Theatre memories

Last updated: 25 November 2008

The curtain fell on the stage at Theatr Gwynedd, Bangor, for the final time in October 2008. Theatre director Dafydd Thomas shares his memories - and we’d like to hear yours.

My first job here was as head of house in 1977, then deputy manager and finally theatre director, so I've been here for years. I was actually here during the first ever performance on January 1, 1975, Pwyll Gwyllt, and I hope to be here for the last ever show on October 18.

We'll be finishing with a production by Showzone, a company who give children from Objective One areas the chance to perform. They've made great use of our facilities, as have local school pupils, and I think they'll greatly miss us when we're closed.

The school halls round here just aren't the same; there's nothing to beat having the experience of performing on a real theatre stage, but absolutely no provision has been made for this and so groups like Showzone will be back to practising in their chapel vestry.

The people of Bangor will definitely suffer until the new arts centre is built, but that won't be for another four years at the very least.

The best of the Welsh acting establishment have performed at Theatr Gwynedd - John Ogwen, Jo Roberts, Maureen Rhys and Dewi Humphreys. David Jason also came here early in his career to appear in a play called Charlie's Aunt.

Our own production company, Cwmni Theatr Gwynedd, was created in 1986 and I recall their first production, O Law i Law, which went down to great reviews. They also did a stage version of the TV show C'mon Midffild which was brilliant - it's always great to see a theatre full of people laughing.

Unfortunately, they decided to separate the theatre from the production company in 2003, which put an end to Cwmni Theatr Gwynedd.

A number of comedians have been here over the years - Jack Dee, Jeremy Hardy - and we've had singers like Rick Wakeman and Ralph McTell.
The university have made good use of us too, putting on musicals like Joseph, Oliver! and Fiddler on the Roof.

Theatr Gwynedd isn't a very big place. There were plans to build a second stage and practice rooms, but the funding ran out. So our backstage area is so small the technicians have often had to bring sets in from a van in the car park because there just isn't the space to store them. But our backstage staff do have a reputation of being the most professional and versatile in Wales.

Many actors have told me how much they love performing at Theatr Gwynedd because you're that much closer to the audience of 350. The acoustics are good and the actors are on a great eyeline with those watching.

Not everything has gone smoothly though. We once had a leak in the roof - I'm sure the audience had no idea there were lots of buckets backstage to catch the water!

And many performers have been late because of the trains and had to run on stage at the last minute. But we've only cancelled shows once, during the strikes of the 1970s when we didn't have any electricity to go on.

It's been fun working here. The fact that so many of the core staff have been here for years speaks volumes. It will be very sad when we close for the last time, especially as there's nothing to replace us. Dafydd Thomas

View some photos of past productions.

**your comments**

**Kevin Myers, Cardiff**
As a member of the University-based amdram group SODA I was lucky enough to perform in a professional theatre for the first time in Theatr Gwynedd, and what a thrill it was. I went on to appear on that stage many more times, and even went on to direct two shows there. Wonderful memories, making the demise of Theatr Gwynedd a sad day indeed for me and for countless others.

**Melfyn, Llandudno Junction**
When I was a student I worked at Theatr Gwynedd for a year as an usher/interval ice cream seller and therefore got to see lots of productions and films for free. My personal highlight was a summer production of Educating Rita with Robert "High Hopes" Blythe and Jacquetta May, despite having to sit through it many times. I also enjoyed Hwyl a Ffleg's "Newid Aelwyd", but please don't make me sit through Robert De Niro's film "The Mission" ever again!
Thu Oct 2 16:13:11 2008

**Sam Roberts from Wales**
Don't close the theatre down as it been there since the 70s and it's the only good thing about Bangor. Many people's careers have started there.
Robert Roberts
Theatr Gwynedd is a significant performance space at the heart of Bangor University life. Why close it down?
Fri Sep 26 15:32:06 2008

Evaviv, Tywyn
Great article, but what a pity it has to close! My daughter, who is a professional actress, singer and dancer, was sorry to hear this, having performed there in the early 90s in Little Shop of Horrors and would love to attend a Gala Night if they have planned to have one. Best wishes to all at Theatre Gwynedd.
Fri Sep 26 09:02:42 2008

Kath, BBC web team
Memorable performances at Theatr Gwynedd for me have included George Melly, Ted Hughes, Rich Hall, and Mid Wales Opera who got me interested in opera for the first time.
Wed Sep 24 14:41:10 2008
Remembering Theatr Gwynedd

Last updated: 25 September 2008

Stage manager Dylan Rowlands has been very busy with his camera over the years. Do you remember any of these dramatic moments on Theatr Gwynedd’s stage?

Catherine Aran, Mici Plwm and Yoland Williams in Gelli Geirios

1 2 3 4 5

More Theatr Gwynedd memories.
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J O Roberts in Fiddler on the Roof

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Siân Wheldon and Llion Williams in Y Cylch Sialc

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Maldwyn John and Pierce Jones in Ddoe yn ôl

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Glyn 'Pensarn' Williams in the Syrcas

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