

Discovering Darlington Hippodrome

Darlington Hippodrome

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In this section children will explore the Hippodrome, beginning with its history, special architectural design, interior layout and features and its stunning decorative details.

Practical activities ask children to design their own theatre façade and proscenium arch, then to create a name and a logo for their 'new' theatre.

At the end, children are given a mathematical challenge using pre-decimal coinage based on early twentieth-century ticket prices, which can be undertaken individually, in pairs or small groups and easily differentiated according to children's abilities.

As a means of demonstrating and presenting children's learning a suggested TOPIC ACTIVITY is to create a display of what they have discovered about the theatre. This could include contemporary and historic images of the theatre, examples of current and old printed ephemera, quotes and observations. If your children are able, perhaps they could present this as a PowerPoint to share with others?

Children's learning will undoubtedly be reinforced by visiting the theatre for a guided tour and/or workshop. Contact us for details.

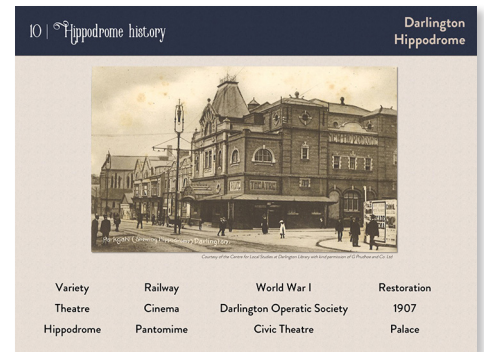


10 | Hippodrome history

ON SCREEN

ACTIVITIES

READ and EXPLAIN The history of the Hippodrome

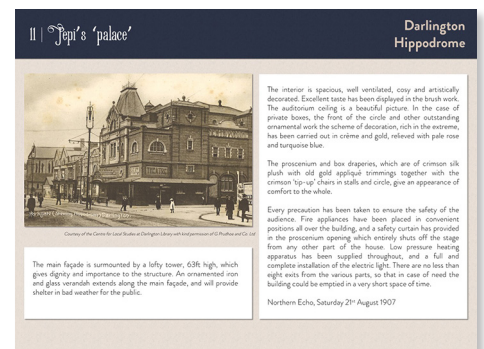


- Ask children to create a timeline of the theatre's early history as a classroom display to 'set the scene' for this topic.
- Begin by sequencing the words on the screen.
- Then, below them add further information to expand on the history. You'll have vocabulary and terms compiled from activities in the 'Pepi and his Palaces of Variety' section.
- Add other imagery, documents, photographs, children's quotes and photographs, related printed ephemera to the timeline as you progress this topic.
- You can also add the cartoon illustrations in the Resources Folder [Cartoons and templates].
- Objects from the theatre's Discovery Boxes will further enhance the scene setting display.

11 | Pepi's 'palace'

ACTIVITIES

- Explain that this is an old photograph of the Hippodrome not long after it opened.
- How do children know that it's a theatre? What makes this building different from other buildings?
- Perhaps ask children to imagine themselves one of the people in the picture. What might they be saying about this new 'palace'?
- Read the description of the theatre in this newspaper article written the week before it opened. Point out that this is a transcript because the original copy is barely legible.
- Underline or highlight key words in the description for future literacy activities.
- Summarise the safety precautions. Why would they be necessary?



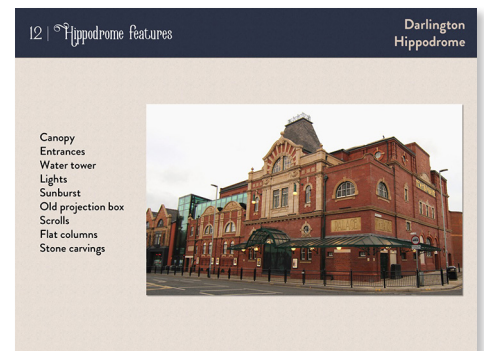
[LINK TO THEATRE TOUR – First impressions and any photos you may have taken](#)

[LINK TO ARTS AWARD – Architectural design](#)

12 | Hippodrome features

ACTIVITIES

- How tall is the theatre – how many levels can children see?
- Talk about architectural features and decoration – shapes, structures and patterns.
- Which materials have been used and where?
- Ask children to identify the features in the words at the edge.
- Produce a display of captioned or descriptive photographs of features you took during your visit.



LINK TO THEATRE TOUR – First impressions and any photos you may have taken
LINK TO ARTS AWARD – Architectural decoration and detail

13 | Fun façades - design your own theatre

ACTIVITIES

- Look at the shape and design of different theatres. How similar or different are they to the Hippodrome?
- List the different building and decorative materials in each image – brick, stone, marble, metal, tile, slate, plaster, wood and glass. How and where have these materials been used for decorative effect?
- Ask children to design a grand façade for a new theatre.
- Let children research images of other theatres for additional stimulus.
- You'll find some excellent images in the Matcham Society's photo archive. www.frankmatchamsociety.org.uk/about/photo-gallery/ (Frank Matcham was a prolific and talented theatre designer responsible for many of our splendid theatres).
- You could adapt this activity by asking children to use cut-outs of individual elements of theatre buildings to create a collage of their imagined theatre façade.



LINK TO ARTS AWARD – Architectural design

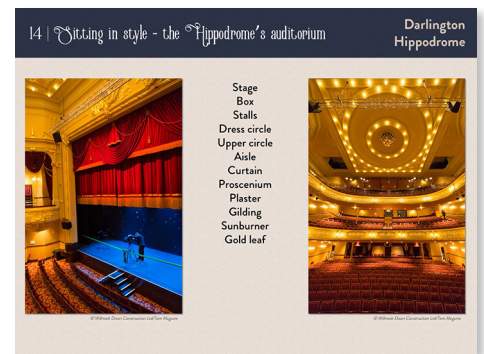
14 | Sitting in style - the Hippodrome's auditorium

ACTIVITIES

- Look at the photographs of the auditorium. What were children's immediate impressions when they entered it? What did they notice first? What did they find interesting?
- Read the section of the newspaper account in **Whiteboard Activity 11** Pepi's 'palace' that describes the auditorium prior to the Hippodrome's opening in 1907. Talk about use of language.
- Ask children to identify interior features in the auditorium. Talk about their function, position and decoration.
- What words would children use to describe the auditorium? Use photographs taken during your visit to collate a list to use for later literacy activities or create a display of labelled photographs.

[LINK TO THEATRE TOUR – Exploring the interior](#)

[LINK TO ARTS AWARD – Surface decoration](#)



15 | Framing the stage - proscenium arch

ACTIVITIES

- Explain that the frame (usually an arch) around the stage is called a proscenium. This arch separates the stage from the auditorium and is often highly decorative. For the audience it's like a magical frame to another world beyond, separating the real from the imaginary.
- Ask children to describe the decoration on each proscenium.
- Children create a design for a proscenium for their new theatre which they designed earlier in **Whiteboard Activity 13** Fun façades. We've provided a few simple outlines as a starting point in Resources Folder [Cartoons and templates].
- If you were able to stand on the stage during your theatre tour, ask children to recall how they felt. What did they see that the audience would not see during a performance? What fascinated them?
- You could also point out that the stage behind it is raked – meaning it slopes upward away from the audience so that they get a better view of what is happening in the background.

[LINK TO THEATRE TOUR – Photos you may have taken](#)

[LINK TO ARTS AWARD – Sculptural decoration](#)



16 | Decorative details - glamour and bling

ACTIVITIES

- Explain that the theatre has recently been restored to how it might have looked when it first opened (except that there is no pit, and the gallery seats are equally as comfortable as those in the stalls and grand circle). A great deal of research was done to find out how it was decorated, including newspaper articles such as the one in **Whiteboard Activity 14** Sitting in style.
- Talk about these elements of internal decoration.
- Which materials were used?
- What shapes, colours, textures and patterns were used in each?
- Ask children to suggest how the decoration was created. Use terms such as printed, carved, moulded, stained, woven, gilded and embossed. Extended language could include textured, reflective, ornate and interlinked.
- Where have they seen similar decoration?

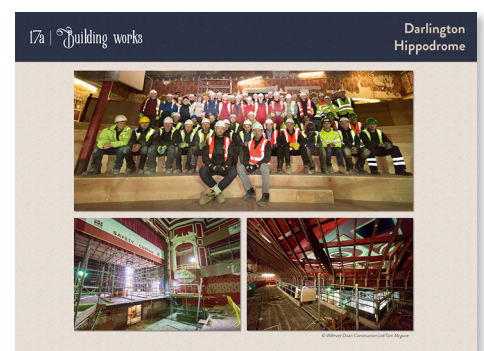
LINK TO THEATRE TOUR – Photos you may have taken of decorative details
LINK TO ARTS AWARD – Surface decoration: shape and pattern



17a | Building works

ACTIVITIES

- Explain that the restoration over 2016/17 cost £12.3 million pounds. The logistics for this major project were immense, requiring the complex coordination of over 120 workers on a huge number of different tasks without getting in each other's way; holding things up; wasting time by waiting for others to complete their work first; or for supplies to arrive. The entire restoration programme was photographed to share with local people, theatre enthusiasts and professionals as well as providing a permanent record to show how the work was managed.
- First, the interior of the theatre was virtually stripped bare to ensure essential structural work and repairs were carried out before any restoration could start. Devoid of all fittings and furnishings the Hippodrome became a skeleton, the remaining structures starkly revealing how the theatre was constructed.
- All historic features that were to be conserved were retained on site, ready for when specialists were able to carefully conserve them.



You might want to explain the difference between the following terms: repair, restore and conserve. Simply put:

Repair is fixing things that are damaged or worn.

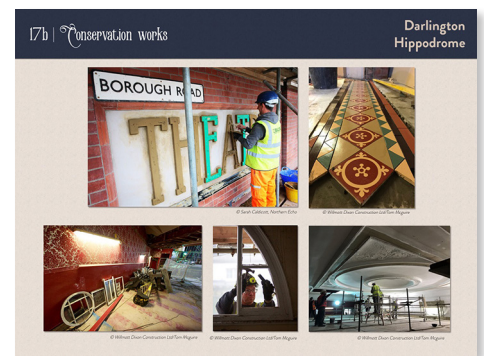
Restore is returning things to the way they were then they were first created.

Conserve is keep things as they are but preventing them from deteriorating further.

17b | Conservation works

ACTIVITIES

- Explain that specialist craftspeople were employed to restore some of the special features inside and outside. The images on the screen are just some of the different techniques they used and the skills required.
- Why do they think these features have been conserved? What is special about them?
- Talk about what people are doing.
- What tools and materials are they using?
- Can children recall seeing these restored or conserved features during their tour of the theatre?



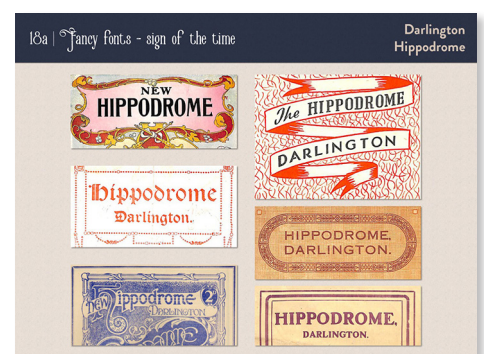
[LINK TO ARTS AWARD – Crafts and skills and decorative details](#)

[LINK TO THEATRE TOUR – Internal decoration](#)

18a | Fancy fonts - sign of the time

ACTIVITIES

- Explain that these logos are from some of the Hippodrome's early theatre programmes.
- Describe how they are different. Look at fonts, style, colour, border, pattern, decoration and background.
- Ask children to give their new theatre a name and to design a sign for its façade.
- In Resources Folder [Hippodrome] you'll find some simple typographic suggestions and templates for children to structure their designs.
- Whiteboard Activities 19a/19b 'Building' images offer an alternative activity that explores use of fonts and logos.

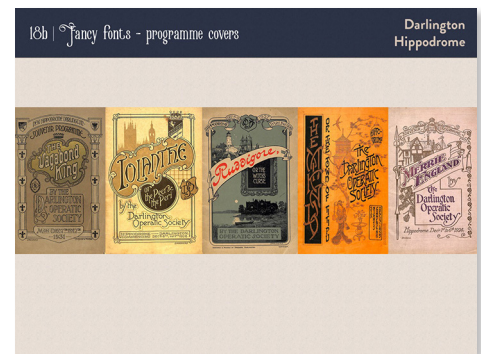


[LINK TO ARTS AWARD – Lettering and typography](#)

18b | Fancy fronts - programme covers

ACTIVITIES

- Explain that these programme covers are from shows produced by the Darlington Operatic Society whom Pepi allowed to perform at the Hippodrome every year without cost. People in this Society performed for free and for pleasure. All profits went to support the Society and its overheads in presenting its shows. (It was the same group that helped save Pepi's theatre from permanent closure 40 years after he died.)
- Compare the decorative fonts used for the titles of each performance.
- Look at the different logos used by Darlington Operatic Society. How are they different – font, upper/lower case, decorative title letter and use of outline?
- How many different designs were used for the theatre's name and how are they different?



LINK TO ARTS AWARD – Graphic design

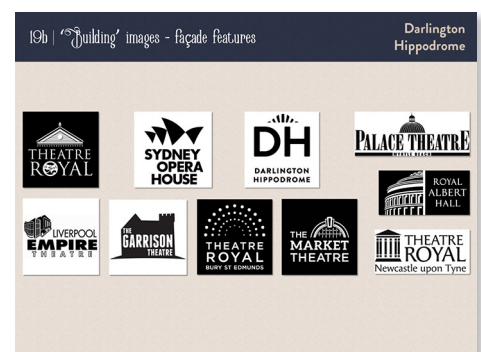
19a | 'Building' images - theatrical logos



19b | 'Building' images - façade features

ACTIVITIES

- Explain the concept of 'branding' – and how important a logo is today for an organisation's image and identity. (Refer, perhaps, to the school's logo and where it appears.)
- Some theatres use parts of their building as a key part of their logo.



- Look at the architectural features that have inspired the logos of the Darlington Hippodrome and the Theatre Royal in Newcastle.
- Which building features have stimulated the designs of the other theatre logos? (Encourage use of words such as outline, profile, silhouette, façade, detail, structure and roof line, or symbolic, represent and simplify.)
- Which do children like and why?
- Research other theatre logos and select some for discussion. Talk about the symbolism and imagery used. What do they convey?
- Ask children to create a logo for their new theatre. This can be an ICT solution or a hand-drawn product.

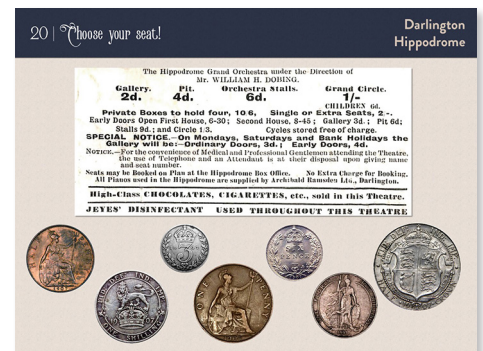
LINK TO ARTS AWARD – Logo design

20 | Choose your seat!

ACTIVITIES

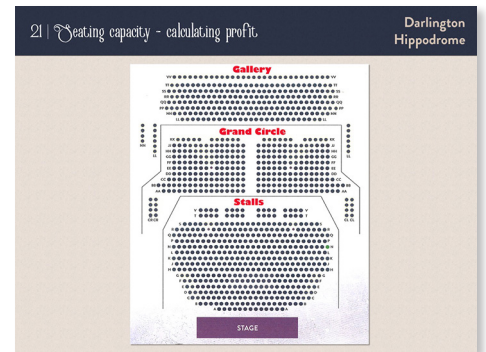
Read and EXPLAIN Old coinage

- Talk about seating areas and levels within the theatre. Refer to the image of the auditorium in **Whiteboard Activity 14** Sitting in style? (Remind children that the pit was behind the stalls and accessed by a rear entrance.)
- Discuss why the prices vary so much in different parts of the theatre.
- How much extra do seats for the later performance cost in each part of the theatre?
- Which coins would you use to pay for different seats? You'll find copies of the old coins in the Resources Folder [Coins] which you can print out onto card and cut out if you want to make this a more practical activity.
- How much change would you get when paying with coins of greater denominations?
- What else can be bought at the theatre?



21 | Seating capacity - calculating profit

Over time, the theatre's internal layout has changed and we don't have a plan of the original seating. (Originally, the pit and the gallery were just long rows of wooden benches without dedicated seating numbers.) For the purposes of this mathematical activity we have provided a plan of our current seating plan. There's a copy in the Resources Folder [Hippodrome]. Also in this Resource Folder is a 1989 copy of the seating plan when only the Stalls and Grand Circle were in use and the seating plan is in the form of a numbered and squared grid, which might make it easier for children to use.



ACTIVITIES

- Ask children to calculate how much the box office takings would be for the First House at 6.30pm based on the original ticket prices? We've calculated this for you in the chart below.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Depending on your children's abilities you can extend this further by asking them to calculate:

- Ticket prices for the Second House.
- How much the theatre takings would be for a full week at full occupancy.
- Theatre takings at 50% occupancy, 75% or 90%. (Give different groups of children different percentages to calculate.)
- What would be the takings if 10% or 20% of the Grand Circle's seats were occupied by children at half price?

CAPACITY INFORMATION

(For ease of calculation we've rounded down the seats in the Grand Circle from 302 to 300 and the Gallery seats up from 246 to 250.)

Stalls	450 seats @ 6d	= £11.5s
Grand circle	300 seats @ 1/-	= £15
Gallery	250 seats @ 2d	= £ 2.1.8d

Boxes 2 boxes @ 10/6 = £ 1.1s (an extra 16s if all eight extra seats are purchased.)

Total (adult ticket prices) £29.7.8d