Most Haunted THEATRES

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YVETTE FIELDING

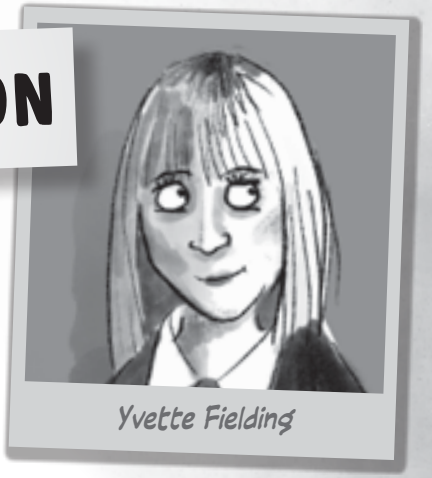
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INTRODUCTION



Do you believe in ghosts? I do now. I was uncertain what to believe when I was growing up, but I was fascinated and frightened in equal measure. My strange journey into the world of the paranormal began over twenty years ago when my husband Karl and I decided to make a television show about ghosts so we could share our interest with everyone. It was called *Most Haunted* and it changed our lives for ever. Could we spend the night alone in haunted locations with a television camera crew?

After a great deal of thought and a lot of enthusiastic chatter between us and our chosen camera crew, we all excitedly agreed that we could – and were eager to get started as ghost hunters.

It was during the first series of filming *Most Haunted* back in 2002 that we were allowed to spend the night in one of Britain's most famous theatres, the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in London.

Armed with a bag of basic ghost-hunting equipment – which consisted of torches, electromagnetic field monitors, pieces of chalk, a stills camera and night-vision cameras – we felt we were ready for anything paranormal that came our way. Over time, as the TV series grew in popularity, so did our ghost-hunting equipment and the bags became heavier and heavier, with all sorts of gadgets and gizmos – you'll learn about all of these later in this book.

It was during this investigation at Drury Lane that I fell in love with the solitude and quietness of empty haunted theatres – but my goodness me, these buildings really come alive at night. It was during this particular investigation that I witnessed my first ghost. It was an experience I'll never forget.

So, what you're about to read are some of my most favourite haunted theatres that I've been lucky enough to investigate with my ghost-hunting team. Perhaps after reading about my spooky adventures, you might decide to go and visit them too.

If you do, keep a watch out, especially for the most famous theatre ghost, the man in grey!

THE THEATRE ROYAL

LOCATION

DRURY LANE, LONDON



GHOSTS

THE MAN IN GREY

CHARLES MACKLIN

JOSEPH GRIMALDI

DAN LENO



PARANORMAL ACTIVITY

ORBS

FLASHES OF COLOURED LIGHT

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT TAMPERED WITH

COLD SPOTS

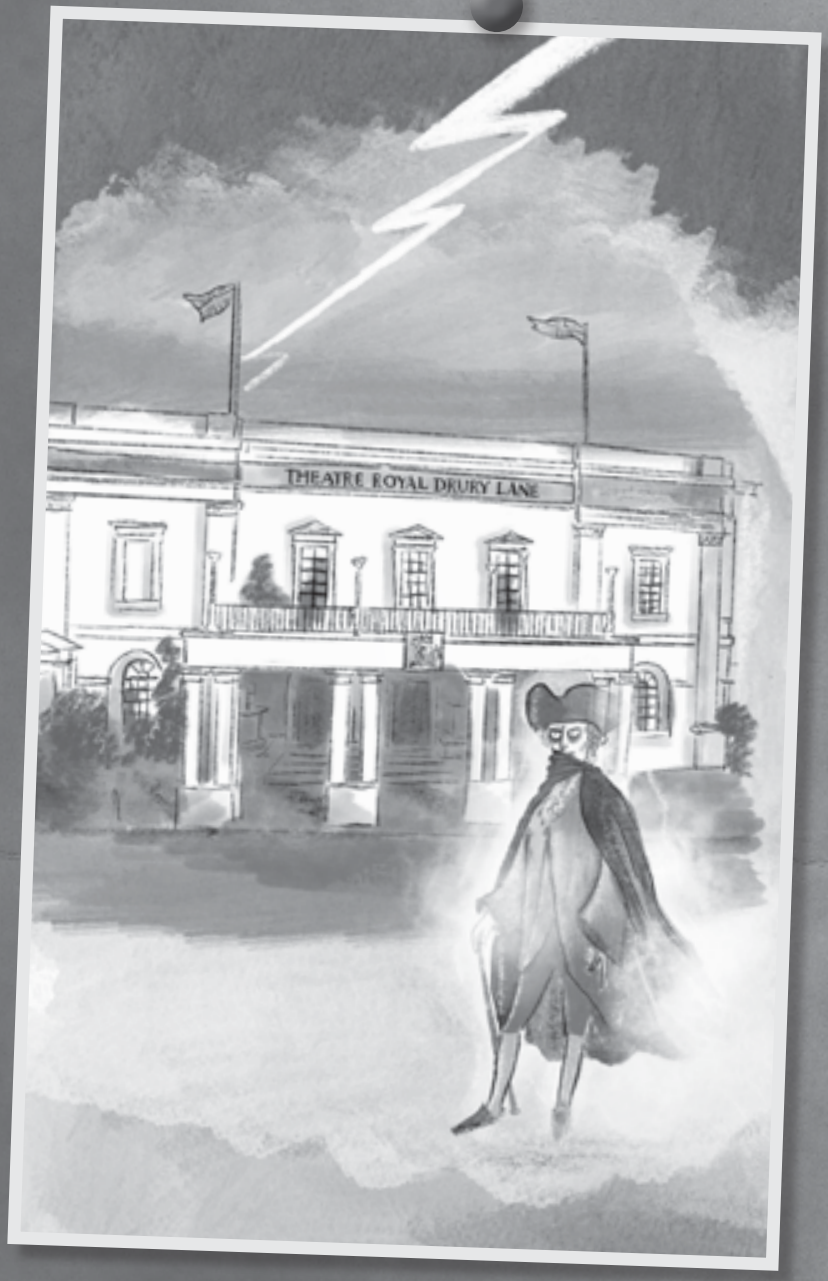
SMELLS OF LAVENDER

SOUNDS OF WHISPERING

FULL GHOSTLY APPARITIONS

BEING TOUCHED AND HIT

POLTERGEIST ACTIVITY



THE HISTORY





Theatre Royal

The Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, is the oldest theatre in London and the original site dates back to the seventeenth century. As you can imagine, its stage has played host to many a famous play and musical throughout the years including *The Lord of the Rings* musical, *Shrek* and *Frozen*. And

it's actually the place where 'Rule Britannia' was heard for the very first time by the British public.

The first theatre was built on the site in 1663 by Thomas Killigrew, but it didn't last long as it was consumed by a fire nine years later. The theatre was then rebuilt by the ever-patient Mr Killigrew and remained a popular and successful theatre for nearly 120 years. By then the building needed to be renovated, so its owner at the time, Richard Sheridan, oversaw the demolition of the old theatre and built a new one. Sadly, Mr Sheridan too was to become a victim of fire and, shortly after it was finished, he watched his beloved new theatre go up in flames. Thankfully, a new theatre was designed by Benjamin Dean Wyatt in 1812 and is the building you can still see today. The Theatre Royal has staged thousands of plays and musicals, including *42nd Street* and

Miss Saigon. And making its recent debut there was Disney's *Frozen* production. The theatre is now owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber.

So, who haunts this famous building? Whoever they were, they certainly want to be noticed now! It's the regularity and consistency of the paranormal activity that has been witnessed there so often that makes it such a haunted hotspot and why it is reputed to be the most haunted theatre in the world.

THE HAUNTINGS

THE MAN IN GREY

The ghost of a man in grey is the most famous apparition reported to have been seen at the theatre. It has been spotted many times and quite regularly. The most fascinating sighting was in 1939 when half the cast of a show called *The Dancing Years* were positioned on stage for a photo call. Everyone watched on in amazement and fear as they witnessed a tall ghostly man dressed in grey eighteenth-century clothing, wearing a tricorn hat and a long riding cloak, walk slowly between the rows of seats in the upper circle of the theatre then disappear silently through a wall.

How did all of those people see the same apparition at the same time?

And who was the man in grey? And why does he continue to haunt the theatre?

Some people believe that it could be the ghost of the man whose skeletal remains were discovered in the theatre in the 1800s. During some renovations, builders found that part of a covered wall sounded hollow. They were certain there was a room behind the wall and so, with the theatre's permission, they smashed through the brickwork and plaster to discover a dark secret passageway.



As the builders clambered through all the fallen masonry and into the newly found space, they came across something no one was expecting: a skeleton.

As you can imagine, all the men were totally shocked, as were the staff and owners of the theatre. Weirdly though, the wall the skeleton was found behind is the exact same one that the ghost of the man in grey has been seen disappearing through. The mystery man's bones gave clues to his demise: he was found with his skeletal mouth open wide as if his last breaths were long and torturous. The remaining scraps of clothes he wore were grey and a dagger had been plunged into his ribcage. So, who killed him and why was his body sealed up behind a brick wall?

Some say that the man in grey was an actor at the theatre, possibly Arnold Woodruff, who was

allegedly involved in a fight with another man over the love of a woman.

Then who was the other man involved in the fatal fight? Who plunged the dagger? Could it have been another actor? Some say it was the notorious Charles Macklin.

The mystery has never been solved. But I believe the man in grey is Arnold Woodruff and I will never forget the night when *I* saw him, well, part of him, with my own bewildered and terrified eyes. (More on this later.)

CHARLES MACKLIN (1699–1797)

Charles Macklin was an Irish actor and dramatist. He is no longer famous for his talents on stage, the plays he wrote, or the fact that he revolutionised acting techniques. He is best known for the murder of a fellow thespian, Thomas Hallam. The story goes that the two actors were in the green room of the theatre when a fight broke out over a wig. Charles, in a fit of rage shouted out: 'Goddamn you for a blackguard, scrub, rascal!' and then proceeded to plunge his cane into Thomas's eye – killing him instantly. Amazingly, Charles wasn't found guilty and didn't go to prison. The court declared the case an 'accidental killing'.



A frightening spectre has been seen in the backstage area of the theatre. He's described as a tall, thin ugly ghost. Some people say this is the spirit of Charles Macklin, who likes to walk around the corridors and dressing rooms, before finally stopping on the spot where he killed Thomas Hallam. Maybe his spirit cannot rest, his guilt consuming his very soul.

Charles Macklin could well have been the killer of Arnold Woodruff (the man in grey) as his dates coincide with the dating of the bones found. As we can see, Mr Macklin had a furious temper when riled. Could he have been the one to plunge the dagger deep into the body of Arnold Woodruff and hide his body? What do you think?

JOSEPH GRIMALDI (1778-1837)

Another famous ghost reportedly sighted at the Theatre Royal is that of Joseph Grimaldi. Grimaldi was known as the 'father of clowns' and invented the made-up face of a clown that is so recognisable around the world today.

Joseph was a very fit and energetic man; he had to be, as his act included tumbling and acrobatics. He would perform on stage at the Theatre Royal, finish his act, then run over to the Sadler's Wells theatre and perform on that stage to a packed-out audience.

He was a dedicated artist, but sadly he didn't live to a ripe old age, as the years of his acrobatics led him to be crippled towards the end of his life.

Many actors since his death say they have felt his presence on stage with them. In fact, the

story goes that if the ghost of Mr Grimaldi isn't happy with your performance, he'll give you a kick up the bum.



DAN LENO (1860–1904)

Some people report detecting the smell of lavender in the backstage area of the Theatre Royal – and this is associated with the ghost of legendary pantomime dame Dan Leno. He performed at the theatre on at least twenty occasions. He sadly died in 1904, but since then there have been several reports of seeing his ghost and smelling the sweet scent of lavender, followed by poltergeist activity backstage and in the dressing room area. I think the old pantomime dame has never stopped performing and loves nothing more than to play tricks and pranks on unsuspecting actors waiting in the wings.

One actor quite recently told his story of being alone in his dressing room when suddenly the television began to change channels of its own accord. He tried to use the remote control