



Our Ref: 2984/SM

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> October 2018

**DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT  
AND HERITAGE STATEMENT**

recorded at

**Phoenix Theatre  
110 Charing Cross Road  
London  
WC2H 0JP**

on behalf of

**Newman Displays Limited  
23 Pakenham Street  
London  
WC1X 0LB**

**Proposed Come From Away signage**

## History

The Phoenix Theatre opened on the 24th of September 1930 with the very successful play 'Private Lives' by Noel Coward, starring Coward himself, Gertrude Lawrence, Adrienne Allen, and Laurence Olivier, and ran for 101 performances before transferring to America.

The theatre was designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, Bertie Crew, and Cecil Masey, with an auditorium designed by Theodore Komisarjevsky. The theatre was built by Bovis Ltd., on land which had previously been a factory and then became a music hall for a while, called the Alcazar.

The Alcazar was an unusual kind of music hall which was basically a very long hall with three different stages which the audience would then wander from, one to the other, as each 'turn' finished their act and the next began. It was also used as a kind of audition space where, although the public paid for admission, theatre managers did not as they were always on the lookout for new 'turns' to populate their own theatres and music halls. Unfortunately for the owner, Lucien Samett, the idea didn't take off and the Alcazar soon became something quite different. The 'Stage' publication referred to it as being a 'Fun City,' with slot machines and gambling on the ground floor, and above; rather dubious sounding 'exhibitions' such as 'Beautiful Artists' and 'Posing Models'.

The Phoenix was one of many theatres which opened in London's West End in 1930, and one of several opening in the same month. First there was the Prince Edward on April the 3rd, then the Cambridge on the 4th of September, then the Phoenix on the 24th of September, and the Whitehall on the 29th of September. Then came the rebuilt Adelphi Theatre on 3rd of December, and finally the Leicester Square Theatre which opened on December the 19th.

The Phoenix Theatre's has two entrances on two different streets, one in Charing Cross Road and the second on Phoenix Street from which the Theatre takes its name.

The day after the Phoenix opened, The 'Stage' reviewed this new theatre in their 25th of September edition, which read:

'The distinguished columns here are blues and pinks on a cream ground, and the whole is lavishly picked out with modelling in gold. Large windows in the adjacent promenade allow late-comers and others who might for some reason or other be prevented from getting to their seats to view the stalls level and the stage. The circle appears to come far forward and has a commodious upper circle above it. Care has been taken in the comfort of the seating. Each seat has sufficient body and leg room and is provided with its own hat rack. There are six roomy private boxes. The upholstery has a touch of the medieval, and is in a rare shade of dark pink with a touch of heliotrope or light purple in its pattern. In the front of the house rich reds, blues, and gold appear to be the prime colours. Bars and cloakrooms are well appointed, but no attempt has been made here in the shape of elaborate decoration. A striking feature in the interior decoration will be found in the fine reproductions of works by old masters'.

After the success of the Phoenix Theatre's opening play, which had a three month contract but could have carried on if it hadn't had, the next production was the equally successful 'Late Night Final' by Louis Weitzenkorn which opened in June 1931 and ran for 132 performances. However, after this the theatre did not do so well and became a variety theatre but this also met with little success.

Noel Coward was back in 1936 though and the theatre picked up considerably with his productions of one act plays called 'Tonight at 8.30'. This did very well and ran for 157 performances. One of the plays in this series was 'Still Lives' which was later made into the now classic film 'Brief Encounter.'

Noel Coward returned again in 1952 with the play 'Quadrille'. On the 16<sup>th</sup> December 1969, the long association with Coward was celebrated with a midnight matinee in honour of his 70th birthday, and the foyer bar was renamed the Noel Coward Bar.

The Phoenix has had a number of successful plays including John Gielgud's 'Love for Love' during the Second World War. 'Harlequinade' and 'The Browning Version', two plays by Terence Rattigan, opened on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 1948 at the theatre. In the mid 1950s, Paul Scofield and Peter Brook appeared at the theatre. In 1968, a musical version of Chaucer's 'The Canterbury Tales' opened and ran for around two thousand performances. 'Night and Day', a 1978 play by Tom Stoppard, ran for two years.

The theatre hosted many musicals in the 1980s and 1990s, including 'The Biograph Girl' with Sheila White, 'The Baker's Wife' by Stephen Schwartz, directed by Trevor Nunn, and 'Into the Woods' by Stephen Sondheim, starring Julia McKenzie. There were also a number of plays by William Shakespeare.

The current production of 'Blood Brothers', the Willy Russell musical that transferred from The Albery Theatre in November 1991, will end a 21-year run on 10th November 2012 after becoming longest-running production at the theatre. Following limited engagements of 'Goodnight Mr. Tom' and 'Midnight Tango', the theatre will host the original West End production of Broadway musical 'Once', which is due to open in April 2013. The theatre is owned by the Ambassador Theatre Group.

### **Design Access Statement**

This design and access statement cover both the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development and how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with and resolved.

### **The Design Component**

The proposed works are to utilise the existing signage poster boxes / framing. The existing canopy facades are to have new show inserts. The entrance on Phoenix Street is to have new show related graphics on the canopy. The corner sign on Phoenix Street/Charring Cross junction is to have the addition of LED chaser lights. The Charing Cross Road entrance is to have new show related signage strapped to the columns.

## **Initial Assessment**

The Charing Cross Road entrance could be considered the most architecturally pleasing elevation of the building. The proposed sign denoting the current show production is to be fixed to the columns using existing fixings with the addition of new fixings of the same design, which have been designed to be removable and cause no lasting damage to the columns. The fixings allow for signs to be installed without obscuring the entire view of the elevation. The canopy along Charing Cross Road and Phoenix Street is to have new show inserts. The canopy itself is situated along an elevation with no significant historical value, with shops to the ground floor and residential flats above. The Phoenix Street entrance has a slightly different style to the Charing Cross Road entrance. The elevations boast ornate column design between the windows and more ornate iron work. The proposed signage to this elevation is to remain within the extents of the existing canopy sign, thus ensuring the overall size doesn't become too large it begins to obscure the façade behind.

## **Design**

The proposed concept in this application aims to furnish The Phoenix Theatre, Charing Cross Road and Phoenix Street with new signs to allow the patrons to appreciate the current show. The proposals also enhance the patron's experiences of the beautiful theatre.

## **Evaluation**

Due to the heights of the main rotunda sign/lettering and the existing side posters to the Rotunda elevation, a small cherry picker would be advisable for installation. Also to the existing corner poster to Phoenix Street. The canopy is accessible from a simple tower scaffold.

## **Appendix**

### *Drawings included:*

- 2984-001 Site Location Plan
- 2984-002 Existing Rotunda Elevation
- 2984-003 Existing Charing Cross Road Elevation
- 2984-004 Existing Phoenix Street Elevation
- 2984-005 Proposed Rotunda Elevation and fixing details
- 2984-006 Proposed Charing Cross Road Elevation
- 2984-007 Proposed Phoenix Street Elevation
- 2984-008 Proposed Visuals