

## All about Theatres

Over 4000 years ago, in ancient Greece, the first theatres were built to entertain people or to teach new things. Frank Matcham, who was the owner of the Kings Theatre, built it in 1907 when it was opened to please both rich and poor. Furthermore, the Globe Theatre was built in the Elizabethan times (1599) with the purpose of showing tragedies, comedies and histories. Despite cinemas, DVDs and Netflix, people still want live story telling and theatres are the place to go.

### Seating and Audience

#### The poor:

~~the poorest~~ In the Edwardian times, the poorest people had to walk up 84 flights of stairs in order to get to the gallery & which is also known as 'The Gods' (because it is the closest seats to heaven). However, men were thought to be more important than ladies, so the gentlemen sat at the front. Interestingly, in the Globe Theatre, the poorest people (who were known as 'Penny Stinkers') had to stand on the yard whether it was raining or not. Although, Penny Stinkers were the only ones able

to see the beautiful paintings of heaven (top of the stage).

### The Rich and Wealthy:

Surprisingly, it was illegal for a lady to show her ankles for in the Kings Theatre, in Edwardian times, a wealthy man would sit in the front row seats to catch a glimpse of a lady's ankle. The rich and glamorous women sat in boxes, which were tilted towards the audience so everyone could see how beautiful they were. Additionally, ladies in the boxes had fans to communicate with a man whilst a play was commencing (as different communication signals were used). Unlike the Kings Theatre, in the Globe rich people were sat at the very top, however these seats were ~~also~~ padded and surrounded by beautiful paintings (unlike the 'The Gods').

### Building and design

#### Kings Theatre:

Intriguingly, on the pillars inside the Kings Theatre, an amazing method, which is called scaffoli, has been used to make the pillars look like they are made out of ~~plaster~~ plaster. Another amazing fact is, because of the

curved walls, sound from the stage bounces off them, so at the top of the theatre sound is still heard. This is known as "perfect acoustics".  
As you walk into the theatre, dark colours were painted on the walls to help adjust people's eyes, so that they could see clearly inside the dark theatre. Did you know that there are 13 dressing rooms in the King's Theatre, but they are named: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 11a and 12, because 13 is an unlucky number. If an actor gets ready at number 13, they believe their performance will be cursed!

### Globe Theatre:

Inside the theatre, the background/setting is changed according to the play, for example, Romeo and Juliet would have a decorated balcony. Although some of the roof is thatched, the centre is left open, so natural light shows up the actors, and also adds atmosphere. Interestingly, in the Elizabethan times, there were 3 different coloured flags which represented a play about history, comedy and or tragedy. Even though a tragedy could make you upset, at the end of every play, all the actors came onto the stage and were applauded to make the audience feel happy again.

## Amazing but True:

• Did you know that when there was a flood at the Kings, an actor had to row across the orchestra pit to get across the stage?

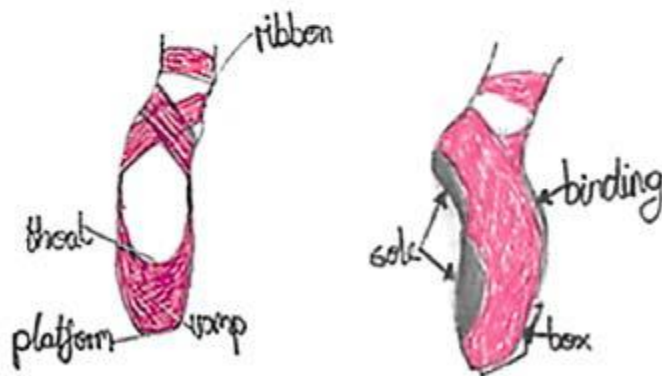
• Did you know that there are 7 ghosts in the Kings Theatre? One is called 'The Falling Angel' because a 24 year old lady fell from the Gallery and died.

• Did you know there are trap doors above and below the stage at the Globe? These represent heaven and hell.

## How Pointe Shoes Came To Be

Have you ever wondered why ballerinas look so beautiful and graceful on stage? Keep on reading to find out about what makes the Nutcracker you saw at Christmas the magical story that it is.

Pointe shoes are what make dancers different and beautiful. With their pink satin and silky ribbons, these shoes have been around since 1795. They were invented to make ballerinas look weightless when dancing, so they started spinning, balancing and jumping en pointe (on the tips of their toes). They are traditionally worn by women for a beautiful *pas de deux* (a solo dance with one man and one woman) but in some ballets men go en pointe too. There is an all male ballet company called Les Ballet Trockadero that had a very famous production of Swan Lake featuring men dancing en pointe as the female swans.



A diagram showing all the technical parts of a modern pointe shoe.

Most people might think 'why hurt your feet like that?' But as soon as you get into the ballet world your life ambition is to start pointe work. This exact thing happened to me. Pointe shoes are very desirable to young dancers too. Pointe work is meant for dancers ~~at least~~ over the age of 11 as it is ideal once your feet have stopped growing. Meanwhile, at the Royal Ballet Lower School (White Lodge, Richmond Park, London) the pupils start at the age of 13. It was also thought (until very recently) that the London Royal Ballet School was the only way to go if you wanted a career in dance but now there are many options for non-boarders.

Every dancer has unique feet with a varying length, shape, arch, flexibility, extension and strength; consequently, most pointe shoe companies make more than one model of a shoe. Sometimes they are custom tailored for the best shoes. Occasionally ballerinas can go through more than one pair in one performance. There are two main parts of a pointe shoe:

- The box - the front end of the shoe that supports the dancer's toes.
- The shank - rigid material to stiffen the sole to support the arch for going en pointe.

Now pointe shoes are beautiful and (for me) the best part of ballet! They take a lot of care, eg. rosin for non-slip; extra elastic; complex ribbon tying; box breaking etc. but become totally worth it when you are en pointe. The conclusion for me is that pointe work is awesome and you should love it! I hope you liked my text and that you now are a pointe shoe fan!