

adc theatre

Annual Report 2018-2019



Angels in America, ADC Theatre (Photo by Lucia Revel-Chion)



Musical Theatre Gala Night, ADC Theatre (Photo by Helena Fox)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Management Team and Executive Committee of the ADC Theatre are delighted to report another financially and artistically successful year.

Our two venues, the ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom, have provided a wide range of opportunities for students in Cambridge's universities to learn about all aspects of theatre, from acting to directing, writing, backstage work and everything else that goes into making a show. While the ADC Theatre is not itself a student society, it is the home to most of Cambridge's most active student societies, including the Cambridge Footlights, Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Club, and Cambridge University Musical Theatre Society.

The ADC Theatre successfully re-opened after a significant refurbishment during the Summer of 2018, in which the auditorium roof was completely removed and replaced. This gave us the opportunity to install two lighting bridges, which allow for even better lighting designs by students. We also took the opportunity to install new, comfier seats in our auditorium!

Thankfully, the time that the Theatre had been closed did not diminish the students' appetite to stage exciting, innovative and entertaining shows, ranging from plays to musicals, comedy and more. Our 2018-19 season has been an artistically ambitious season that also exceeded our expectations in the number of audience members that went to see our shows.

This report takes the opportunity to look over the highlights of our past year. We hope that you enjoy reading it.

2018-19 Management Team

Victoria Collins: Theatre Manager
Jack Rowan: Operations Manager
James Darby: Operations Manager
Ellie Mitchell: Production Manager
Nathaniel Davies: Technical Manager
Anna Perry: Box Office Administrator
Jenna Hirst: Office Administrator

CONTENTS

Welcome.....	4
About Us.....	6
Resident Companies.....	8
ADC Theatre.....	10
Corpus Playroom.....	12
2018-2019 in Numbers.....	14
Financial Performance.....	16
Student Involvement.....	18
Technical Work.....	20
Community Involvement and Services.....	22
Get Involved and Support Us.....	24
The Team.....	26

WELCOME

The ADC Theatre began as a student-managed venue before it became a department of the University of Cambridge in 1973, but the involvement of students remains at the heart of everything we do. There is no better way for an undergraduate or postgraduate to learn how to become a performer, a production team member or theatre technician. The people who have trod our boards have entered all fields of the arts industry, from illustrious actors such as Sir Ian McKellen and Emma Thompson, to the recent success story of Toby Marlow and Lucy Moss, whose original musical **SIX** debuted at the ADC Theatre before going to the West End and Broadway. Our venues provide the opportunity for the next generation of theatrical talent to grow.

The students are guided in their creative endeavours by a Management team of six staff members, and this group of people had a challenging task on their hands this year: to re-open the ADC Theatre after a significant period of closure due to building redevelopments.

Thankfully, my predecessor as Theatre Manager, Vicky Collins, managed this task with aplomb, and programmed an incredible year of plays, musicals and comedy shows, that were as artistically ambitious as they were financially successful.

Re-opening a student venue after a period of closure brings with it fears that the creatives will not return to stage shows, but I am happy to report that the number of students that were involved with productions in our venues increased this year compared to previous ones.

Our redevelopment gave us many opportunities to improve the technical facilities of our venues, so that we can have students have an experience as close as possible to working with professional-grade systems. The ADC Technical Manager at the time, John Evans, designed two lighting bridges in the roof, which give lighting designers more positions to create beautiful-looking shows. We also took the chance to modernise our theatre lights, buying a new stock of LED lanterns which are more energy-efficient and provide more opportunities for breathtaking designs.

Even with so many changes to the fabric of the building, we worked hard to retain the sense of community that is at the heart of the productions we stage at the ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom. Outside of term time, we program shows produced by non-student amateur companies, and this year set a new bar in their quality, with highlights including the impressive flying car in **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang**, and the debut of the ghostly play **The Girl in the Glass**.

The improvements that we were able to make to the Theatre would not have occurred without the generosity of the University of Cambridge, and the supervision of the ADC Executive Committee, led by its Chairman, Dr Mark Billinge.

When Sir Trevor Nunn managed the ADC Theatre as a student, he described the experience as “an exhilarating contradiction, the most audacious and yet the most responsible times of our lives”. I believe that this combination of ambition and tradition lies at the heart of the ADC Theatre’s success. We allow an opportunity for students and non-students to learn from each other about the creation of theatre, and to push the boundaries of what is technically and artistically possible.

Having recently begun as the Theatre’s new manager, I am excited to build off the fantastic work of the previous year, and hope that the ADC Theatre can continue to be one of the liveliest and most creatively varied venues in the area.

Jamie Rycroft, Theatre Manager



ABOUT US



Wild Honey, ADC Theatre (Photo by Emily Brailsford)

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

Vibrant and varied programmes of drama, comedy, musical theatre and dance are presented at each venue by student groups during the University terms and by local groups long during the vacations. Typically each venue has staged two different productions each night.

Today we aim to provide opportunities for students and 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. The ADC Theatre is still run almost entirely by students, with no faculty involvement.

Training, learning and support are at the heart of everything we do here and we are set up to encourage and to provide help and guidance to all who are interested in creating theatre from the seasoned habitué to the most inexperienced user.

All of 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 met and 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 one of the resident companies of the Theatre.

The ADC Theatre has helped to launch the careers of many theatre luminaries, including Sir Ian McKellen, Rachel Weisz and Emma Thompson.

RESIDENT COMPANIES



Hedda Gabbler, ADC Theatre (Photo by Emily Brailsford)

There are several student companies resident to 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 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 Theatre each season, bringing together some of the finest young theatrical talent in the country and providing unrivalled support for their productions. The ADC Theatre and CUADC are very close partners as the Theatre continues to be owned by CUADC.

Fletcher Players

The Fletcher Players are the drama society of Corpus Christi College and the resident company at the Corpus Playroom. The Fletcher Players are integral to the running of the Playroom, helping with programming and producing up to six shows a term. Named after John Fletcher, alumnus of Corpus and Jacobean playwright, productions by the Fletcher Players showcase new writing, traditional classics, comedy 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 fortnightly Smokers, an original mix of sketches and standup, are the breeding ground for new talent. No other student comedy society champions new talent and new writing more consistently, or provides as many opportunities to try out and develop material.

CUMTS

The Cambridge University Musical Theatre Society are the source of the very best musical theatre taking place in Cambridge. In addition to their mainshows, the Society runs popular Bar Nights and a series of social events throughout the year. Its contribution extends far beyond showcasing existing onstage talent: it aims to encourage training in musical theatre and regularly invites experts and seasoned professionals in the field to run masterclasses for its members.

ADC THEATRE



A Chorus Line, ADC Theatre (Photo by Emily Brailsford)

The ADC Theatre continues to be one of the most popular venues in Cambridge, both with those wishing to create high-quality theatre and those audiences who consume it. We are proud of the quality and quantity of the applications we received for our slots, and we continue to receive more applications for shows by students than we can program.

Over the past twelve months the ADC Theatre programme has offered something for everyone. Our Mainshows, which are performed every evening at 7.45pm, offer an opportunity for theatre creators to take on an artistic or technical challenge in a safe environment. Our Lateshows, which are staged every evening at 11pm, allow for a more Fringe theatre environment, providing high-quality comedy, student new writing, and even circus.

We re-opened the ADC Theatre with a magical production of Shakespeare's **The Tempest**, which kick-started a fantastic autumn season including Alan Bennett's hilarious **The History Boys** and the epic play **Angels in America**. We were proud to stage an impressive production of a story by an incredible writer who once performed at the ADC Theatre: Douglas Adam's **Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency**. This show was especially notable for the technical ambition that the students brought to it, with a revolving stage travelling the audience through a variety of locations.

Every spring season the students deliver an impressive musical theatre production for two weeks, and this year's **Legally Blonde** was not only a technically audacious production, with a set that unfolded and revealed more and more locations, but it was also the best-selling musical we have had on our stage.

The students' willingness to push technical and artistic boundaries was not limited to the Mainshow slots. The ADC Lateshow **War of the Worlds** brought a live orchestra and pyrotechnics, and the original student play **Anna** provided impressive aerial circus performance.

Outside of term time, our non-student amateur companies brought excellent and intriguing plays that were matched by excellent audience numbers. The Combined Actors of Cambridge staged the debut performance of **The Girl in the Glass**, a ghostly tale set in wartime Cambridge that sold out its entire run. The sold-out **Photograph 51**, meanwhile, told the fascinating true story of Rosalind Franklin, the former student at Newnham college in Cambridge who discovered DNA.

While our programming at the ADC Theatre prioritises productions by amateur companies over professional ones, we are happy to continue our close relationship with the Central School of Ballet, whose annual production of **The Nutcracker** provides the perfect family-friendly Christmas show.

CORPUS PLAYROOM



Atomic Jaya, Corpus Playroom (Photo by Kevin Low)

Our L-shaped studio space is Cambridge's primary Fringe venue, showcasing a variety of productions with an emphasis on new student writing. Seasons at the Playroom and the ADC are devised holistically in order to ensure that the two work as complimentary spaces.

The President of the Fletcher Players, which is the dramatic society of Corpus Christi College, has a significant input into Theatre programming both specifically at the Playroom and more generally across the two venues.

Since 2011 the Playroom has been managed by the ADC Theatre and in that time we have seen an increase in audience numbers year on year, and a higher and more consistent calibre of production.

Much like the ADC Theatre, a typical week at the Corpus Playroom has a Mainshow (at 7pm), and a Lateshow (at 9:30pm). This allows the opportunity for both theatre and comedy shows to be performed.

With only 80 seats and an intimate auditorium, the Playroom is the perfect place for Cambridge's best student actors to sink their teeth into challenging roles. This last year at the Playroom, we chose to stage some theatrical classics, including Edward Albee's outrageous **The Goat? or Who is Sylvia**, and the beautiful **Constellations**, in which a couple's relationship develops over a series of parallel universes.

The smaller audience capacity also affords the opportunity for staging more unusual and experimental shows. The student production of Caryl Churchill's **Drunk Enough to Say I Love You** added new dimensions to the script by having the two actors flip a coin every night to find out which characters they would be playing. Works of original student writing like **Bastard** by Billie Collins and a techno adaptation of the Greek tragedy **Electra** were given an opportunity to be performed. Our termly scratch writing night, **Smorgasbord**, continues to provide student writers with the best opportunity to develop their work.

As well as staging serious plays, the Playroom continues to be one of the best places to see stand-up and sketch comedy in Cambridge. Every fortnight the Cambridge Footlights perform a **Playroom Smoker** to test out their latest stand-up material. We were happy to welcome back ADC alumnus **Ken Cheng**, fresh off his national tour and BBC Radio 4 show, to perform his latest show at the venue where he began. The Playroom is also the best space for new comedians to develop their craft, and sketch shows like **Slush** and character-based comedies like **Gail Summerfield** were greeted with excellent audience attendance.

Outside of term time, local amateur companies like the Ministry of Unplanned Occurrences and Corkscrew Theatre Company continue to use the space for Fringe plays, musicals and improvised comedy.

“The ADC has provided, and continues to provide, a great deal of creative energy to the professional theatre.”

Sir Peter Hall

“The ADC is where I learned about Theatre.”

Miriam Margolyes

“Without the ADC Theatre I would never have become a director.”

Sam Mendes

“Few if any training grounds have contributed as much to the performing arts as the ADC Theatre.”

Michael Attenbrough

“We learned the hard way about planning, budgets, cost control, box office, marketing, and the price of failure. For me and my contemporaries, working at the ADC Theatre amounted to an exhilarating contradiction, the most audacious and yet the most responsible time of our lives.”

Sir Trevor Nunn

2018-2019 IN NUMBERS

189

productions at the ADC Theatre
and Corpus Playroom

1,371

students involved at our venues

61,956

tickets sold for events at the
ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom



773

performances at the ADC
Theatre and Corpus Playroom

1,868

students involved in cambridge drama

58%

average capacity

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE



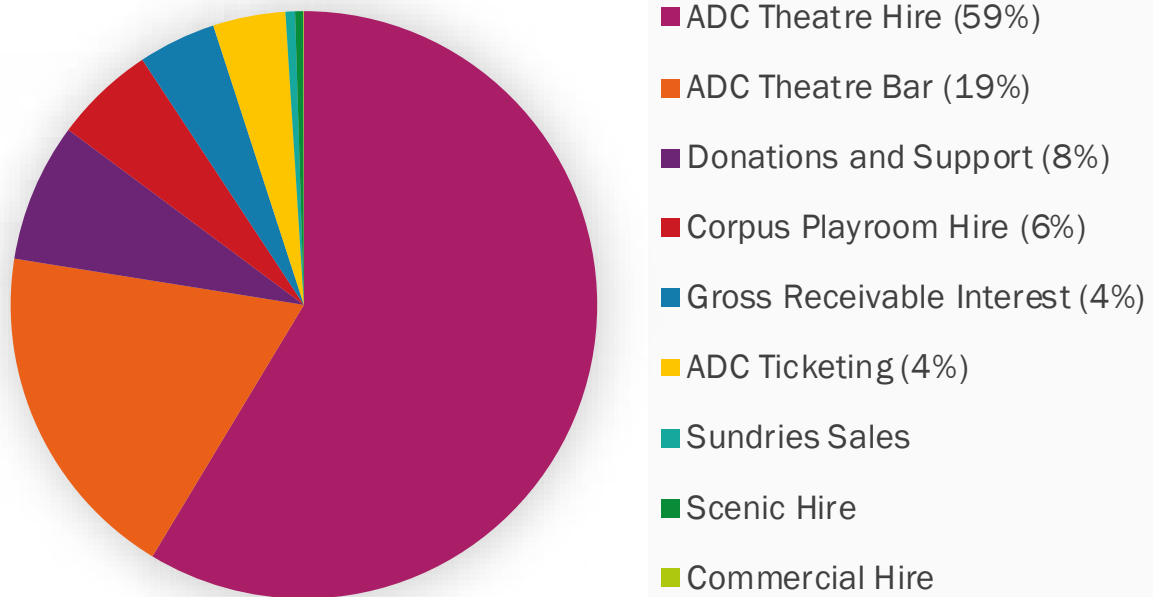
RIBS, ADC Theatre (Photo by Cabriel Humphreys)

We wish to draw your attention to the following:

- Income at the ADC Theatre rose from £156,966 in 2016-17 (the last full year of shows at the ADC Theatre before its refurbishment) to £180,698
- Income from the Corpus Playroom rose to £17,109 from £15,434
- The bar continues to provide a key revenue stream, returning a surplus of £58,173
- Patrons continued to donate generously, with over £20,000 raised this year

Whilst mindful of the need to maintain reserves sufficient to meet the costs of planned theatre improvements and to guard against any future shortfall in revenue, the Executive Committee of the Theatre remains committed to investing any surplus in the Theatre itself, ensuring that it continues to offer both performers and audiences a state-of-the-art experience. This year surplus funds were spent on a new Stage Manager's desk, LED lighting, and a refurbishment of the Theatre's Bar.

ADC Theatre Income



STUDENT INVOLVEMENT



She Loves Me, ADC Theatre (Photo by Helena Fox)

Involvement

Mindful of our wider educational role and constant desire to offer opportunities to all, the year began with a campaign to attract new students to the Theatre community. We worked closely with the CUADC Committee and hosted a social in the ADC Bar during the Friday of Freshers' Week, where new students could receive backstage tours and ask any questions.

CUADC continue to provide three Freshers' Shows that are entirely performed, produced and crewed by those new to Theatre. This year's shows were **Mosquitoes** and **Don Juan Comes Back From the War** in the ADC Theatre, and **The Last of the Haussmans** at the Corpus Playroom. These shows continue to be the best showcase of Cambridge's freshest student talent.

New Writing

The ADC Theatre is committed to providing an opportunity for new student writing to be performed, and our programming structure allows for writers to apply with scripts without the need to have a full team already assembled. Both venues had productions of new writing over the last year that performed well financially.

The most impressive work of student writing continues to be the **CUADC/Footlights Pantomime**, an original musical that has been the largest and most financially successful show

in the ADC Theatre's calendar since it began in 1970. Previous pantomimes have starred Stephen Fry, David Mitchell, Robert Webb and Simon Bird. This year's Pantomime was **The Gingerbread Man**, a wacky and surreal version of the classic story that travelled to outer space and beyond.

Michael Bascom's musical **Cathy: A Retelling of Wuthering Heights** was a highlight at the Corpus Playroom, providing a new spin on Emily Brontë's novel. ADC Lateshows like **Pool Noodles** and **Comic Sans Men** were also new works of comedic student writing, the perfect type of show for a mostly student audience to see late at night.



Angels in America, ADC Theatre (Photo by Lucia Revel-Chion)

TECHNICAL WORK



Richard III, ADC Theatre (Photo by Harry Redding)

Improvements to Technical Systems

The closure of the ADC Theatre in Summer 2018 provided the perfect opportunity to make improvements to the technical systems in the venue, so that student technicians can use equipment that is as close to professional standards as possible. The lighting system has been entirely reworked to remove any reliance on dimmers, which were very old and not particularly energy-efficient. The new lighting patch makes it easy to use LED lanterns, meaning that student lighting designers have much more control over the colours they wish to use.

The ADC Theatre now has a new, custom Stage Manager's desk, designed and built by Technical Manager at the time, John Evans. This new desk (pictured on the page opposite) allows for a Deputy Stage Manager to control lighting and sound from this off-stage position, which is especially useful for Lateshow performances which sometimes have only one operator. The improvements in monitors and cue lights also means that any former Stage Managers from the ADC Theatre will find their transition into the world of professional technical theatre as smooth as possible.

Maintenance Camp

Every Summer the ADC Technical Manager runs a technical camp in which student technicians help to make vital repairs to the building. This is an excellent opportunity for students to learn useful technical skills including lantern maintenance, cable pulling and set building. This year's Camp was a success, with 60 attendees over the course of the week and the following projects completed:

- Maintenance of our counterweight flying system
- Improvements to the braking speed of the safety curtain
- Finishing the renovation to the lighting patching system
- Fixing issues with the backstage and Front of House paging system

Technical Ambition in Shows

We continue to be impressed by the level of technical ambition that students bring to their shows. Over the last year, we have seen a different set, lighting design and sound design on the ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom stage each week. There have been revolving stages, flying setpieces and unfolding box sets, all entirely designed and constructed by students. While the ADC Theatre Management team guides students through the technical process and ensures the safety and feasibility of every show, the primary job of teaching technical skills continues to be a shared and collaborative process among the student community.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & SERVICES



King Charles III, ADC Theatre (Photo by Ben Kybett)

Work experience

In June, one GCSE pupil completed their work experience in the Theatre. The pupil shadowed each member of the ADC's Management Team and learnt about marketing, running a Box Office, Technical Theatre and Theatre Administration. The pupil also got involved with stewarding a performance.

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 135 performances, selling 16,517 tickets. This generated an income of £12,316 to the ADC Theatre via our 9% Box Office Commission.

Clients for ADC Ticketing include Cambridge University Musical Society, City of Cambridge Symphony Orchestra, East Anglia Chamber Orchestra and Camerata Musica.

Hire business

The provision of ready-assembled packages has continued to prove very useful and has encouraged those less experienced in technical theatre to hire equipment for external events and productions.

ADC TICKETING IN NUMBERS

135
performances

16,517
tickets sold

£12,316
income from ADC Ticketing

**GET INVOLVED
& SUPPORT US**



Conversations with Myself, Corpus Playroom (Photo by Helena Fox)

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 and get closer to the theatre you love by becoming an ADC Friend for £45 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.

Our friends scheme continues to grow, with 201 current members helping to -support us.

THE TEAM



The Djinns of Eidgah, Corpus Playroom (Photo by Anna Gawedzka)

2018-19 Executive Committee

Dr Mark Billinge [Chair]
Richard Barnes
Sarah Cain
Victoria Collins
James Darby
Diane Gaskin
Amy Hefferman
Zak Karimjee
Tom Nunan
Lucia Revel-Chion
Alex Ridley
Jack Rowan
David Todd-Jones
Robin Walker
Isabella Woods

2018-19 Management Team

Victoria Collins: Theatre Manager
Jack Rowan: Operations Manager
James Darby: Operations Manager
Ellie Mitchell: Production Manager
Nathaniel Davies: Technical Manager
Anna Perry: Box Office Administrator
Jenna Hirst: Office Administrator

Casual Staff

62 casual staff members worked as Box Office Assistants, Bar Staff, Front of House Support and Playroom Duty Managers.

The ADC continues to provide an opportunity for young people to gain work experience in customer service roles in a supportive environment and offers a means whereby they can be provided with positive references when they go on to apply for other jobs.

Thank you

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 Alex Brett, Alan Egan and Paul Gotch.

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

adc theatre



The Gingerbread Man, ADC Theatre (Photo by Emily Brailsford)