

VISIT THEATRES

Mhora Samuel

Inleiding door Johan Penson op artikel "Visit Theatres" van Mhora Samuel.

Professionelen die actief zijn in onze sectoren worden vrijwel dagelijks geconfronteerd met andere talen. Hieronder een artikel van Mhora Samuel over het netwerk Visit Theatres. Mhora is directeur van Theatres Trust, een internationale belangenvereniging voor schouwburgen die de waarde van schouwburgen promoot en hun toekomst probeert veilig te stellen. Theatres Trust is de drijvende kracht en organiserende instantie van Vist Theatres, een uniek initiatief dat een kader schept bij het organiseren van rondleidingen in Belgische, Britse en Nederlandse theaters. Uitwisseling, afstemming en bijleren zijn de kernwoorden van het netwerk.

We geven het artikel mee in de oorspronkelijke versie, dat leek ons wel gepast in deze grensoverschrijdende context. Internationale netwerken zijn van kapitaal belang voor onze sectoren. We kunnen er veel van opsteken waardoor we onze eigen werkingen of methodes kunnen bijstellen. Er is ook het belang van het kapitaal, want we leren er omgaan met andere methodes van financiering. Europa ondersteunt dit netwerk dat internationale ontsluiting van rondleidingen in historische schouwburgen wil bewerkstelligen.

We hopen in STEPP magazine binnenkort meer aandacht aan deze onderwerpen te kunnen geven, beschouw dit alvast al een kennismaking.



The Visit Theatres website, visittheatres.org, was launched in January 2014 to promote tours of theatre buildings in Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands. Created as part of the European Route of Historic Theatres, Mhora Samuel provides an update.

The Theatres Trust is a member of Perspectiv, the Association of Historic Theatres in Europe. Between 2007 and 2009 Perspectiv received funds from the European Union to create the first 'European Route of Historic Theatres' comprising of four 'Routes' – German, Nordic, Italian, and Channel (Great Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands, co-ordinated by the Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds). Each route featured only twelve theatres.

In 2012 Perspectiv was able to secure further funding from the Culture Programme of the European Union to develop the project in a new four year project from 2012–2017. The project would re-establish the four original Routes and create a further six Routes, Emperor, Adriatic, French, Iberia, Baltic, and the Black Sea.

The Theatres Trust took over the 'Channel Route' in 2012 and considered how it could maximise the opportunity to support

the promotion of the architecture and history of theatre buildings – within the constraints of a very small budget.

We found that many of the contacts at the original twelve theatres had either left or were no longer active and so The Theatres Trust was effectively free to develop the 'Channel Route' with new participants.

Our solution was to create visittheatres.org as an online platform to provide information on theatres tours in Great Britain,

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the Netherlands and Belgium and harness the opportunity to bring together theatres that offered tours of their buildings to see how we could share resources and ideas.

Visittheatres.org also provides an opportunity for more than twelve theatres to participate in the project. Staff and volunteers at the Trust now manage visittheatres.org, which was launched in January 2014, populate a Twitter page – @theatrust and a Facebook page – /visittheatres, with posts from the participating theatres, develop marketing initiatives, and co-ordinate and organise meetings of the participating theatres. Devon Cox is responsible for the project co-ordination on behalf of the Trust. We are also grateful to our partner, Centre for Technical Theatre RITS, Erasmushogeschool, Brussels led by Chris Van Goethem and the help of advisers including:

Rupert Rhymes, the Chairman of the Frank Matcham Society; Ivo Kersmaekers in Belgium; and Louis Janssen in the Netherlands.

The new website is light-touch and simply designed, and provides contact details for the theatre's tour organiser, how to book and links to the theatres website and social media. Long-term we would like to develop its interactivity – as we want to be able to provide a platform where people visiting theatres can personalise their experience,

provide feedback and share their thoughts with others.

Theatres

Twenty-three theatres are currently featured on the website including the Adelina Patti Theatre, Bourschouwburg (Toneelhuis), Britannia Panopticon Music Hall, City Varieties Music Hall, Gaiety Theatre, The Georgian Theatre Royal, The King's Theatre, Glasgow, The London Palladium, Normansfield Theatre, Koninklijk Theater Carré, the National

The theatres taking part in visittheatres.org are able to share their cultural and architectural history, and their experience of managing live theatres, museums, exhibitions and heritage destinations.

Theatre, La Monnaie – De Munt, The Old Vic, Shakespeare's Globe, Stadsschouwburg Amsterdam, Le Théâtre du Château de Chimay, Theater De Maagd, Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds, Theatre Royal Drury Lane, Theatre Royal Haymarket, Theatre Royal Newcastle, Kunstencentrum Vooruit, Wilton's Music Hall and more are in the process of joining.

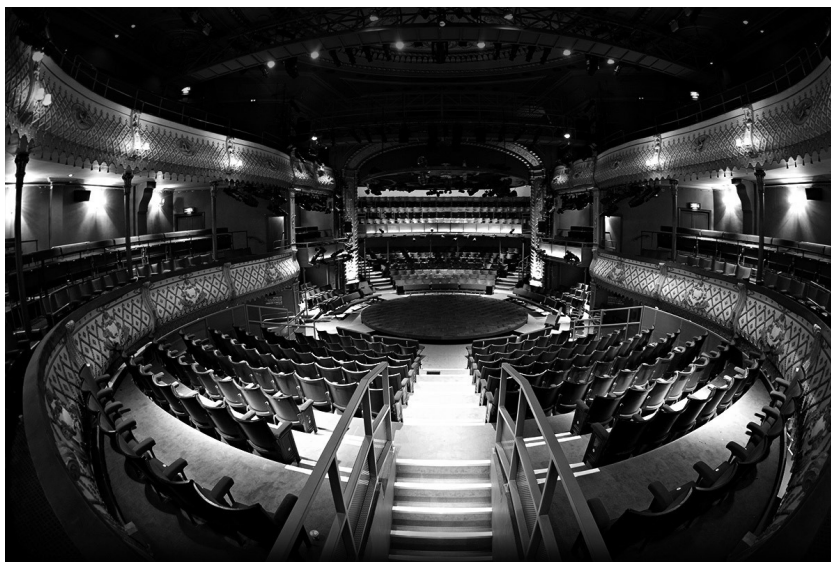
These theatres demonstrate the rich diversity of theatres across Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands and include theatres whose main use is for public performance, some of which also produce their own theatre, musical and music performances; and theatres that were formerly in use as theatres – as public theatres, in private houses and castles, and in other forms of building, including private hospitals. Those

that are former theatres are managed primarily today as visitor attractions and museums but also present occasional performances and other events in their theatres. Some of the former theatres are also working to reopen as full-time theatres. The theatres taking part in visittheatres.org are able to share their cultural and architectural history, and their experience of managing live theatres, museums, exhibitions and heritage destinations. Almost all are actively engaged in the tourism industry.

Each theatre provides tours of their buildings and has summary information on their tours on the visittheatres.org website as well as their own websites.

Theatres' tours cover the history of their buildings, their architecture, their past and current arts, theatre and entertainment use, their daily working life (particularly if they are producing theatres or are used for public performances), and their social history. Often tours will incorporate building conservation, restoration, technical theatre, and operational topics, depending on the profile of the visitor group. When theatres are undertaking capital projects, tours also include 'hard-hat tours'.

Some theatres have regularly organized tours, others provide them on request. Some also use actors and provide



historical re-enactments and introduce real and fictional characters (including ghosts) associated with the theatre. Most theatres also incorporate archival material and historic artefacts in their tours. Some have a dedicated museum or exhibition space that can contain both permanent and temporary exhibits. Where possible their archives might also be scanned and available online, alongside educational tools. Promotion of tours also varies. Some participate in annual open days, hosted

across their city or town, or thematically (e.g. Heritage Open Days in the UK). Those with a visitor membership or audience base, actively promote their tours through direct email. The majority are active on social media. Whilst only a few have the capacity to have significant links with the travel trade many have contact with special interest groups. The contacts at each of the theatres are also varied and include those responsible for the marketing of their theatres, guides who take visitors

on the tours, archivists, and the owners and operators of the theatres.

Developing Visit Theatres

In 2014 visittheatres.org received over 5.000 visits to the website and over 130.000 hits from other sites and search engines – so there's still much to be done but we've made a start. We've had great feedback and we know we've created a site that usefully brings together theatres' tours information into one place. The top search engine that's directing traffic to the website is, not unexpectedly Google – type in the name of the theatre and 'theatre tours' into the search field and the theatre's entry on visittheatres.org is often at the top of the search results. The theatres

have also displayed the Visit Theatres leaflet in their foyers and handed leaflets out to people on their tours.

The project also provides the chance for participating theatres to meet and share ideas. This is invaluable as not only does it create new links and potential working relationships it also helps to establish shared aims, increase the benefits of participation, and develop ideas for the future.

With a focus on attracting more people to visittheatres.org, and helping potential visitors to create their own 'theatre routes' between, and in, towns and cities across Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands we are now making plans to reach out to the public and to the travel press and aim to: Generate interest in visiting theatres to learn more about their

history, architecture, and theatrical activities raise general awareness of the theatres participating in visittheatres.org provide suggestions to help visitors and tourists personalise their experience of visiting theatres and provide information on the timing and availability of guided tours on offer in theatres.

The Theatres Trust promotes Visit Theatres during West End Live, held each year in London's Trafalgar Square, and is developing new links and contacts with the travel trade and press to raise awareness of the project.

As a group our next initiative is a joint social media campaign focused on theatre visitors posting images and comments using the hashtag #visittheatres on Heritage Open Days and Open Monument Day 2015. This year in Great Britain Heritage Open Days take place on 10-13 September 2015, in Belgium Open Monument Day takes place on Sunday 12 September 2015 and in the Netherlands, its Open Monument Days are on 11 and 12 September 2015. Keep an eye out for the campaign and if you visit a theatre and you're on social media do use the hashtag #visittheatres to let us know about your visit. ■

If you would like to know more please get in touch with us on visittheatres@theatrestrust.org.uk



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