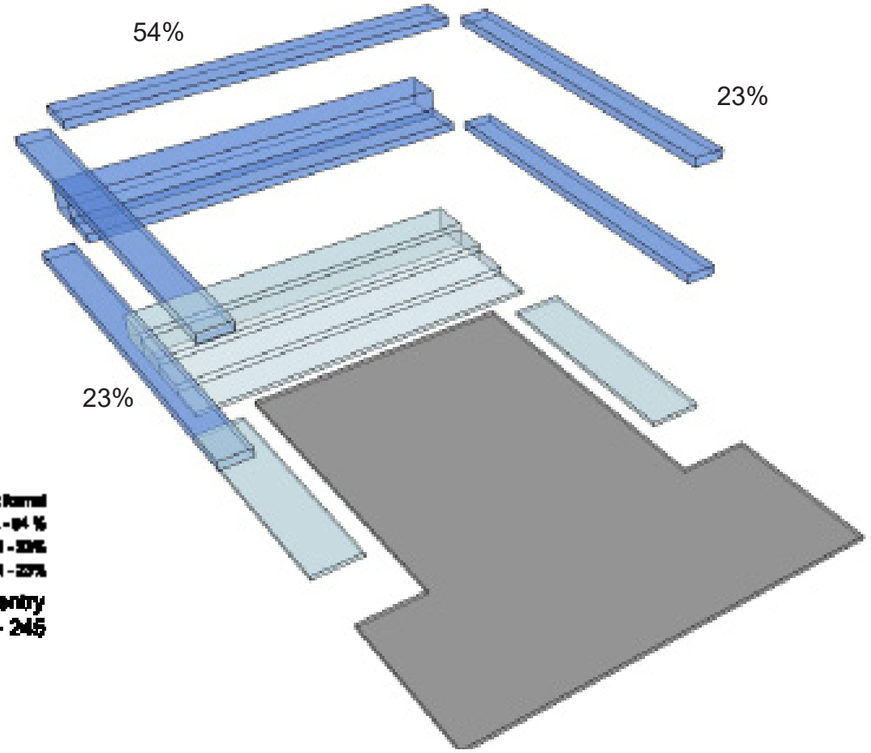


The Belgrade B2 has a smaller capacity to the Sondheim but its space proportions are very different being shorter in length but larger in overall width. This enables the venue to transform relatively easily from ‘end on’ stage events to thrust and ‘in the round’ productions.

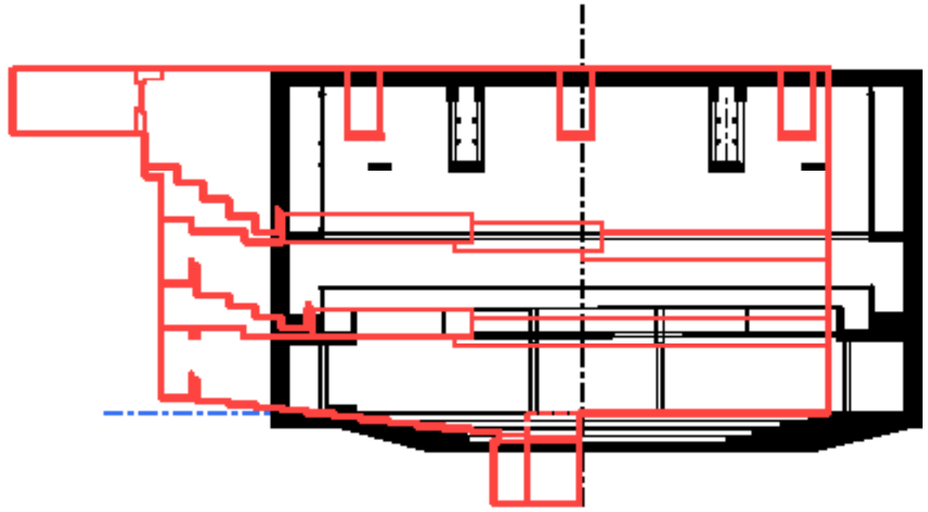




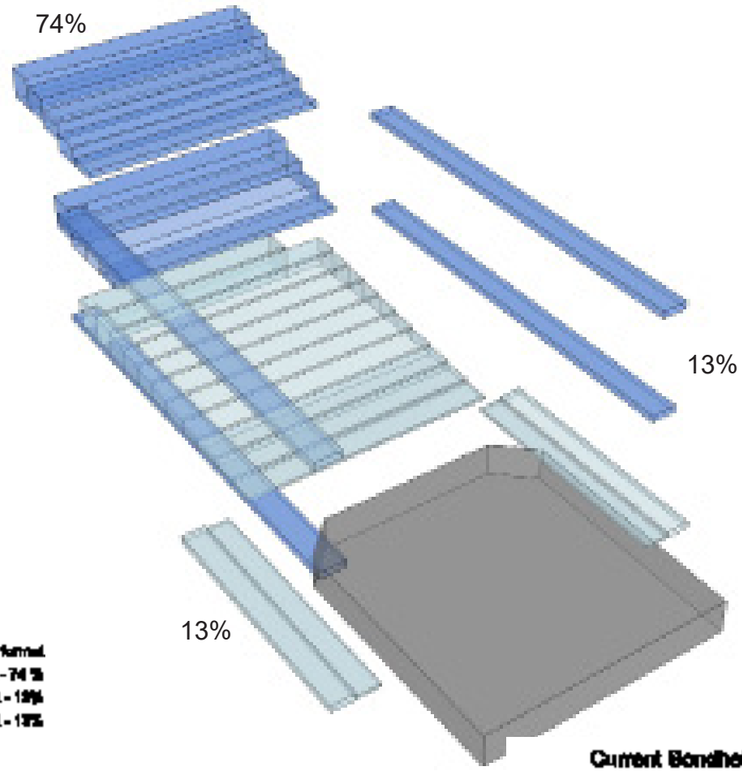
Current Sondheim Theatre proposal



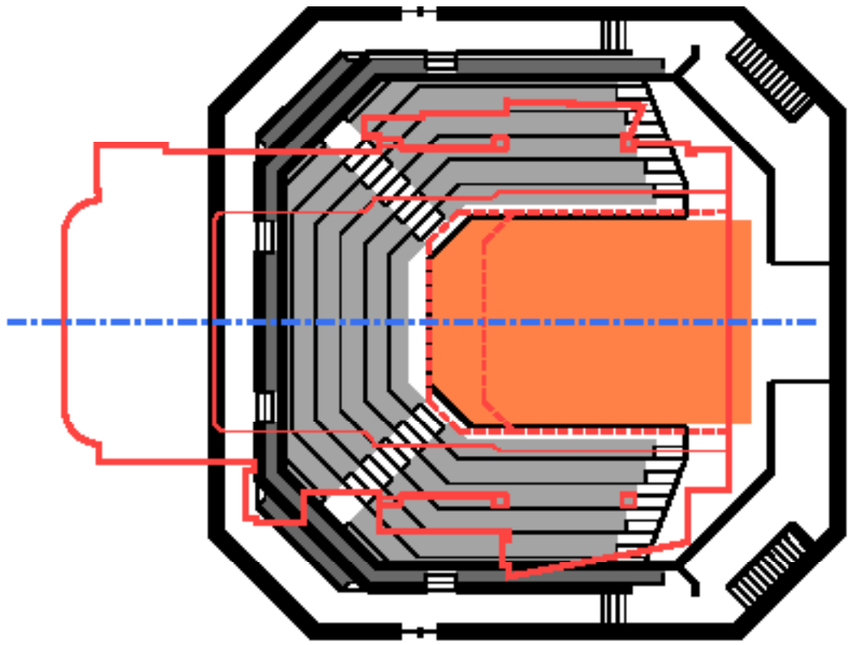
Belgrade 2 Theatre, Coventry
Capacity - 245



The Young Vic has balanced length and depth proportions in plan which enables a balanced distribution of the audience along the rear and sides when in thrust stage format.

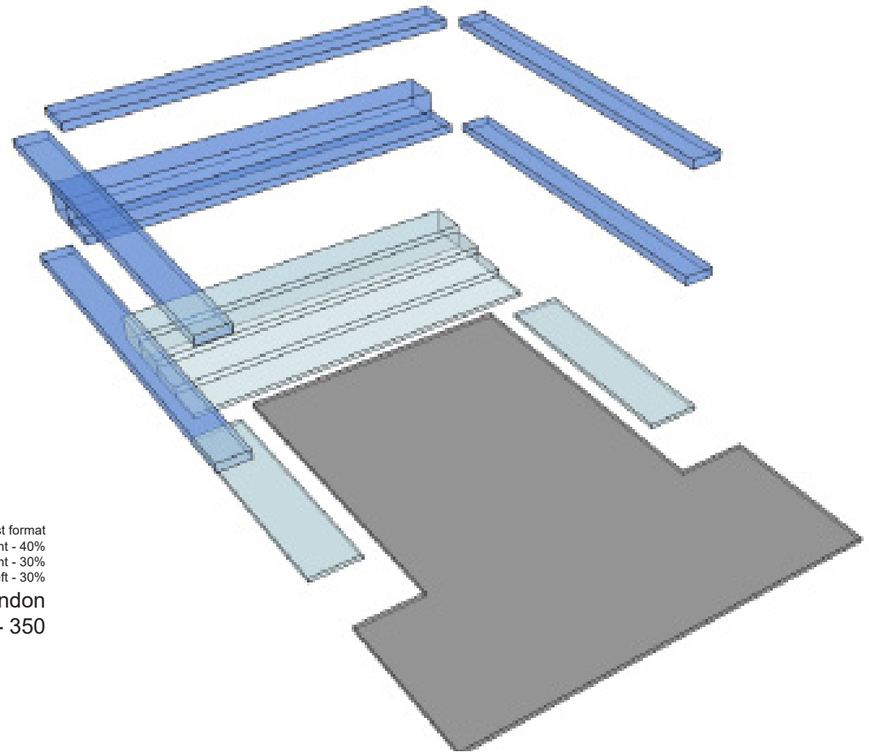


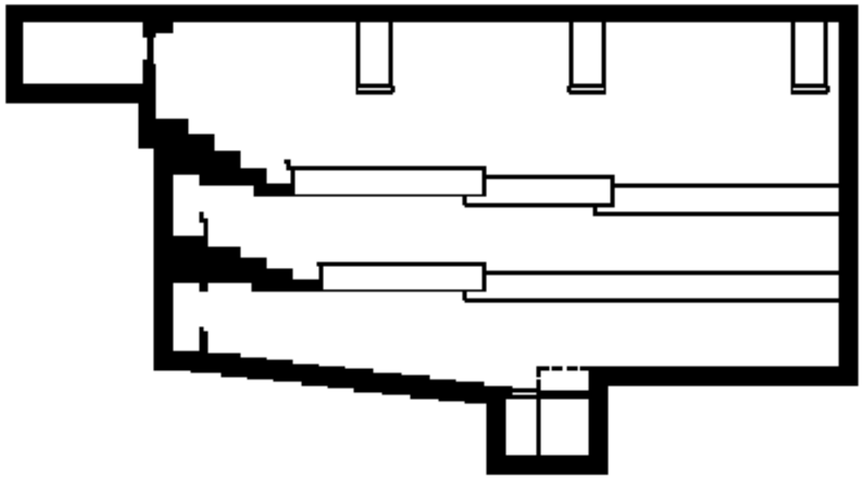
Current Sondheim Theatre proposal

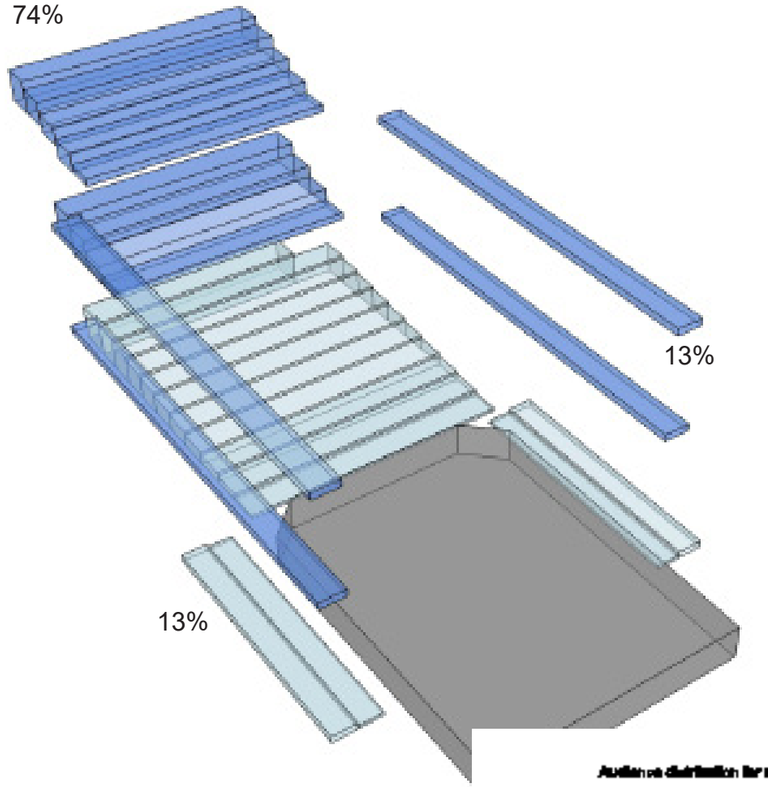


Audience distribution for thrust format
Front - 40%
Stage right - 30%
Stage left - 30%

Young Vic Theatre, London
Thrust Capacity - 350

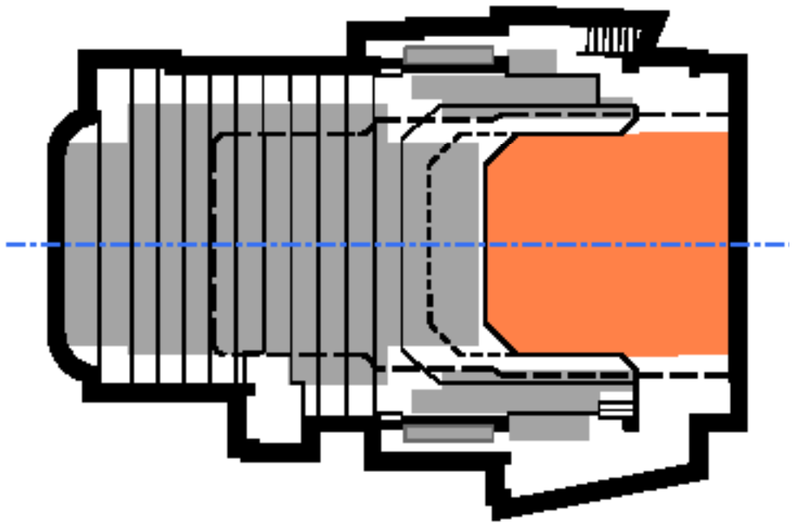




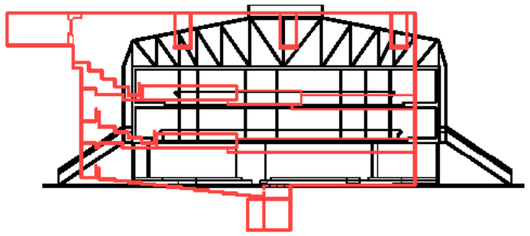


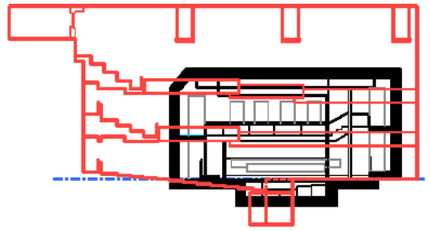
Audience distribution for narrow thrust format
Front - 74 %
Stage right - 13%
Stage left - 13%

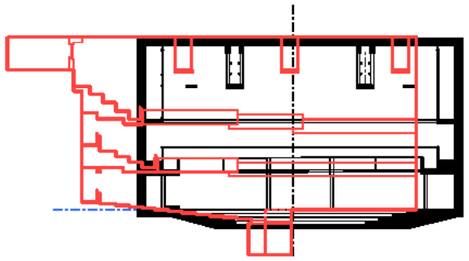
Current Sondheim Theatre proposal

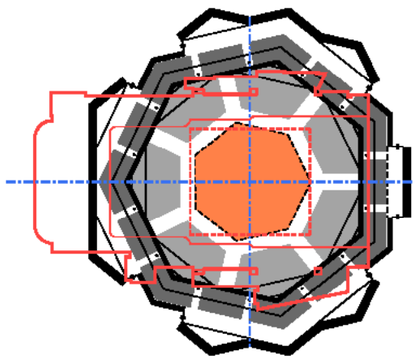


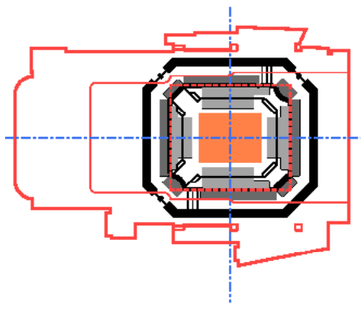
‘In the round’ stage formats

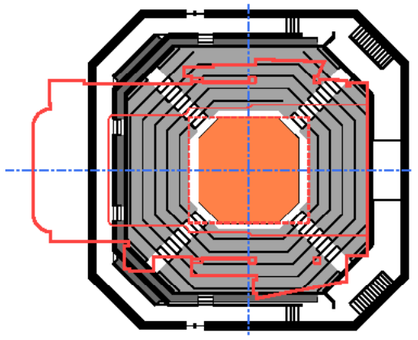








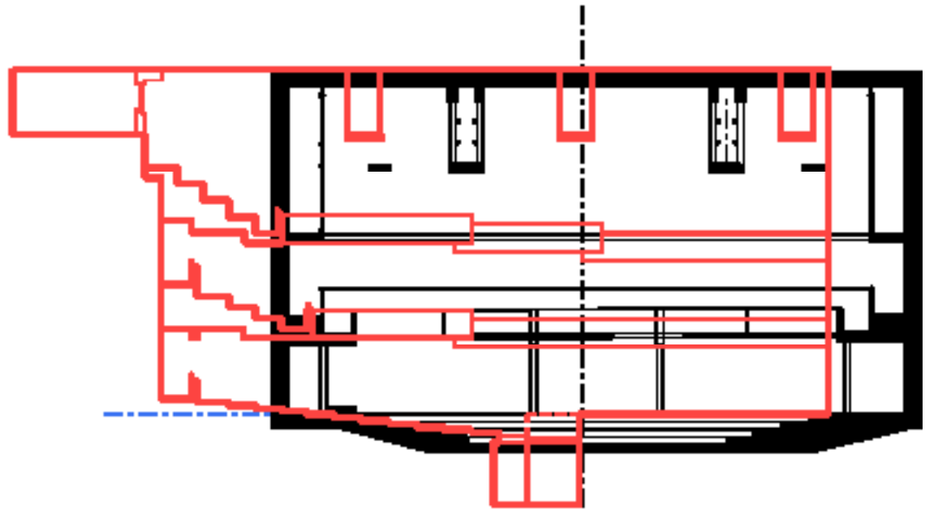




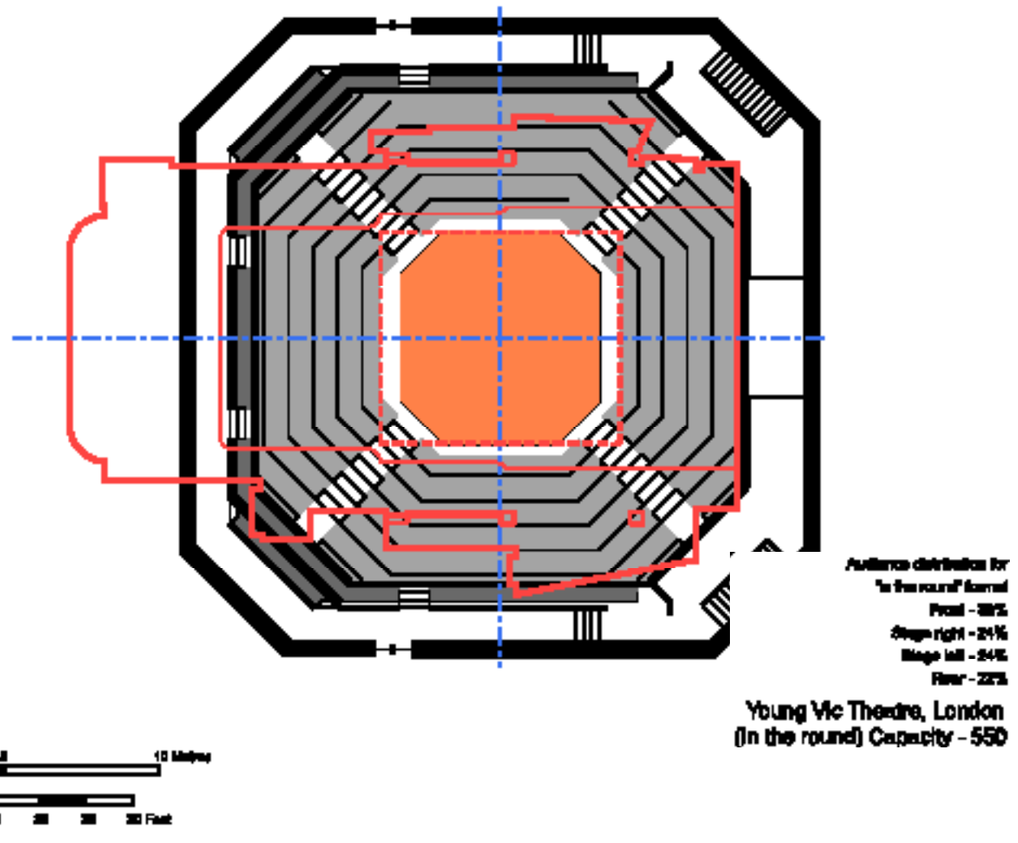
Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester
Capacity - 700

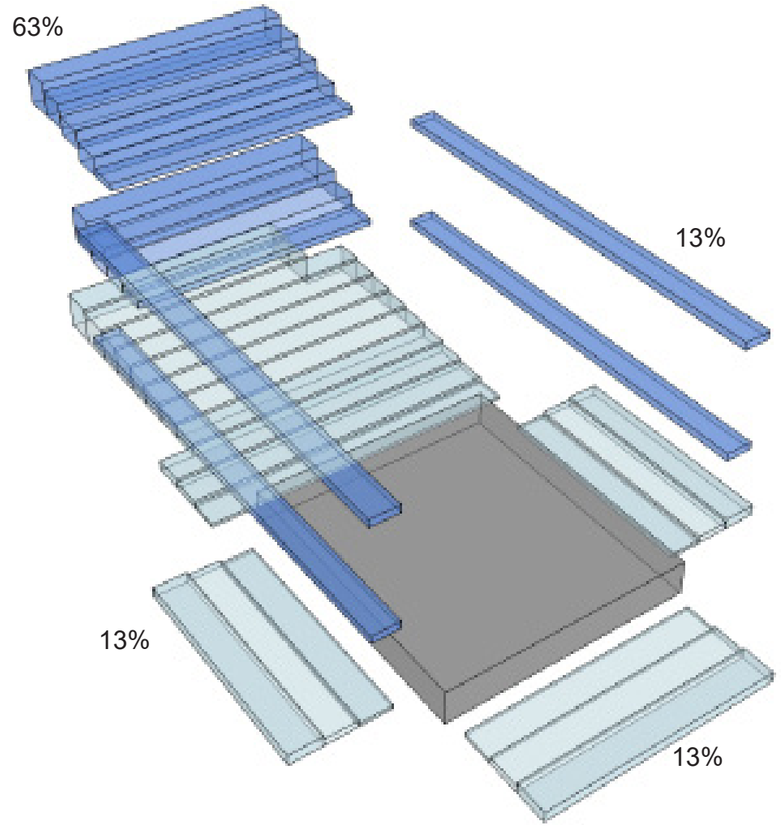
Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond
Capacity - 175

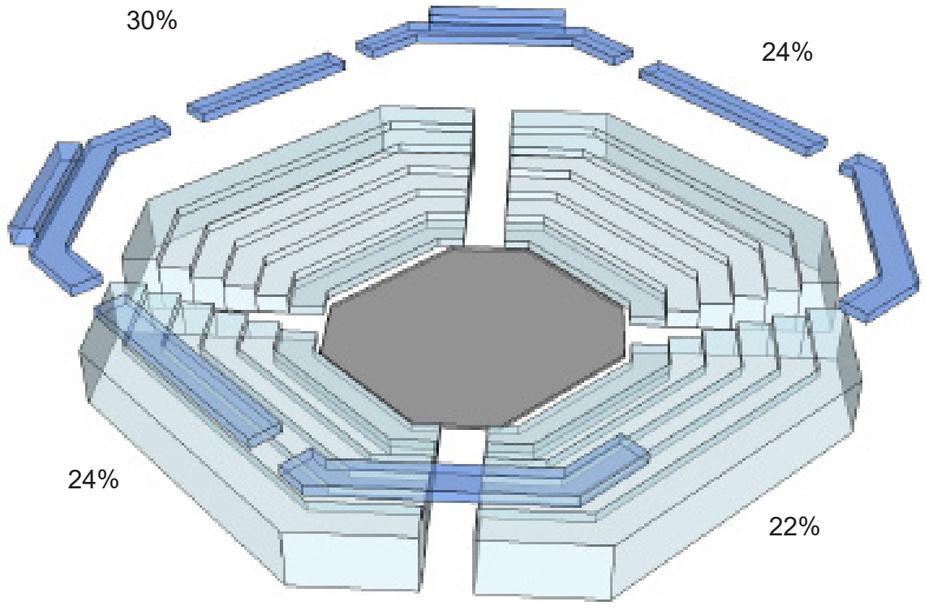
Young Vic Theatre, London
In-the-round Capacity - 550

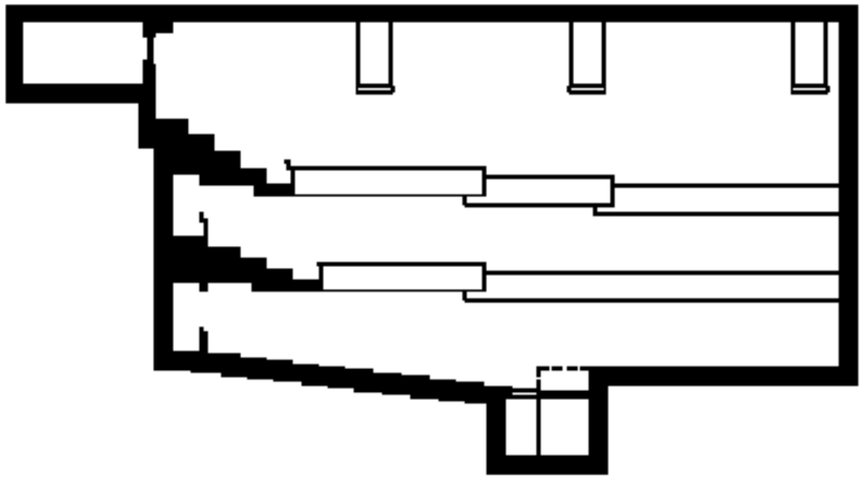


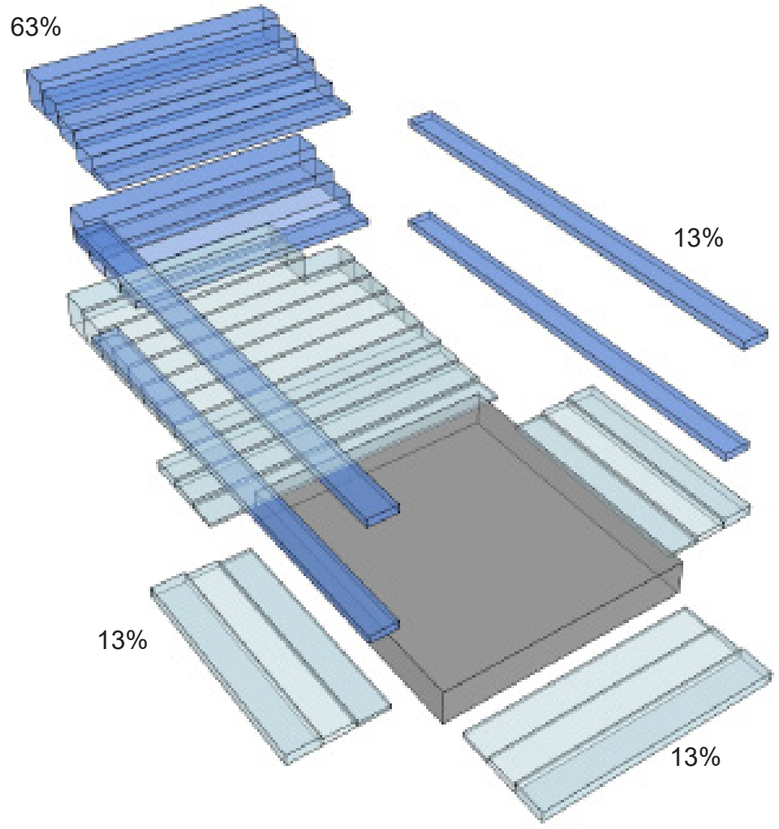
The Young Vic has balanced length and depth proportions in plan which enables a balanced distribution of the audience to the front, rear and sides when set up ‘in the round’ stage format. The acting area created is smaller than that proposed in the Sondheim scheme.

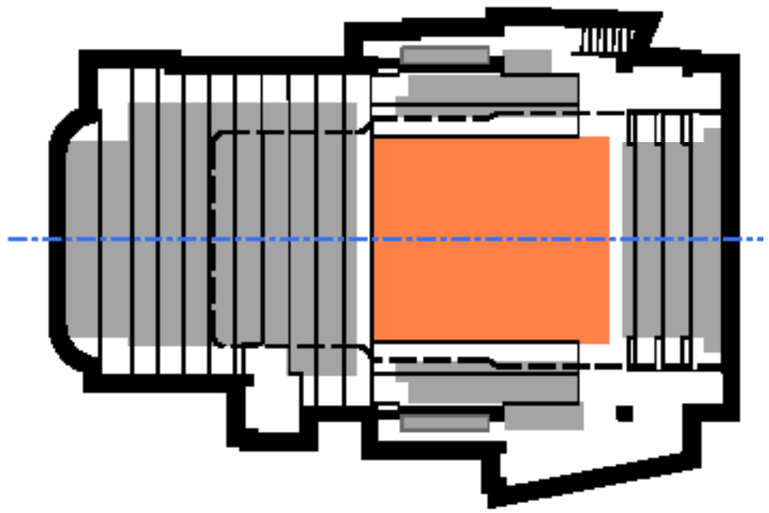


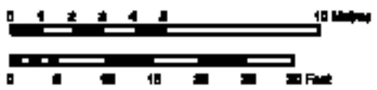






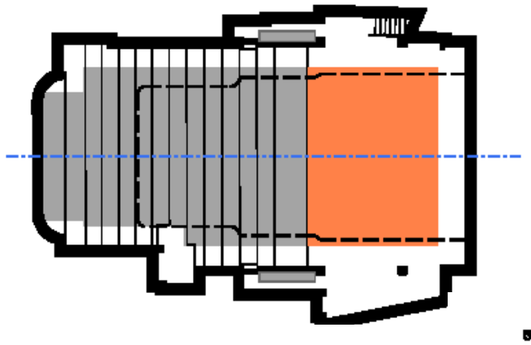




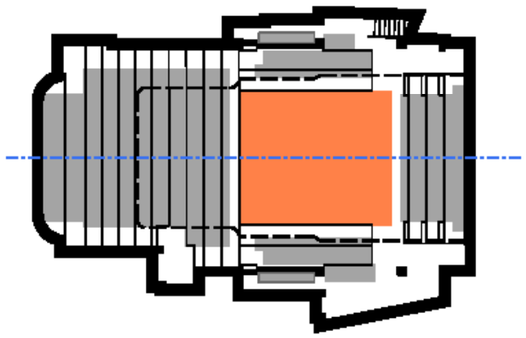


Auditorium distribution for 'in the round' format
Front - 63%
Stage right - 13%
Stage left - 13%
Rear - 13%

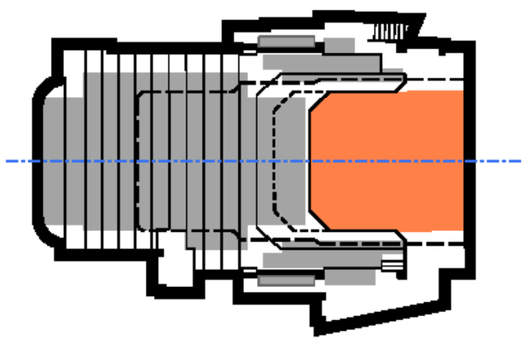
Current Sondheim Theatre proposal



Sondheim Theatre - End stage format overlay



Auditorium distribution for 'in the round' format
Front - 63%
Stage right - 18%
Stage left - 19%
Rear - 13%



Auditorium distribution for narrow thrust format
Front - 74 %
Stage right - 13%
Stage left - 13%

Comparatives - assessment

The comparatives demonstrate the tightness of the site, particularly in plan. In thrust mode, the lack of width is clearly displayed. This can be seen in the proportional audience split for thrust or in-the-round seating. The venues which are considered to successfully adapt to these layouts have a relatively even split across seating zones. The Sondheim is disproportionately weighted towards the front with 63% seated here in-the-round and 74% in thrust. This relationship can be improved by reducing the width of the stage and thus increasing the available seating at the sides, however, the stage size suits transfer of shows from the benchmark theatres and a reduction in size may mean a show is not viable.

Consequently it can be celarly seen that proposed size of site is just about acceptable though with limitations. Ideally additional width to both sides of the stage and auditorium is desirable. Failing to increase the width by the modest amount proposed in the current scheme would make thrust and in-the-round formats unsuable and cast doubt on the feasibility of the redevelopment.

Appendix 4

APPENDIX H – AUDITORIUM WIDTH / TOWER COURT EXTENSION

Introduction

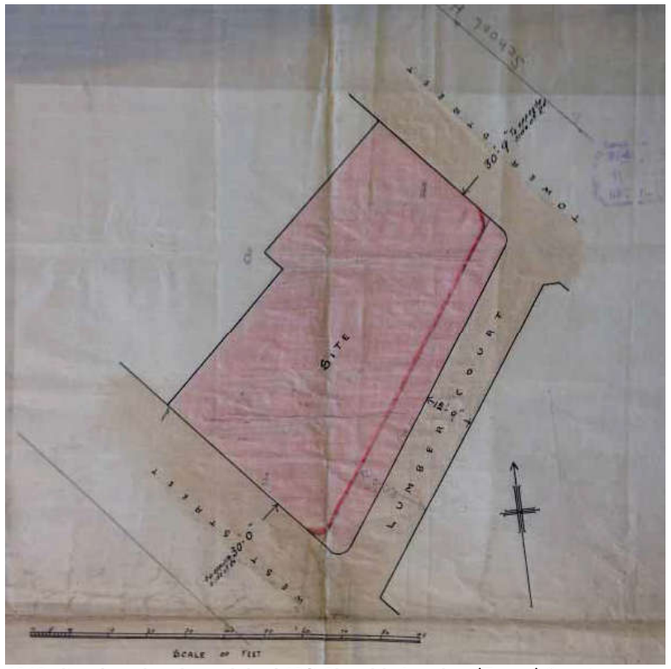
To create a performance space that can deliver this artistic vision of the Sondheim Theatre requires that the Ambassadors Theatre be extended beyond its current building line - into the adjacent Tower Court.

Whilst this extension provides a number of improvements to the theatre, including an accessible lift serving all levels, the critical imperative for increasing the footprint is the width of the auditorium/stage itself - as the space needs to accommodate productions in Thrust Stage and In-The-Round formats.

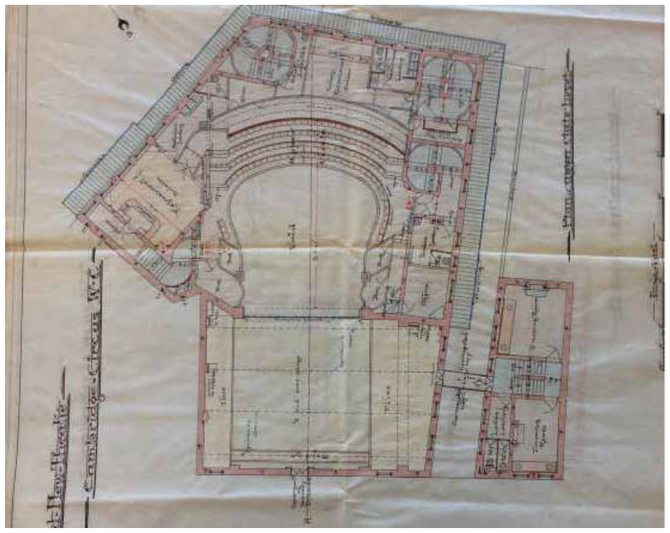
Thrust Stage and In-the-Round venues are inherently wider spaces by the very nature of their stages.

As stage sizes can vary dramatically from venue to venue, and there is no simple 'blueprint' to follow, the Sondheim design, stage size and configuration of the auditorium has been reviewed through a high level peer assessment process. Feedback from a leading theatre producer, theatre director and specialist theatre architect are provided here.

In the context of extending into Tower Court it is interesting to note that the initial plans for a theatre on this site, in 1898, occupied a considerably larger footprint than the one Sprague was eventually constrained to work within.



1913 site plan showing original 12ft 9in wide Lumber (Tower) Court



Frank Swift's 1898 unbuilt design - plan

The Executive Director

"This feels like a once in a life time opportunity for a theatre to be created in the West End that is adaptable to the needs of contemporary audiences and theatre makers. It really is an historic opportunity that I cannot see forthcoming elsewhere in the West End if this scheme is not progressed. Many people consider the West End to be the theatre capital of the world with only Broadway knocking on the door of this achievement. If London is to keep the crown of world theatre capital then it needs to continue to develop and offer change and difference and new opportunities. As you know New York is rapidly developing new spaces where new work can be shown. I applaud the imagination and determination of the Cameron Mackintosh organisation to create this fabulous new space that will offer so much to audiences and enable Camden and London to host new and outstanding work.

I was concerned however by the challenges you might face around the width of the space. As any theatre maker will tell you, there needs to be a critical mass of audience around the stage to enable an intimacy with the performer, which enables the performers to raise their game and give their best performance. My feeling is that this space will only work if the appropriate width is achieved otherwise you will end up with a space the same as any other in the West End."

Marcus Davey, Chief Executive and Artistic Director

The Artistic Director

"The Sondheim will be a huge asset to the Young Vic and other similar theatres in London and throughout the country provided that its proportions are conducive to the practicable transfer of our productions to its stage without prohibitive extra expense.

There are two key issues:

Firstly, the width and depth of the stage. As currently proposed, we could transfer productions to the Sondheim with ease. If the stage were any narrower, we would be unable to do so without expensive redesign or, in some cases, not at all.

Secondly, for us to transfer our productions when they are designed in a thrust configuration, it is necessary that there are a balanced number of rows on both sides of the thrust, and enough seats in those rows to create the right density in the auditorium. Again, the proposed design is just wide enough. If there were any fewer rows on either side, a thrust configuration would become unbalanced and therefore not be possible."

David Lan, Artistic Director Young Vic Theatre

The Theatre Architect

"The proposed Sondheim Theatre is a new theatre, which will occupy the site of the existing Ambassadors Theatre. This new theatre is conceived specifically as a 'transfer house' where successful productions from the subsidised sector can transfer easily and economically to the West End, with the attendant benefits of greater exposure and additional income for the producing theatres.

Most medium scale theatres in the subsidised sector, from which these productions will come, have a seating capacity in the range of 200-400 seats and are almost all single space auditoria, where the actors and audience occupy the same room, often with some degree of encirclement of the stage by the audience. This experience of being close to the actors in a single room is essential to the sense of intimacy which plays such an important role in the success of theatres of this scale, and is also the reason why many successful productions lose their impact when transferred to the larger and more conventional proscenium arch theatres of the West End. It is this problem which the new Sondheim Theatre seeks to address.

To do this it must provide some encirclement of the stage by providing side galleries close to the stage, on several levels, as well as the opportunity to create three or four sided seating arrangements, which emulate the form of the originating theatre. It is this requirement which determines the width of the auditorium necessary to accommodate at least three rows of seating on both sides of the acting area, with side galleries above them which are far enough apart to allow the audience to see the stage. In my view the width provided to achieve this at The Sondheim, with a distance between the side galleries of 8.5m, is adequate but by no means generous.

It is for this reason that the extension of the building into Tower Court is so essential to the success of the project."

Tim Foster, Founding Partner at Foster Wilson Architects

Appendix 5

SECURITY & RISK ADVISORS

DELFONT MACKINTOSH LIMITED

Response to Camden Planning Comments on Safety and Security

1. *"The current arrangement gives us an open and wide path, providing sightlines along the court and leading to the northern section which stretches beyond West Street. As demonstrated in Fig 1. We have outlined the existing sightlines leading from West Street into the court.*

   Sightlines from the north side are highly restricted due to the bend, leaving the south view the most open. Applying the development to this you can see in Fig 2. that sightlines are severely restricted and this causes areas of the Alleyway left unseen creating a blind alleyway."

Fig 1: Existing Sightlines

Fig 2: Proposed Sightlines

Response:

It is unclear what approach was employed to calculate these 'sightlines' as they do not concur with our own observations in the field. We would argue that Fig 2 reflects a more accurate picture of current sightlines.

The statement infers that pedestrians currently have an uninterrupted line of sight to the top of Tower Court where it adjoins Fielding Court. As can be seen from the images below and from various visits we have made, we do not believe this is an accurate estimate.

It is agreed that pedestrians will not be able to see along the full length of Tower Court as indicated, but we would argue that a pedestrian's current field of view also does not extend this far.

As can be seen from the images below and depending on time of year and time of day, a person's typical field of view would be obstructed by parked cars or growing vegetation obscuring sight around the bend and into the upper segment of Tower Court.

Sightlines are also further impacted at night (when one would expect the public's perception of fear of crime to be heightened) due to very low levels of street lighting on the upper reaches of Tower Court compared to the immediate surrounding area. Again, one can see that it is not possible for a pedestrian to have a full line of sight along Tower Court as inferred in Fig 1.

We would argue that the impact of the development would not alter a member of the public's perception of the area as lines of sight to the upper reaches of Tower Court would not be changed from existing.

Pedestrians walking along the section of Tower Court that is to be impacted will still have a clear, immediate uninterrupted view of some hundred yards both from West Street and Tower Street. There is no evidence therefore to suggest that the development would either create a heightened

sense of fear on persons walking in the immediate area, that it would increase crime rates in the immediate area, or that it would present a threat to public safety from a crime / security perspective.

As reflected in historic incidents of police reported crime, one could argue that the public's level of anxiety is actually likely to increase when walking further away from the Theatre and up the more dimly lit reaches of Tower Court than in the immediate vicinity of the two Theatres.

We also disagree with the statement that this creates a 'blind alleyway' and a hidden area. A person's immediate view in both directions is not fully impeded in the immediate vicinity and therefore the fear of someone jumping out at a person is unwarranted.

Finally, we would comment that the current high levels of lighting in the immediate vicinity between the two Theatres, as detailed below and which it is assumed would remain extant, provide an effective security measure in reducing fear of crime.