

The Grand Opera House, Belfast

What is The Grand Opera House?

The Grand Opera House is a theatre in Belfast. Frank Matcham, a well-known theatre architect, designed the building. It is the only theatre that he designed anywhere in Ireland. The theatre opened on 23rd December 1895.



Past Performances

The pantomime 'Blue Beard' was the first show in the newly opened theatre. As well as pantomime, early audiences were treated to comedies, dramas, opera and Shakespeare plays.

Over the years, the Grand Opera House has hosted circus performances, ballets, musicals and family shows. It was also used as a cinema for many years. Pantomimes have been part of the holiday season at the theatre for over a century. The production of 'Beauty and the Beast' in 2019/2020 was the 30th pantomime to feature Northern Ireland theatre legend May McFettridge.

Over the years, famous figures and entertainers that have graced the stage of the Grand Opera House include Charlie Chaplin, Laurence Olivier, Luciano Pavarotti, Darcey Bussell and Laurel and Hardy.

History of the Theatre

The Grand Opera House is the only remaining theatre built during the Victorian era in Northern Ireland. In 1972, during the Troubles, the building was closed and boarded up. It faced possible demolition. The historic theatre was saved after becoming the first building in Belfast to be awarded Grade A building status. This designation meant that the building was considered 'of greatest importance to Northern Ireland'. After five years of renovations the Grand Opera House reopened in 1980. Further restoration work was necessary after the changing block and other parts of the building were damaged by bombings in 1991 and 1993.



The new millennium brought more renovations to the theatre, including the 'Baby Grand' studio, an additional performance space, which opened in 2006. In 2017, restoration to the façade of the iconic building and its famous statue of Mercury the Roman god was completed.