



The Byre Theatre
and
The Legacy It Leaves Behind

~

A personal response to the Byre
by Nishka Dalmia, undergraduate and Byre Archive Intern
Summer 2024

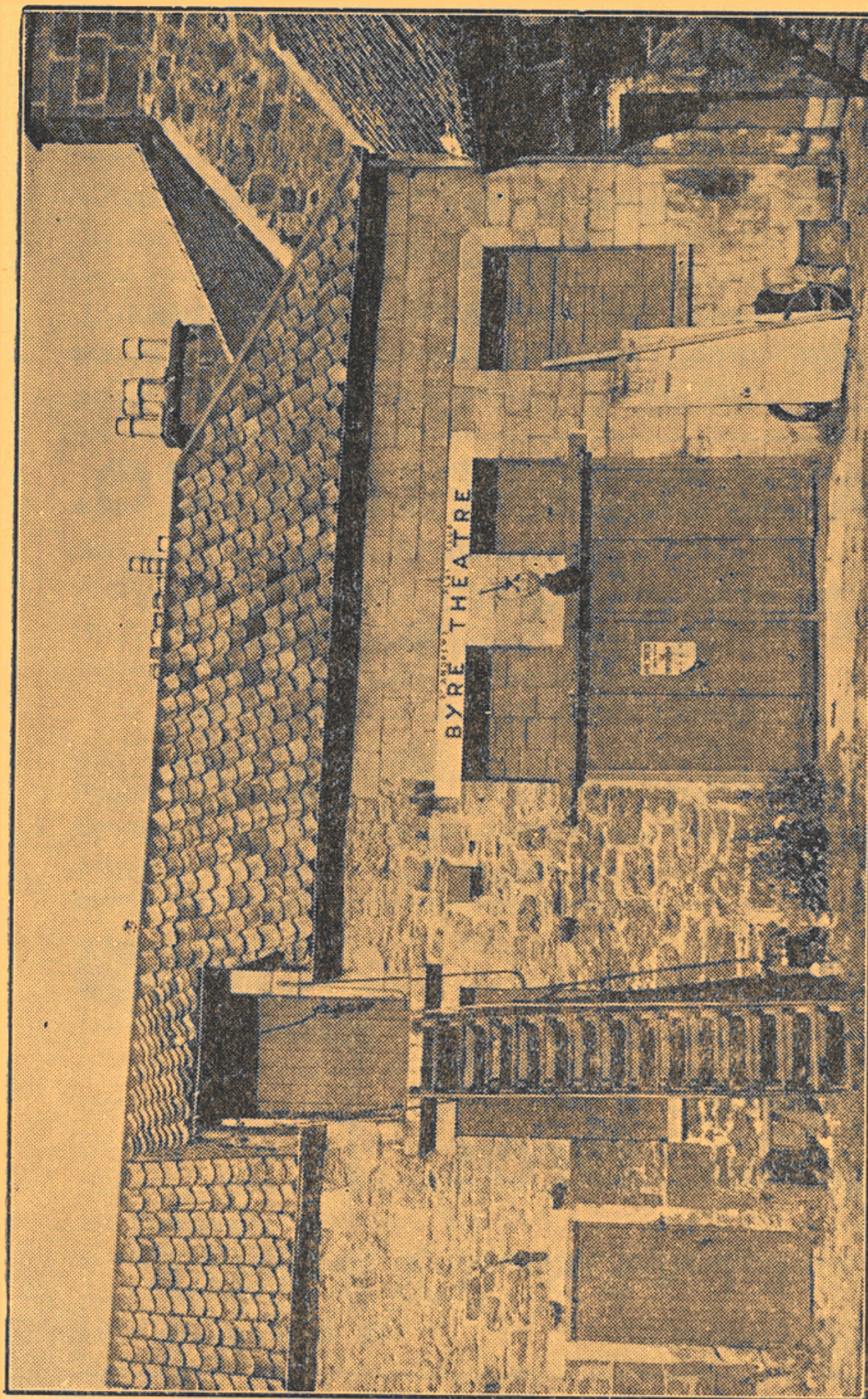


| Byre
Theatre

In the archive room of the Byre Theatre, time becomes fluid. I sift through photographs - the original Byre, a humble structure born of community will, and blueprints for the current building where I sit.

Each document tells a fragment of a larger story, one I've unwittingly become part of.

At seventeen, I arrived in St Andrews, 4,000 miles from home. The town was a labyrinth of unfamiliarity until I pushed open the Byre's doors on Abbey Street. The warmth that enveloped me wasn't just physical; it was a sense of belonging I hadn't realized I'd been seeking.



The Byre Theatre In Early Days

Picture from a 1960 Program produced by the Byre Theatre

As I catalogue the archive, a pattern emerges. The Byre, I discover, has always been more than a building. It's a commitment - a community's dedication to storytelling and cultural preservation. I see it in faded programmes, in minutes from the various meetings, in handwritten notes on play scripts.

Amidst the archive's treasures, I found a collection of programmes from the 1980s. Their faded colours and vintage designs tell their own story of changing times and enduring passion. I've included images of these programmes here - each cover a window into a moment when the curtain rose, the lights dimmed, and the Byre came alive with another tale. These fragile paper time capsules remind us that while faces and productions may change, the heart of theatre beats on, steady and true.

1959



Programme

Director :

A. B. Paterson, M. B. E.

Deputy :

Brian Bell

Fisher & Donaldson

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The Byre Theatre Company

PRESENTS

THE ENTERTAINER

BY

JOHN OSBORNE

with music by
JOHN ADDISON

October 5th—24th 1959

The Characters

BILLY RICE	Ronald Wilkinson
JEAN RICE	Veronica Baird
PHOEBE RICE	Marie Linde
ARCHIE RICE	Brian Bell
FRANK RICE	Michael Hutton
GRAHAM	Peter Milner
BROTHER BILL RICE	Michael Hutton

Play directed by BRIAN BELL

Stage Managed by PAT DEVLIN and PAMELA MILES

Setting devised by the Producer
and executed by RONALD TODD and PAT DEVLIN

At the Piano: ANN ROCHE

The play is set in The Grand Theatre and a Suburban house
in a large English coastal resort—1956.

OVERTURE

1. Billy and Jean.
2. Archie Rice—"Don't take him seriously!"
3. Billy, Jean and Phoebe.
4. Archie Rice—"In trouble again."
5. Billy, Jean, Phoebe and Archie.

Intermission

6. Billy, Phoebe, Jean, Archie and Frank.
7. Archie Rice—"Interrupts the Programme."
8. Billy, Phoebe, Jean, Archie and Frank.

Intermission

9. Frank Rice—"Singing for You."
10. Billy, Phoebe, Jean, Archie and Frank.
11. The Good Old Days Again.
12. Jean and Graham—Archie and Bill.
13. Archie Rice—"The One and Only."

NOTE

The Music Hall is dying, and with it a significant part of Britain. Some of the heart of Britain has gone; something that once belonged to everyone, for this was truly a folk art. In writing this play, I have used some of the techniques of the Music Hall because I believe that these can solve some of the eternal problems of time and space that face the dramatist and, also, it has been relevant to the story and setting. Not only has this technique its own traditions, its own convention and symbol, its own mystique, it cuts right across the restrictions of the so-called naturalistic stage. Its contact is immediate, vital and direct.

JOHN OSBORNE

Our next production is Jean Anouilh's compelling play *Antigone*. This is a very fine and exciting play and we hope that you will enjoy it. It opens on October 26th and runs for a fortnight.

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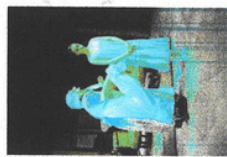
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Delving deeper into the archives, I uncover a trove of visual history: production stills frozen in time, contact sheets filled with captured moments, and behind-the-scenes snapshots that reveal the hidden magic of theatre-making. These images offer an intimate glimpse into the Byre's past, bringing to life the creative process and the people who breathed life into each production. In every grainy photograph and well-worn negative, I see the passion and dedication that have always been the lifeblood of this place. These visual records do more than document; they tell the story of countless hours of rehearsal, the nervous energy before opening nights, and the camaraderie that forms in the pursuit of artistic expression.

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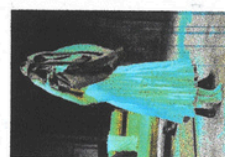
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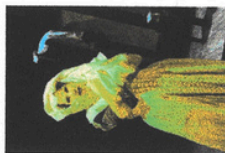
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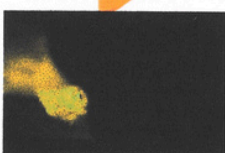
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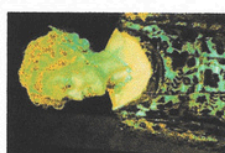
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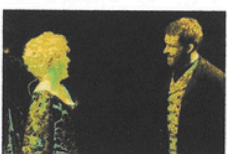
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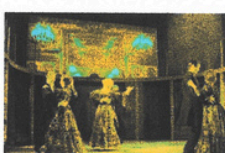
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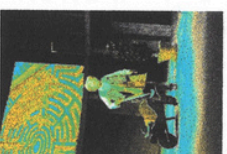
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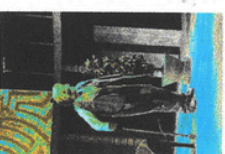
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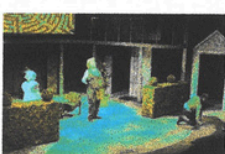
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Production Still from the play, 'The Sleeping Garden', 2003

BYRE THEATRE SEASON 2003/4

The Secret Garden
Book and Lyrics by Marsha Norman
Music by Lucy Simon
Based on the novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Cast

Mary Lennox...Vikki Fallow*
Lily...Annette Yeo ✓
Fakir...Ali De Souza
Captain Albert Lennox...Nicholas Maude
Rose Lennox...Vanessa Clarke
Alice...Eithne Browne ✓
Lieutenant Peter Wright...Davor Golub
Lieutenant Ian Shaw...Andrew Keelan ✓
Major Holmes...Peter Edbrook ✓
Claire Holmes...Christine McKenna
Ayah...Shireen Morris
Mrs Shelley...Christine McKenna ✓
Major Shelley...Peter Edbrook ✓
Mrs Medlock...Eithne Browne ✓
Archibald Craven...Earl Carpenter
Dr Neville Craven...Davor Golub
Martha...Claire Knight ✓
Ben Weatherstaff...Peter Edbrook ✓
Dickon...Andrew Keelan ✓
Colin...Rory McLeod*
Mrs Winthrop...Christine McKenna
Nurse...TBC*
Jane...TBC*
William...TBC*
Timothy...TBC*

* Members of St Andrews Youth Theatre

Production Team

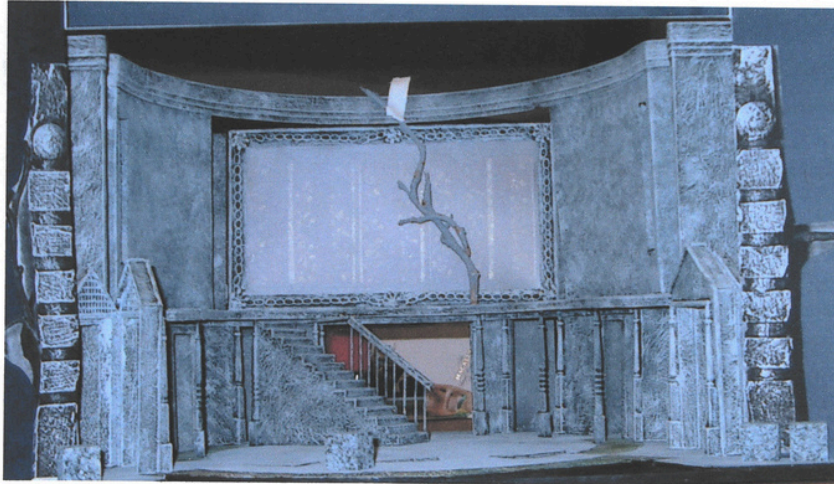
Director Ken Alexander
Musical Director Jon Beales
Associate Director/Musical Staging Rita Henderson
Designer Charles Cusick Smith
Lighting Designer Simon Wilkinson
Sound Design & Operation Paul Smith, Apex Acoustics
Associate Director Steven Little
Production Manager Peter Hargreaves
Master Carpenter Ron Kiddell
Wardrobe Supervisor Liz McCafferty
Scenic Artist Patsy Large
Stage Manager Tricia MacLean
Deputy Stage Manager (On the Book) Hazel Price
Assistant Stage Manager Demelza Haines
Assistant Stage Manager Emma Skaer
Technician Neil Fenwick
Assistant Carpenter Kris Smart
Assistant Scenic Artist Caroline Alexander

First Call: 10.30am, Monday 7 July at the Byre Theatre, Abbey Street, St Andrews
(see over for details)

Ken Alexander

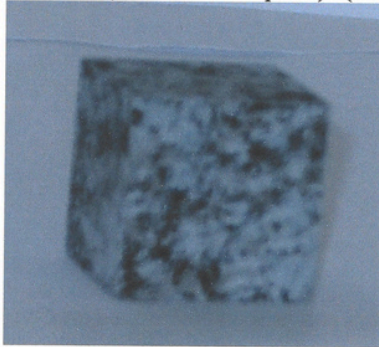
Production team from the play, 'The Sleeping Garden', 2003

THE SECRET GARDEN SET BREAKDOWN



Pros Profiles
SI/SR
5400 high x 1200 wide flat
16cm deep
2 x 300 diam balls at £7 each on top
Branches fixed to flat

4 x boxes (2 either side of prosc) (fire exit issue through voms)



500 x 500
will open up to reveal flower/brush arrangement

Set breakdown from the play, 'The Sleeping Garden', 2003

What strikes me most is the resilience. The Byre's journey, from its inception, has been fraught with challenges. Yet, in every era, people rallied. They refused to let the curtain fall. This perseverance resonates with me, echoing my own journey to find my place in a new world.

The archive reveals a tapestry of lives intertwined with the Byre. Students finding their voice on stage, local playwrights seeing their words come to life, families making memories at pantomimes. It's a testament to the power of storytelling, yes, but more so to the community that recognized its value.



Dear Cast,

I am writing to tell you how much I enjoyed your performance of "The Secret Garden."

I came to see your performance on Wednesday the 20th August, and I must say it inspired me even more into the art of acting. I am only twelve so, I haven't done that much acting, although I've done nativity plays since I was six and school shows since I was eight. This year I managed to achieve the main part in our school show, "The Rocky Monster Show".



"The Secret Garden", I would like to thank you for your contribution to the production. I am thrilled to see you and I hope that it helps to develop your talent.

If you are thinking of a career, then my best advice is to do as many productions as you can (school time) and as you can. The best way to learn, is by participating and observing.

In my experience, is by participating and observing.

I am delighted to enclose a photograph of the show and I hope you visit The Byre again in the future. In the meanwhile, I wish you all the best for your start at Glenalmond School in September.

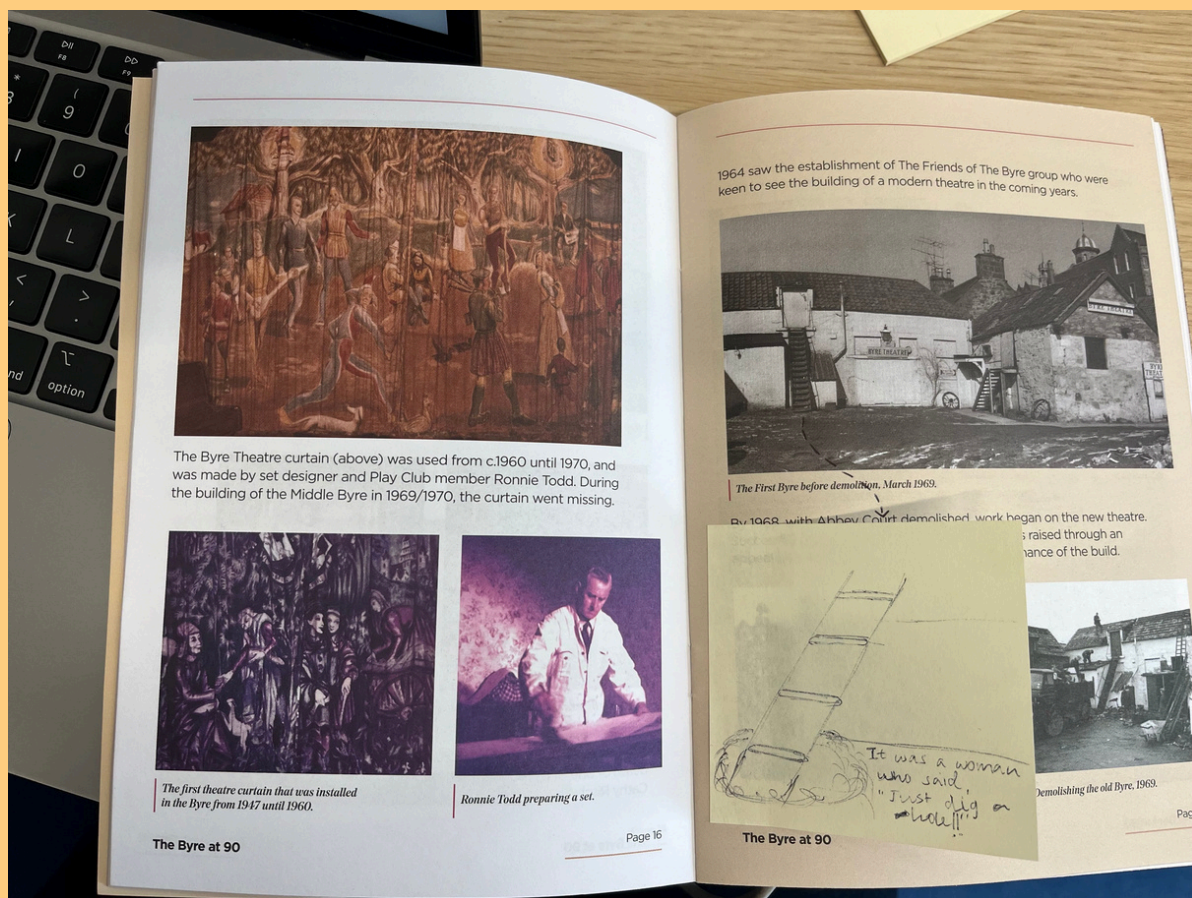
Yours sincerely

Ken Alexander
Artistic Director

Enc

As I add my notes to the archive, I realize I'm not just documenting history. I'm participating in it. The Byre, I now understand, isn't just a theatre. It's a living entity, sustained by generations of people who believed in the importance of having a cultural heart in their town.

In piecing together the Byre's past, I've found my present and glimpsed our shared future. This room, full of memories, holds stories waiting to be rediscovered. As I create bookmarks with snippets of the Byre's history, I hope to bridge generations - helping others find, as I did, that home can be a place where stories live and breathe, even far from where we started. These small tokens of the past may just be the key to unlocking the Byre's future in the hearts of a new St Andrews.



My illustration for a story I came across while archiving, placed alongside the actual picture of the setting



With the help of many members of our community, the Byre now has records of over 500 scripts, 50 boxes of glass photographic plates, around 300 CDs and DVDs, many more folders of photographs, old documents, and some lovely old letters.

Although the project has been a great success so far, there is still a gap in materials from over the last 40 years. No artifact relevant to the Byre is too new or old, it's all part of our shared history. If you have anything from photographs, programmes, scripts, recordings to video footage, the Byre would love to see it.

Please don't give us any original copies or objects. Instead, you can send us photos, scans, descriptions or a note of any stories you have up your sleeve. Email is the easiest way to get in touch. Contact byreboxoffice@st-andrews.ac.uk.



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