

15: HISTORY

The New London Theatre is built on the site of previous taverns and music hall theatres. A tavern became known as the Great Mogul by the end of the 17th century, and presented entertainments in an adjoining hall. The Mogul Saloon was built on the site in 1848, and in 1851, it became the Middlesex Music Hall.

This in turn was rebuilt as the New Middlesex Theatre of Varieties, in 1911 by Frank Matcham for Oswald Stoll. In 1919, the theatre was sold to George Grossmith and Edward Laurillard, refurbished and reopened as the Winter Garden Theatre, presenting comedies and musical theatre. In the 20th century, the theatre enjoyed mixed success, closing in the 1930s, reopening in 1942 and closing permanently in 1959. This theatre was demolished in 1965 to be replaced in 1973 by the current building Designed by Paul Tvrkovic and first opened in 1973 with Peter Ustinov's play "The Unknown Soldier and his Wife"

The theatre also hosted the 1977 BBC Sports Personality of the Year and the Masters snooker between 1976 and 1978.

Principal Dates

1972

The New London's auditorium first opened, under the supervision of Bernard Delfont, with a television recording of Marlene Dietrich's one-woman show.

1973

The official opening was in January with *The Unknown Soldier and his Wife*, written by and starring Peter Ustinov and featuring his daughter Tamara Ustinov and Brian Bedford; *Grease* followed with Richard Gere as Danny Zuko.

1974

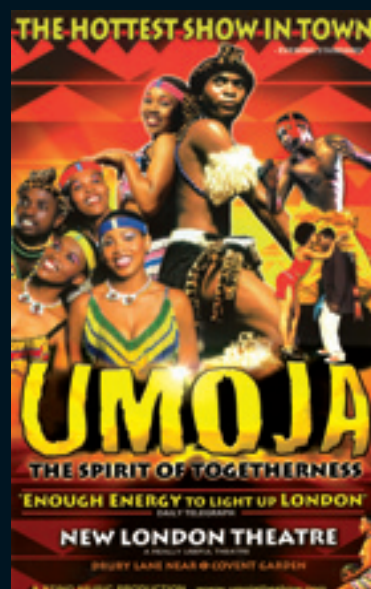
Sheila Hancock and George Cole starred in *Deja Revue* directed by Victor Spinetti.

1975

Brice Forswyth had a successful run with his one-man show; various short seasons included *Kwazulu*, *Africa*' *Musical Explosion* and John Hanson in Ivor Novello's *Glamorous Night*.

1976

Leave Him to Heaven, a roll and roll musical starring Brian Protheroe heading a cast that featured Steven Pacey and Anita Dobson. Bernard Miles starred in his Mermaid Theatre production of *Treasure Island*.



1977

Lionel, a musical created from the works of Lionel Bart with a cast that included Avis Bunnage, Marian Montgomery, Clarke Peters and a very young Todd Carty. Steven Berkoff directed and appeared in his own adaptation of *Kafka's Metamorphosis*.

1978

Berkoffs East and The Fall of the House of Usher.

1977-1980

The auditorium was used as a television studio, including early broadcasts of championship snooker. The whole building was occasionally put to use as a conference centre as had been intended in the buildings revolutionary design.

1981

The opening of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Cats* starring Elaine Paige, Brian Blessed, Wayne Sleep, Paul Nicholas, Sarah Brightman and Bonnie Langford. Direction was by Trevor Nunn with choreography by Gillian Lynne.

1991

The building was purchased by Andrew Lloyd Webber's Really Useful Group, and, in turn, the year 2000 saw it become part of Really Useful Theatres when Andrew Lloyd Webber and Bridgepoint Capital purchased Stoll Moss Theatres.

2002

January heard the announcement that *Cats*, the longest running musical in the West End and Broadway History, was to close. The show ended the first of its nine lives, on its 21st birthday, 11 May 2002. The final performance was also broadcast on a large screen in the Covent Garden Piazza.

Prior to the opening of *Umoja – The Spirit of Togetherness*, the building underwent an extensive programme of work to reinstate the original stage machinery and auditorium features which made it so versatile that on its opening in 1976 it was hailed as 'Europe's revolutionary new entertainment venue'. Given the opportunity of designing a 'theatre for the future', the architects (Paul Tvrkovic in association with Sean Kenny, famous for his original *Oliver*' set, Chew and Percival) incorporated many revolutionary features, notably the stunning 60'-wide revolve which includes the stage, orchestra-pit and part of the seating.

2003

Bill Kenwright's new production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* saw the building welcoming new generations into its spacious foyers and auditorium prior to the arrival of the *Blue Man Group* and a whole new theatre experience.

2005 Onwards

Since December 2005 the New London Theatre has been owned 100% by the Really Useful Group Limited.