



Fenland's *lively* LITTLE community arts centre

ANGLESTHEATREWISBECH

Introduction

The last three years has seen many highs and lows for the theatre. 2018, saw us celebrate our 40th anniversary with a fully packed year of shows and events including our 40th Anniversary Gala, which brought together performers and audiences old and new.

Our in-house company RATz continue to thrive, performing 30 shows in three years including major productions like Sister Act, The Sound of Music and The Railway Children. Our yearly pantomime is still packing in the crowds with 18 performances of Cinderella in 2019.

The theatre has produced 'Headline Fundraising Events' that includes two musicals in 24 hours, bringing together over 50 volunteers for each event, from performers and techies to costumiers and caterers, to produce a full-scale musical in just 24 hours. For 2021, we are looking to attempt the World Record for Fastest Theatrical Performance, currently set at 14 hours and 30 minutes!

Ratzcool continues to play a major role in the theatre's future. In 2019, after a decline in participants, the school structure was overhauled. With new and additional classes, as well as additional staff, Ratzcool numbers are once again increasing and the product improving. Whilst a lot of work is still ongoing to ensure the success of the relaunch, the current projections are very encouraging.

The theatre continues to work with local organisations including Katy Lilley's School of Dance, The Wisbech Players, and local primary and secondary schools. We have participated in local events such as the Christmas Lights Switch On and Rose Fair, and in 2020 were asked to be the entertainment for the Pride of Fenland Awards, by the Fenland District Council.

2019 saw major changes in the theatre's operational structure. New faces were brought onto the Board of Trustees with a new focus on the theatres governance rather than day to day operations. The theatre is now a majority volunteer-run organisation as we no longer employ a Theatre Manager or Bar Manager. These roles are now covered by a large number of volunteers coordinated by the Management Team. Our volunteer numbers are on the rise and with the ongoing change culture throughout the theatre, more volunteers are giving even more hours, and returning to us after several years away.

The theatre has always been a special place for anyone connected to it, from Ratzcool student to loyal audience member to a long-standing trustee. In the last few years we've been changing and adapting, actively building ourselves, and we are ready for new people, plans and projects.

We are ready to make The Angles Theatre the best it can be for anyone who wants to be a part of it.



The Angles Theatre In-house Company - RATz

Back in 2005, after the closure of the Empire Theatre and the decision for a local amateur group not to use the theatre, the Board of Trustees set up 'RATz', The Angles Theatre's in-house company. Since then the theatre has performed over 90 shows ranging from small black box plays to full musicals and pantomimes.

In the past three years, RATz have won multiple National Operatic and Dramatic Association (NODA) regional awards for their productions including Best Youth Musical with Godspell and Sister Act, Best Pantomime with Jack and the Beanstalk, Best Overall Production with Sister Act and in 2019 were nominated for Best Youth production with Chicago, Best Drama with The Railway Children, Best Musical with The Sound of Music and Best Pantomime with Cinderella.

RATz Youth continues to go from strength to strength with the group aged 9 to 18 performing some of the biggest productions available including Les Misérables, Sister Act and with plans to put on Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat in 2020. Three of our performers have also won the NODA award for Best Youth Performer.

The Angles Theatre prides itself on bringing through young performers and giving them opportunities to direct our productions. In the past 3 years we have given nine new directors the chance to stage a production including seven under the age of 30.



2017

Jeeves and Wooster
Peter Pan
Brief Encounter
Godspell
Sweeney Todd
Beauty and the Beast

2018

April in Paris
Bouncers
Teachers
Sister Act
My Fair Lady
Dancing in the Street
24 Hour Musical - The Pirates of Penzance
The Last Five Years
Ghost
Yes Prime-minister
40th Anniversary Gala
Our Friends, The Enemy
She Stoops to Conquer
Jack and the Beanstalk

2019

A Night at the Piano Cabaret
Chicago
The Haunting
Blackadder
24 Hour Musical - Peter Pan
The Railway Children
The Sound of Music
Swing Time
Cinderella
Sinders - The Adult Pantomime



Pantomime

Pantomime has always been a key part of the theatres annual programme. Throughout the years we have performed to sell out audiences and has brought in vital revenue from when tickets go on sale in July right up to the final performance. According to NODA, The Angles Theatre has held the crown for several years for most amateur performances of pantomime in a run, in the UK, with 17 shows.

Pantomime is a very unique experience, for not only the audience, but the cast and crew as well. One of our trustees wrote an article for a national magazine highlighting why pantomime is worth the work:

“During one performance this year, I remember a severely disabled boy on the front row who would not settle before the show began and his carers were planning on taking him out. As soon as the show started he settled in an instance, and although his communication skills were not very advanced, he was booing and cheering the whole show and loved every minute. For me that’s what panto is about - Pantomime is accessible to everyone, and everyone is truly able to experience Christmas magic through it.



Every night, walking out and having a full house cheering at the top of their voices, having to stop your script as the audience is booing so loudly, and knowing that the community song might be twice as long as necessary because the audience don’t want the magic to end. It is a unique experience that no other type of show will give you. For me, that’s what makes pantomime worth it.”

Every year, the theatre donates tickets to a local cause. In the past we have donated to young carers, low income families and foster children. In 2019, we were approached by CamSight, a Cambridgeshire charity supporting local people of all ages with low vision and blindness. They were enquiring about the price of tickets in order to fundraise and send 20 low-vision and blind children to pantomime. The theatre donated tickets for the children and carers to attend. To make the experience even better we also offered to hold a “touch tour” before the show. A touch tour gives a person with low vision or blindness chance to explore the set, props, some of the costumes, which backs up the descriptive information they receive and provides them with extra detail to allow them to engage with the production. CamSight were so grateful that, despite not being a big theatre with staff, we had put such effort in, and to the cast and crew it was simply a pleasure and part of the pantomime experience.

Each year, children and adults new to pantomime learn that being part of an Angles Pantomime is all about making someone’s day - each performance, whether you hear about it or not, will have made a special memory for someone.



Ratzcool

Wisbech School of Performing Arts

Ratzcool, the theatre's educational theatre school, was set up in 2010 to bring all of the Angle's Theatre's educational activities together.

It's our birthday - so we are having a party! This year is Ratzcool's 10th birthday and to celebrate Ratzcool has been relaunched. The world, and theatre, is a different place to when we set up 10 years ago and after a couple of years of dwindling numbers we've had a big rethink and changed our weekly classes, our summer holiday offerings and increased our home-education programme. These changes have been brought in with the aim to improve the quality of studies, whilst also making the programme more accessible, no matter what age you enter it at or which parts you want to engage with.

We are very keen to bring Ratzcool into the community - so expect to see Ratzcool at more events in and around Wisbech!

As 2020 is our birthday we have pushed the boat out and are involved with the National Theatre Connections programme run by the National Theatre in London. The programme will see our students rehearse and perform a stage play in our venue before going on tour to the Garage Theatre in Norwich, which is attached to the Norwich Theatre Royal. Rehearsals are going great and the children (our older group) are really excited about that this is a national competition ran by the National Theatre. We would love to make this a regular fixture in our Ratzcool programme and partake every 3 years.

Ratzcool's new classes include singing, stage acting, screen acting, musical theatre and the Arts. If singing a traditional musical theatre ballad isn't for you, then have a go at our Screen Acting class, this term it focuses on presenting everything from comedy/quiz shows to serious news reports.

Our new Arts programme, which supports students to gain Arts Award qualifications, broadens the range of qualifications we can offer to students. The award allows students to get a taste of other art forms that link to theatre - from the art of street performing and presenting, to set design and makeup tutorials from visiting professionals. The Arts classes enable students to see the wider variety of art forms that aren't covered in regular classes and are definitely not covered in schools.

With the help of the Moment family we have launched a new bursary programme which reduces costs of classes to eligible students.

Have a look at the Ratzcool leaflet to find out more!



Ratzcool Holiday Activities

Junior Musical Workshop

The Junior Musical Workshop has continued to be a very successful week of rehearsing, learning and fun. The format includes 4 days learning and rehearsing the show before a dress rehearsal and performance on the 5th day. The music and technical aspects introduce the children, aged 5 to 10, into the workings of the stage and prepares them for future productions that include theatrical lighting and sound.

Parents are always impressed at their child's ability to pick up the story and memorise lines. Our choice of well-known stories includes Disney and well-known fairy tales, helping to engage the children and make the line learning process easier and more enjoyable.

Senior Musical Workshop

The Senior Musical Workshop challenges our 11 to 18 year olds with a full production, the same shows that we would do at any other point in the year, in just 2 weeks!

From auditioning and casting, to learning songs, dance routines and script, to costume fittings and prop introduction, to tech and dress runs - the production process is fast paced and a real learning curve no matter your age or experience. And the best bit is - it's really fun! Whether your a child participating or someone working or volunteering, you've all got to get this show to the stage in just two weeks and there is a real buzz in the air throughout the process.



Play in a Day

Play in a Day runs in each half-term and during the summer holidays. The concept is simple - produce a play in a day.

Children aged 5 to 12 come along, and with the help of our practitioners, and some guidance, the students devise their own play to perform.

With lots of games and activities and the possibility to tweak each day depending on the children's abilities and confidence, parents are often astounded when their introverted child is happily pretending to be the schools pet crocodile that sneaks out of its cage with its opposable thumbs, or the private detective with invisibility super powers that catches the crocodile!

Future

Unfortunately, there has been a decline in interest in our current Senior offering. We think this might be due to the two-week commitment in prime summer-holiday-time. So, this year we will try something new:

Musical Theatre Summer School

More akin to the offerings of national programmes found in cities like Peterborough, Cambridge and Norwich, the new week-long programme allows children to experience a range of musical theatre styles, producing two performances of a compilation show at the end of the week.

Drama Summer School

Totally new and in response to requests from our youth section, the drama week will also produce two performances of a compilation show, but with a total focus on drama. For those not interested in singing or dancing and those wanting to improve their acting skills this week will push them to try new styles.

Both weeks will still have all the technical, costume and prop support that is unique to working in a real theatre.



Katy Lilley's School of Dance

Katy Lilley's School of Dance (KLSD) is an independent dance school, based solely in the theatre's fully equipped dance studio, offering professional tuition with a warm friendly atmosphere.

All students work towards internationally recognised exams in ballet, tap, jazz and musical theatre, with a 100% pass rate. The school also makes good use of the theatre by putting on an annual show, giving each student the opportunity and experience of performing in front of a capacity audience. Being based in a professional theatre, performing annually, and whilst working towards exams, sets KLSD aside from the local competition.



The Wider Community



The Wisbech Players

Performing at the theatre since the 1980s, The Wisbech Players are a local voluntary organisation performing two to three plays at the theatre each year.

They provide the theatre with a different audience than our in-house company attracts by catering for a different market with their show choices and traditional setting. The theatre gives them a professional service and real theatre to perform in as well as production and technical support, costume loaning and set storage in our own store.

Bedazzle Projects

Each Wednesday daytime, the theatre opens its doors to Bedazzle who brings together adults with learning disabilities aged 16 and above to hold inclusive theatre classes. The classes lead to performances in Wisbech and beyond, introducing the arts while building confidence and life skills.

Working with schools

Arts budget cuts are occurring more and more. Naturally we think this is a shame but also an opportunity, allowing us to fill the gap created by offering theatrical experiences in a real theatre or with our own theatre professionals. As part of our community work, the theatre can provide local schools the opportunity to perform at the theatre at a discounted rate, or for staff to attend their school and support their productions.

In 2018, Wisbech Grammar School brought Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat and Shout! The 80's Musical. Staff worked with the school cast and crew to give them an enhanced theatre experience.

In 2020, we will be welcoming Peckover School and starting a project with Marshland High School, again providing a professional performance space for their school productions.



The Angles Theatre 40th Anniversary

2018 marked our 40th anniversary. So to celebrate, the whole year was packed full of in-house and professional productions. These included She Stoops To Conquer, which was the first show performed at the newly opened Angles Theatre in 1978, three musicals, six plays, seven youth workshops, five local partner productions and a sell out run of pantomime. We also staged a show simply to celebrate the 40th anniversary and held a Gala Evening to celebrate everything the theatre has achieved. With over 70 performers spanning across the 40 year history performing, it was inspiring to see so many of the original members in the audience over the three nights, all of them still as enthusiastic as they were back in 1978 for the theatres survival.



Seasonal Community Events

Whilst the theatre is a home for many people, we try to engage outside our walls too. We use our 'home' as a base during events like the Christmas Lights Switch On and Rose Fair, attracting the families and friends of our performers and the general public, who quite often have no link to the theatre except that they once stumbled across our Rose Fair BBQ on the forecourt and now come every year to enjoy the food, games and atmosphere we create each year. We are now hosting more events that use our expertise but aren't your typical arts events, from pop-up escape rooms to historic talks to Christmas Bazaars, we are encouraging the use of the theatre for events that will make people enter the building who might never have before.



Keeping the doors open

The theatre has become almost entirely volunteer run. We only employ a cleaner regularly and technical support when necessary. This change has really kept the theatre afloat with multiple unexpected maintenance issues needing urgent attention over the last few years. With the reduction in staffing, a lot more pressure has been put on to our volunteer base, but with the hours the management team have put in to recruitment and retention of volunteers, our numbers have increased.

We have also changed the way we programme events to include more 'headline events' that are designed to bring in money and inspire new volunteers at the same time.

Headline Events

24 Hour Musical

A normal musical will take 6 months of planning, from the time we decide the title to opening night. As a fundraising event, we decided to do it all in 24 hours. The show arrived in a sealed box with us only knowing a list of 10 possible shows. 50 volunteers gathered round the box at 7:30pm on the Friday evening to discover the show they would be working on for the next 24 hours. No preparation was allowed and everyone pulled together as a team to produce a certainly memorable performance. From the event we raised over £1000 profit.

Adult Pantomime

As an alternative New Years Eve party, in 2019 we embarked on adding an additional pantomime with a twist - one that was only open to 18+. With a sell out audience, we broke our bar takings record comfortably and the audience left extremely happy requesting we repeat the experience the following year. As we already had a set and the majority of costumes, the event was a relatively low cost to put on, resulting in an excess of £1000 profit, plus bar sales.



Volunteering

In the last year we have appointed a new Volunteers Manager who has tried to improve relations with existing volunteers and put effort into creating structures, information and procedures to help make volunteering at the theatre a fun experience. Our volunteers are happier than they have been in several years and we are seeing volunteers return to us again who had reduced their commitment in the last 5 years.

One area that has been particularly successful is the bar. We no longer employ bar staff and so the bar is run entirely by volunteers. With fun training sessions and a can-do attitude, the bar has become a particularly popular volunteering sector with all ages of volunteers. We would like to focus on backstage and box office areas in the coming 12 to 18 months.

Over the last three years, we have redecorated the public spaces of the theatre. The bar and entrance areas have become very tired and dated. With the help of a large number of volunteers, the bar was completely overhauled, entrance areas decorated and the front of the building repaired and repainted. The next stage of work will be backstage and the studio spaces.

Volunteer hours during Pantomime Performances

Preshow make up sessions	31
Merchandise selling	40
Bar work	147
FOH	112
Box Office	162
Chaperoning	231
Performers	1152
Technicians	162
Stage Crew	162
Total Hours	2199



Footfall

Footfall is based on the number of times a person engages in an arts activity at the theatre. 2018 saw a bumper year in engagement with our 40th Anniversary season. In 2019, we saw a decline in engagement in Ratzcool, prompting the relaunch in Autumn 2019.

	2016	2017	2018	2019
The Angles Theatre In-house Company -RATz				
Adults Engaged In Arts Activities	2475	2321	2932	2544
Children Engaged In Arts Activities	7990	8099	8497	8555
RATzcool and Holiday Activities				
Children Engaged In Arts Activities	9192	8777	9382	8509
Katy Lilley School of Dance				
Adults Engaged In Arts Activities	1497	1376	1403	1352
Children Engaged In Arts Activities	6204	6864	7555	7320
The Wider Community				
Adults Engaged In Arts Activities	1420	1390	1131	1433
Children Engaged In Arts Activities	362	722	1201	591
Audience				
Adults Engaged In Arts Activities	6085	7254	8026	7583
Children Engaged In Arts Activities	3780	4063	3810	4119
Total Adults Engaged In Arts Activities				
	11477	12341	13492	12912
Total Children Engaged In Arts Activities				
	27528	28525	30445	29094
TOTAL ENGAGED IN ARTS ACTIVITIES				
	39005	40866	43937	42006



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