



Q THEATRE, Kew Bridge

1924 Opened
1956 Closed and demolished.

This was converted from the existing Prince’s Hall on the north side of the Thames at Kew Bridge, and was the brainchild of actor/director Jack de Leon.

He opened his theatre on 26 December 1924 with a revival of Gertrude Jennings’s “The Young Person in Pink”. For the next 32 years Jack de Leon produced revivals of West End hits and many new plays, including “Dial M for Murder” and Philip King’s “See How They Run”. He was forced to close in 1956 because the Q Theatre was unable to meet the safety requirements of the licensing authority.

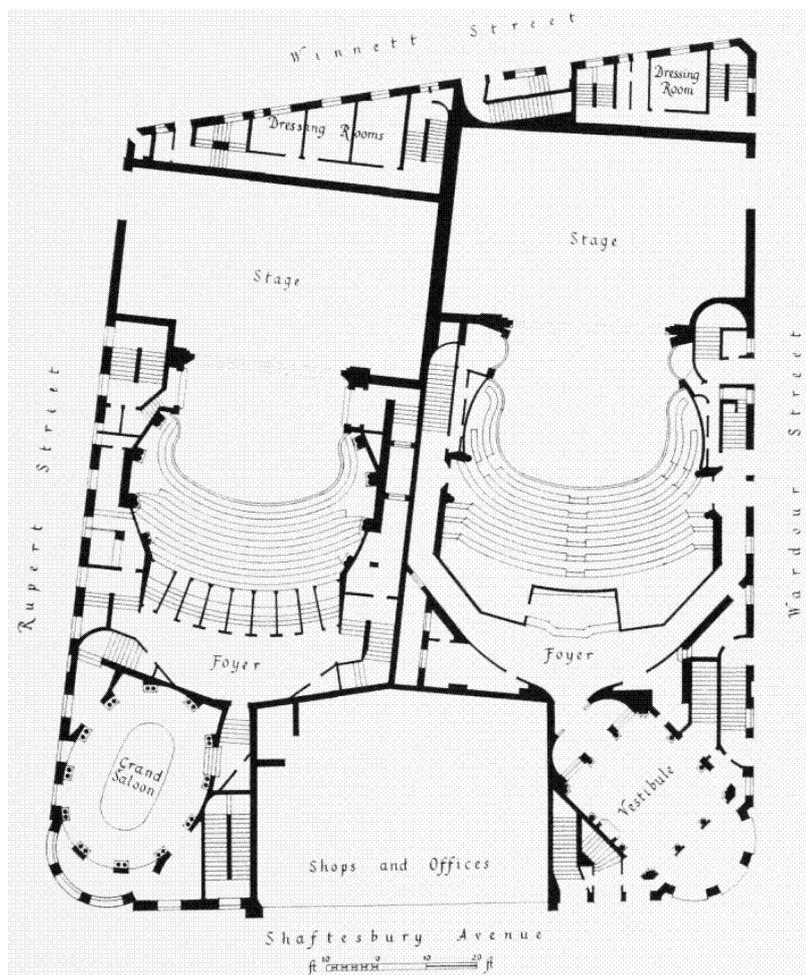
QUEEN’S THEATRE & THE HICKS THEATRE IN 1907

(See entries under *Gielgud Theatre and Queen’s Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue*)

The Hicks and the Queen’s Theatres were designed as part of one composition, with basically similar plans and elevations, although with different schemes of interior decoration.

Originally the frontage to Shaftesbury Avenue, between Rupert and Wardour Streets, consisted of the theatres, twin corner buildings of Portland stone, each four storeys high and crowned with buttressed and domed angle turrets, flanking a shop and office building of similar architectural treatment, five bays wide and one storey higher than the theatres.

The corner buildings contain the entrances, foyers and bars of the theatres and behind these and the office building are the 'working' parts of the theatres, the auditoria being placed side by side on a north-south axis with the stages to the north and ranges of dressing-rooms fronting Winnett Street.



The 'entrance pile' of the Queen's has been rebuilt in a completely new form since its destruction in the last war (q.v.) but the rest of the joint street front remains, together with the auditoria and stages behind

From: 'Shaftesbury Avenue', *Survey of London: volumes 31 and 32*

QUEEN'S THEATRE, Shaftesbury Avenue

1907	Opened
1940	Destroyed in the Blitz
1959	Rebuilt and re-opened
2006	Some renovation planned

The first lessee and manager was J. E. Vedrenne, who originally proposed to call the theatre The Central—'as if it were a criminal court or a railway terminus', commented Bernard Shaw. Later, when the present name had been decided upon Shaw remarked that Vedrenne was 'after a knighthood ... it is not for nothing he has called his theatre the Queen's—though why not the Alexandra?' Designed by W.G.R. Sprague and built as an almost identical, adjoining sister-theatre to the Globe (see Gielgud Theatre), The Queen's Theatre opened on 8 October 1907 with "The Sugar Bowl". The following year the musical "The Belle of Brittany" enjoyed a successful run and in 1908 H.B. Irving played a season of classic revivals.



In 1912 the theatre hosted "tango teas" - very fashionable at the time—with the stall seating removed and the area used as a dance floor. By 1914 the seats were re-installed for an American Jewish comedy "Potash and Perlmutter". So successful was this that in 1916 it was replaced with "Potash and Perlmutter in Society", thus extending its run.

In the 1920s Fred and Adele Astaire appeared in "Stop Flirting", Owen Nares and Fay Compton starred in "The Little Minister" and Edmund Gwenn and Yvonne Arnaud played Mr and Mrs Samuel Pepys in "And So to Bed". The 1930s were star-studded. Cedric Hardwicke, Edith Evans, Marie Tempest, Sybil Thorndike, Margaret Rutherford and Rex Harrison all appeared in various productions. John Gielgud headed a season of Shakespeare, Chekhov and Sheridan in 1938-39. He played Richard II, Shylock, Vershinin in "The Three Sisters" and Sir Joseph Surface in "School for Scandal". His supporting company included Michael Redgrave and Peggy Ashcroft, and among the small-part players were Harry Andrews, Dennis Price and Alec Guinness.

The opening night of Dodie Smith's "Dear Octopus" caused a scandal when Dame Marie Tempest publicly snubbed the playwright during the curtain call—though the main news of the night was Chamberlain's "Peace in our time" return from Munich. "Dear Octopus" was still running when the outbreak of war led to all theatres being closed. The Queen's reopened in December 1939 with a revue called "All Clear" and followed this with a very successful run of "Rebecca". This run came to an end on 24 September 1940 when the theatre was badly damaged by bombs.

For almost twenty years the ruins scarred Shaftesbury Avenue. The auditorium remained intact and during this period it was used as a scenery store for H.M.Tennent. In July 1957 the re-built (and modern looking) Queen's Theatre opened. No attempt was made to match the new exterior to its adjoining "other half" Appropriately enough, the opening show was John Gielgud's "Ages of Man".

The 1960s saw Michael Redgrave in "The Aspern Papers", and Noel Coward's final stage appearance in "Suite in Three Keys". Marlene Dietrich staged her one-woman show, and in 1969 Ralph Richardson and Coral Browne suffered a flop with Joe Orton's "What the Butler Saw". In the 1970s Robert Stephens and Maggie Smith starred in a revival of "Private Lives", and Alec Guinness was much praised in "The Old Country". Tom Courtenay starred in "The Dresser" in 1980, and Charlton Heston in "The Caine Mutiny Court Martial" in 1985. The 1990s included Michael Ball in Stephen Sondheim's musical "Passion" and Maggie Smith in Alan Bennett's "The Lady in the Van".

At the turn of the new century, the theatre came under the ownership of Cameron Mackintosh who announced plans for a major renovation. These plans include the creation of a "Studio" theatre on the upper floors of the Queen's - the Studio is to be known as the Sondheim Theatre, named after Stephen Sondheim. Meantime the theatre staged a transfer of "Les Miserables" from the Palace Theatre, and in September 2006 saw this show become the longest running musical in theatre history.

QUEEN'S THEATRE, Endell Street, Long Acre

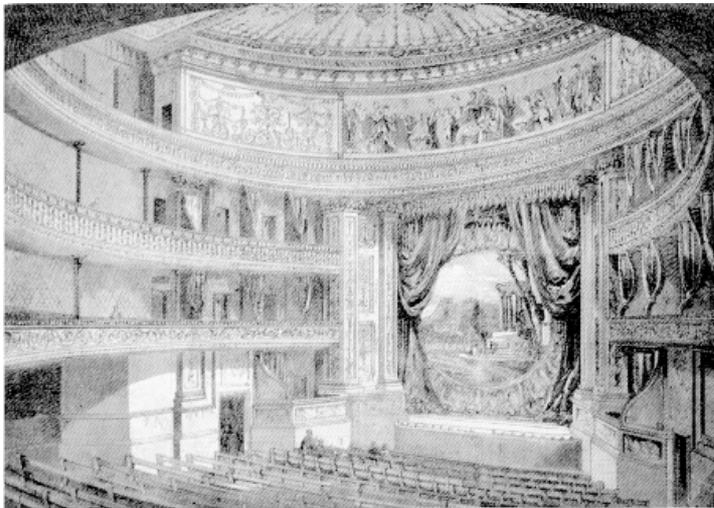
- 1850 Opened as St Martin's Concert Hall
- 1860 Damaged by fire
- 1862 Re-opened
- 1867 Converted into the New Queen's Theatre
- 1877 Renamed the National Theatre
- 1878 Resumed the old name, but quickly closed
- 1879 Partially demolished, and building used by Odham's Press . Façade remained until 1938.

St Martin's Hall, built on the junction of Endell Street and Long Acre opened on 11th February 1850 as a concert hall for the development of choral singing.

In 1858 Charles Dickens gave a reading from his works in aid of the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital. This was so successful that Dickens decided to launch himself professionally with his readings. On the 26th August 1860 the theatre suffered serious fire damage and closed.

The re-built St Martin's Hall opened on 6th January 1862 with an Ethiopian Minstrel Show. Just prior to the reopening there was an accident involving the workers installing the main gas chandelier. The main scaffolding collapsed, killing three and seriously injuring another three. A seventh man was left suspended for five minutes and was close to losing his grip when they managed to rescue him by lowering a ladder from the roof and holding it while he climbed up. In spite of amateur hirings, lectures, various entertainments and promenade concerts, the Hall failed to pay.

It closed in May 1867 and the interior was completely rebuilt so the building could be used as a theatre. Named the New Queen's Theatre, and designed by C.J. Phipps, it opened on 24th October 1867 with "The Double Marriage", a romantic drama by the novelist, Charles Reade.



The interior of the New Queen's, 1867

The 1868 company was a very strong one, including J.L.Toole, Charles Wyndham and Henry Irving and Ellen Terry acting together for the first time. In 1869 Mrs Rousby made her debut and became the toast of London. In 1875 the famous Salvini appeared as both Hamlet and Othello—all his performances were given in Italian.

By 1877 the theatre had fallen on hard times. Once more it tried a season of Promenade concerts. It even tried a demonstration of the new novelty, the telephone.

It changed management and was renamed the National Theatre on 27th October 1877, opening with a melodrama called "Russia, or the Exiles of the Angara", but after just three months it reverted to the name Queen's Theatre. Just six months later, in July 1878, it closed. In January 1879 it was partially demolished and used as storage for the University.

In 1911 the building was bought for use by Odhams Press. The frontage remained until 1938 when it was demolished.



Drawing by Hanslip Fletcher

Odhams offices in the old Queen's Theatre, 1927

QUEEN'S THEATRE, Battersea

- 1890 Opened as the Park Town Theatre in converted Town Hall
- 1892 Renamed the Queen's Theatre
- 1897 Closed

This theatre had a short and chequered life. It was licensed to John Virgo in 1890 as the Park Town Hall and Theatre—seemingly the converted Town Hall used chiefly for music events. Over the next five years Virgo seems to have renamed it the Park Town Theatre of Varieties, though he does not seem to have done any building work to adapt his hall into a proper stage. In 1896 it was closed for most of the year, and reopened in early 1897 under the management of Alice Melville. She seems to have given it the name Queen's Theatre, though possibly Virgo had used this name earlier. In any event, Alice Melville ran the venue for less than a year. In November 1897 the London County Council refused to license it on safety grounds. The theatre closed.

QUEEN'S THEATRE, Hornchurch

- 1913 Opened as a cinema
- 1953 Converted into a theatre
- 1974 Closed .
- 1975 Replaced with a new theatre on a different site.

The “old” Queen's Theatre was a converted cinema. From 1953 onwards it became part of the growing Repertory movement, and was soon established as one of the leading Reps in the country. After

twenty years plans were made to build completely new premises on a new site, and a splendid and spacious new theatre opened in 1975. In the mid 1990s it underwent a series of financial crises and on separate occasions its accumulated deficits were written off and the venue put on a new financial footing. It survived these upsets and entered the new century re-vitalised and in a strong position.



J. Arthur Dixon, Ltd



QUESTORS THEATRE, Ealing

Founded as an amateur company in 1929 by Alfred Emmett and moved into a converted building on the current site in 1934. In 1946 the Questors Theatre Company became one of the founder-members of the Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain. Through extensive fund-raising the players were able to finance a new purpose-built theatre as a replacement for their old premises. This opened on the same site in 1964. In 2000 the company received a Lottery Grant and the premises underwent extensive refurbishment.