

adc theatre
annual report 2017-18





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The Management Team and Executive Committee are delighted to report on another successful year at the ADC Theatre!

2017-18 has been a momentous year for the ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom. We have continued to present a wide variety of productions and have provided countless opportunities for performers, technicians, directors and designers to hone their talents and acquire new skills. In addition to this we carried out a large-scale renovation of the theatre, which necessitated a six-month closure period. During this closure we maintained an active programme at the

Corpus Playroom and launched ADC on Tour, a collaborative project between students and local businesses in which we created pop-up theatres in four venues around Cambridge.

In this report we will be revisiting the highlights of the past year. We hope you enjoy looking back at a fantastic year for the ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom!

welcome to our annual report

I opened our Spring Season by echoing the sentiments of the late Angela Carter; 'I'm all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode'. I strongly believe this sentiment has characterised our 2017-18 programme. We have revitalised classics, brought old favourites to the stage in new forms and have encouraged new writing in every season. Our students have brought an incredible breadth of work to the ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom stages and we have welcomed a range of audiences through our doors.

The ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom remain the heart of amateur theatre in Cambridge. We pride ourselves on the opportunities we provide to experience and learn about all aspects of theatre whilst presenting productions of the highest professional standard. The enrichment of the student experience at the University of Cambridge, a key

component of the Theatre's mission, has remained a critical focus and we continued to ensure that theatrical opportunities were available to all during our period of closure.

The Executive Committee has continued to pursue a number of significant projects this year with a view to ensuring the continued long-term success of both venues. The Committee has encouraged the reinvestment of surpluses in the Theatre's facilities, which has been of great importance during the renovations. The support and encouragement of our Chairman, Dr Mark Billinge, and the rest of the Executive Committee has been invaluable during the exciting renovations the ADC Theatre has undergone this year.

This has been such an exciting time to be the Theatre Manager of the ADC. From overseeing renovations to building pop-up theatres in venues around Cambridge, the team have had to face an extraordinary range of theatrical challenges. 2017-18 has been quite a departure from our usual schedule of work and we took full advantage of

this - making a virtue of necessity - by creatively exploring exciting new theatre spaces. Whilst we are all looking forward to working in our beautiful theatre again, the previous year has been a unique and valuable experience. 2018-19 will offer a change of pace and we are excited to share the fruits of our hard work with our audiences.

Victoria Collins
Theatre Manager



about us



The ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom are the centre of Cambridge's thriving amateur drama scene. Productions at these venues are mounted entirely by students, amateurs, and volunteers. From actors and technicians to directors and producers, everyone is united in a desire to enjoy and contribute to the creation of high-quality theatre.

We present vibrant and varied programmes of drama, comedy, musical theatre and dance at each venue and work with student groups during the University terms and local groups in the vacations. Typically each venue has two different productions each night and on average we stage 6 productions each week! We aim to provide opportunities for amateurs to experience and learn about all aspects of theatre, while presenting productions of the highest standard. We are a department of the University of Cambridge and the oldest University playhouse in the country! Training, learning and support are at the heart of everything we do and we are set up to encourage and provide guidance to all who are interested in creating theatre.

All this activity draws on a long tradition. Plays have been presented on the site of the ADC Theatre since 1855 when the Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Club (CUADC) was founded and the Club performed in the back room of the Hoop Inn on Jesus Lane. The coaching inn stood almost exactly where the ADC Theatre stands today. At first the Theatre was run as a private members' club by the CUADC, but owing to growing financial difficulties, it was agreed in August 1973 that the theatre would be leased to the University of Cambridge for 75 years.

Although the Theatre continues to be owned by CUADC, it is currently run as the smallest department of the University, which has assumed responsibility for its management and maintenance. The CUADC remain as remain as the Theatre's chief resident company.

The ADC Theatre has helped launch the careers of many theatre luminaries, including including Sir Trevor Nunn, Sir Nicholas Hytner, Dame Emma Thompson, Rachel Weisz and Eddie Redmayne.



resident companies

There are several student companies resident in the ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom. Not every show is produced by these companies, but the Theatre is the epicentre of their activities and their student committees are heavily involved in the programming of each season. Representatives of CUADC and the Fletcher Players serve on the Theatre's Executive Committee.



CUADC

The Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Club is the oldest and largest student drama society in Cambridge. The first performances on the site were staged by the founders of the club in 1855. The CUADC present a varied programme of Mainshows and Lateshows at the ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom each season. The ADC Theatre and CUADC maintain a close partnership as the Theatre continues to be owned by CUADC.



The Fletcher Players

The Fletcher Players are the drama society of Corpus Christi College and the resident company of the Corpus Playroom. The Fletcher Players are integral to the running of the Playroom, helping with programming and producing a number of shows each term. Named after John Fletcher, alumnus of Corpus Christi and Jacobean playwright, their productions showcase new writing, traditional classics and cutting edge political drama.



Footlights

It is hard to think of a group that have had more influence on British comedy than the Cambridge Footlights. Their Smokers, run at both the ADC Theatre and Playroom, are an original mix of sketches and stand-up and are a breeding ground for new talent. No other student comedy society champions new talent more consistently, or provides as many opportunities to try out and develop new material.



CUMTS

The Cambridge University Musical Theatre Society are the source of the very best amateur musical theatre taking place in Cambridge. In addition to their Mainshows, the Society runs popular bar nights and a series of other musical events throughout the year. Its contribution extends far beyond showcasing existing onstage talent, it also encourages new writing and each year sends a new musical to the Edinburgh Fringe.

adc theatre productions



The ADC Theatre continues to be one of the most popular venues in Cambridge. We are proud of the quality and quantity of the applications we receive for production slots at both of our venues, particularly as these applications come from students who are juggling extensive academic commitments with their extra-curricular activities.

Over the past twelve months, the ADC Theatre programme has offered something for everyone. Our Mainshows offer an opportunity for theatre makers to take on an artistic or technical challenge in a safe environment. Our Lateshows allow for something a little different and high quality variety and comedy acts dominate this slot.

We had an impressive year of writing at the ADC! We opened with the homerun of new musical **SIX**, written by Toby Marlow and Lucy Moss. The musical came back to the ADC from a sold-out Edinburgh Festival Fringe run and has now enjoyed a west-end run and UK Tour (including a visit to the Cambridge Arts Theatre). We also had a run of **Porterhouse Blue**, which was adapted

from Tom Sharpe's original novel by two students and sold-out weeks in advance. We were also incredibly proud to stage new play **Stormface**, written by student Billie Collins. Following on from the success of her play **Spiders** at the Corpus Playroom, this production explored femininity, love and how it feels to know the world wasn't quite made for you.

We were also very excited to be joined by two non-student cast members during **Love's Labour's Lost** and **Gypsy** in our Michaelmas term. Over the two production weeks we were joined by three dogs, Basil, Sophie and Jack, who brought a lot of joy to the theatre!

The ADC Mainshow slot gives students the opportunity to be ambitious in the technical scope of their productions. Throughout the year we had a number of showstoppers that really pushed the boundaries of the ADC stage. In Michaelmas term we had our famous CUADC/Footlights Pantomime, **The Hunchback of Notre Dame**. Each year our pantomime shows the ambition of our students, who write the script and

songs as well as performing, directing, producing and crewing. This year the students built Notre Dame on stage, complete with a full stage stained glass window and a flying Dame! We closed the theatre with a spectacular production of **The Producers**. With toe-tapping storm troopers and chorus lines of zimmer frames, the ADC could not have gone out in better style!



corpus playroom



Our L-shaped studio space is Cambridge's primary fringe venue, showcasing a variety of productions with an emphasis on new writing. Seasons at the Playroom and ADC are programmed holistically in order to ensure that the two work as complimentary spaces. The President of the Fletcher Players has a significant input into programming at both the Playroom and ADC Theatre. Since 2011 the Playroom has been managed by the ADC Theatre and in that time we have seen a doubling in average audience numbers, and a higher and more consistent calibre of production.

The unique layout of the Corpus Playroom provides an exciting challenge to directors, who have to direct their plays to a two-sided audience. This setting lends itself well to re-imagining classics and our year of theatre was peppered with old favourites! Our Autumn Season saw Shakespeare's epic Roman play, **Coriolanus**, performed by just six actors. This bold and experimental production placed the focus on movement and physicality, and emphasised the play's fundamental concern of 'the people' versus 'the



person'. At the end of the academic year we staged Edward Albee's modern masterpiece, **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?** The intimacy of the Playroom emphasised the tensions of the play and contributed to a truly unforgettable theatrical experience for the audience.

The Corpus Playroom acts as a home to new writing in Cambridge. We are proud to provide opportunities to playwrights as they begin their careers and 2017-18 was a particular highlight in this regard. In our Autumn Season playwriting duo, Ella Godfrey and Simon West brought their Cold War Spy Comedy, **Shot in the Dark** to the Playroom stage. Later in the season Other Prize winner **Bromley Bedlam Bethlehem** explored the effects of mental illness on three generations of an immigrant family. Finally, in our

Summer Season audiences raved about new farce **Arm in the Catflap**, written by Cambridge Footlight Noah Geelan.

Since the ADC Theatre took over management of the Playroom it has become an important space for students to explore underrepresented themes and narratives. Throughout 2017-18 Queer narratives were portrayed in a number of different ways. **Rights of Passage** brought to the stage the real stories of LGBT+ asylum seekers and provided an authentic and heart-breaking insight into the lives of refugees. **The Cambridge Companion to Lesbianism** explored the history of lesbianism and used a combination of oral histories, written narratives and videos. On the other end of the spectrum, **Hot Gay Time Machine** returned from its sold-out Edinburgh Fringe run to take over the Playroom. After a week of outrageous songs and comedy in Cambridge, the show transferred to the Other Palace and is now enjoying a West End run in Trafalgar Studios.

refurbishment



The refurbishment this summer combined a number of important upgrades and maintenance tasks into an extremely challenging programme. The auditorium roof and the original lath and plaster ceiling were completely removed and replaced, which also gave us the opportunity to introduce insulation and a new ventilation system that should make the auditorium much more comfortable in the winter and summer. The entirety of front of house has been redecorated and recarpeted, but perhaps more important to the audience will be the new plush seating in the auditorium!

The Theatre has also invested heavily in substantial improvements to backstage facilities, the most visible of which is the addition of two front of house lighting bridges over the auditorium. These bridges were entirely designed by Technical Manager, John Evans, and represent a change in safety, ease of use and artistic possibility when compared to the previous small, fixed bars over the aisles that could only be accessed via a ladder. Less visible to the audience, but vital to those working backstage, is the complete replacement of the Theatre's lighting control system, some parts of which were nearly 50 years old - bringing us fully into line with modern standards. New LED lighting fixtures will reduce the Theatre's carbon footprint, but also keep us up to date with the latest developments in theatrical technology - vital for our role in giving the theatrical designers and technicians of the future a place to experiment.

Other less visible changes include the replacement of our main electrical panel, extension of the formerly cramped administration office, and substantial refurbishment to the Stage Manager's control desk - some parts of which dated to the 1980s. Although many of the changes are 'below the surface', this refurbishment has been vital to ensure the systems of the theatre continue to be relevant to modern theatrical practice for years to come.



adc on tour



The refurbishment of the ADC Theatre meant that we had to close our doors for six months. During this period we were keen to continue offering as many theatrical opportunities to students as possible and so launched **ADC on Tour**. For this project we took the resources of the ADC to venues around Cambridge and created pop-up theatres.

We started our tour at the Round Church with an intimate production of **Hamlet** staged in the round. We then headed to Ballare nightclub, who hosted our musical **Merrily we Roll Along**. The Footlights International Tour Show is a regular fixture in our calendar, so this year we collaborated with the Footlights to stage their show **Pillow Talk** in the Cambridge Union.

Our touring season was concluded with our most ambitious project, a five-hour two-part adaptation of Philip Pullman's **His Dark Materials**. For this production we constructed an auditorium, complete with raked seating, in the Temporary Exhibition Space of the Fitzwilliam Museum.

A focus of 2017-18 was the re-investment of reserves in the theatre's facilities. We dedicated a significant proportion of our reserves to our ventilation, redecoration and lighting infrastructure overhaul. These improvements will benefit audiences and theatre makers for decades to come.

Whilst our income was reduced due to our closure, there were some particular financial highlights:

Income from the Corpus Playroom rose to £34,089 from £33,418.

Scenic hire continues to provide a good revenue stream, returning a surplus of £3,854.

Patrons continued to donate generously, with over £5,000 raised this year.

financial performance



people involved in productions at the adc: 809



student productions outside of the adc and playroom: 177



people involved in productions at the playroom: 594

total people involved in cambridge theatre: 1975



people involved in adc on tour: 82



over 30,000 tickets were sold for internal shows in 2017-18

student involvement



Mindful of our wider educational role and constant desire to offer opportunities to all, the year began with another strong campaign to attract new students to the Theatre community. We worked closely with the CUADC Committee and hosted Freshers' Friday during the first week of the Michaelmas Term. Freshers were encouraged to come to the Theatre for backstage tours and a chance to meet and chat to students already involved.

The Ruling Class, Rabbit and **The Memory of Water** were this year's Freshers' Shows. These shows were performed, directed, produced, designed and crewed by those new to Cambridge theatre, and showcased the ADC's freshest talent.



community involvement and services



In September, the Management Team conducted a number of backstage tours during the University's Open Cambridge and the Alumni Festival, allowing visitors to see parts of the building not usually open to the public.

out of term programming

Outside of the University term the ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom host productions by local amateur groups. We work regularly with groups such as BAWDS, Combined Actors, the Festival Players and Pied Pipers. In 2017-18 we hosted 24 productions outside of term. We were also delighted to be joined once again by Ballet Central, the Central School of Ballet's touring company, who brought their 45 minute version of **The Nutcracker** to the ADC Theatre over Christmas for a sold-out run.

adc ticketing

The Theatre continued to provide a secure, convenient and affordable Box Office service for events happening in and around Cambridge. We provided ticketing for 108 events this year, selling 16032. The Cambridge University Musical Society continue to be our largest client, on whose behalf we sold 2166 tickets.

Other notable clients included City of Cambridge Symphony Orchestra, East Anglia Chamber Orchestra and Camerata Musica.

ticketing in numbers:

- 108 Events
- 16,032 Tickets
- £187,960 value of tickets sold



get involved



The ADC Theatre currently receives no external funding, yet we remain committed to keeping our ticket prices low and our bar affordable, so that both our student and local audiences can experience and enjoy the Theatre as frequently as possible. We are always mindful that any of our performers today could be the famous names of tomorrow and that they and our audiences can only thrive in a lively and affordable theatre.

We encourage participation in all forms and at all levels including:

in our productions

There are hundreds of opportunities to act in the ADC Theatre every year and our productions always require dedicated production and technical teams. Whether you're interested in acting, directing, designing, managing, building, lighting, or crewing a show, new faces are always welcome, regardless of experience. We also require volunteer stewards to help us run the Front of House in the evenings. Our stewards greet audiences, sell programmes and ice-creams, and oversee admission to the auditorium.



as a friend

With your support we can ensure that our students get the best theatrical training we can offer, with industry standard theatrical equipment, financial support for ambitious and innovative productions and an ongoing investment in our backstage facilities.

You can help nurture new talent by becoming an ADC Friend for £30 per year. As such, you will enjoy:

- One free ticket to a show at the ADC Theatre or Corpus Playroom
- 10% discount on two tickets per show
- 10% discount on drinks and snacks at the ADC Bar and half price ice cream
- Special offers on selected events throughout the year
- Backstage tours and Friends only events

You can join online today at adctheatre.com/friends to begin enjoying the benefits and supporting the ADC Theatre.

the team



Victoria Collins



Jack Rowan



Jamie Rycroft



John Evans



Connie Dent



Steve Gage

executive committee

Dr Mark Billinge (Chair)
Richard Barnes
Zoe Black
Sarah Cain
Victoria Collins
John Evans
Diane Gaskin
Theo Heymann
Zak Karimjee
Tom Nunan
Andrew Reid
Alex Ridley
Jack Rowan
David Todd-Jones
Robin Walker
Oscar Yang

management team

Victoria Collins: Theatre Manager
Jack Rowan: Operations Manager
Jamie Rycroft: Production Manager
John Evans: Technical Manager
Steve Gage: Box Office Administrator
Connie Dent: Office Administrator

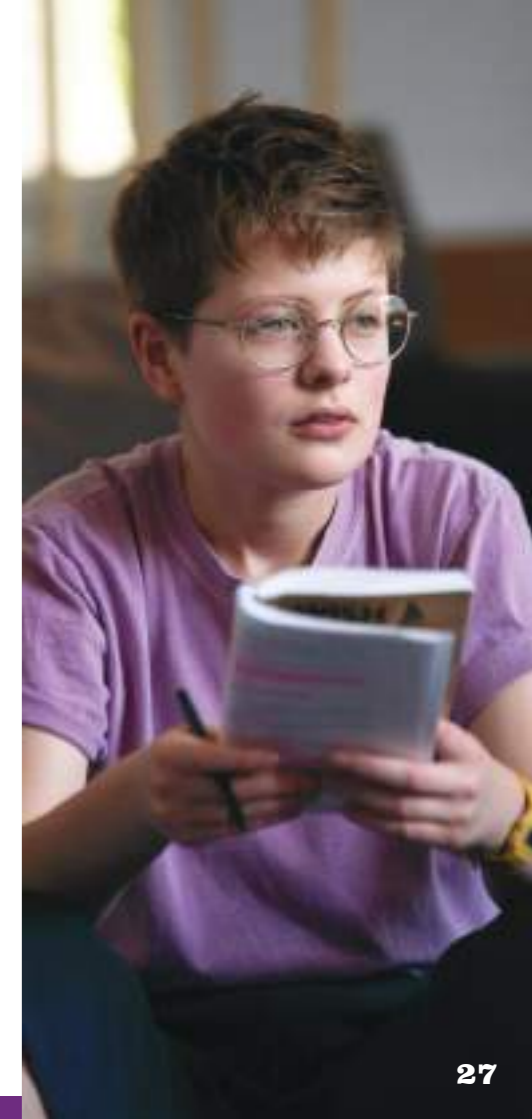
thank yous

We are, as always, grateful for the ongoing support of the University of Cambridge, the University Theatre Syndicate, the Executive Committee and the CUADC Committee and for the generous help offered by many of our friends, audience members, students and volunteers.

We are extremely grateful for the ongoing IT support provided by volunteers Alan Egan, Alex Brett and Paul Gotch.

Our warmest thanks go to everyone who has supported us in making this another memorable year.

If you would like to support our new talent and be an important part of our community, please consider joining our ADC Friends scheme.





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report design by **Mitchell Clarke**