

# Variety Theatre

## **Suitable for:**

Second Level

## **Outcomes:**

By the end of the session, participants will have:

- Learned about the King's Theatre
- Explored what Variety Theatre is
- Designed a costume for a performer

## **Curriculum links:**

Expressive Arts:  
EXA 1-02a, EXA 1-03a,  
EXA 1-05a

Social Studies:  
SOC 1-02a

## **Resources needed:**

- variety theatre presentation (included)
- 1 template per person (included on pages 7 & 8)
- craft supplies i.e. tissue paper, coloured tape, sequins, feathers
- colouring pencils and pens
- scissors
- glue sticks

## **Prior knowledge needed:**

This lesson plan works best when pupils have some understanding of what a theatre is, what genre is, and who might perform on a theatre stage. Pupils don't need to have any prior knowledge of the King's Theatre, but you may wish to explore this as a class [here](#).

# Variety Theatre

Activity & timing	Description	Projected outcomes
<p>The King's Theatre &amp; context <b>5 minutes</b></p>	<p>Ask pupils to sit on carpet in front of Smart Board if there is space. (otherwise at their own desks).</p> <p>Show a picture of the King's Theatre (<i>Slide 2</i>), ask if anyone recognises this building. Ask if anyone has been to see a show there?</p> <p>Explain that the King's Theatre was built in 1906 and has been a very important theatre to the people of Edinburgh ever since.</p> <p>You may wish to give more context and information on the King's Theatre redevelopment. For more information please see our <a href="#">website</a>.</p> <p>Show a photo of the auditorium pre-closure (<i>Slides 3 &amp; 4</i>) and ask if anyone knows what kind of shows have typically been put on the King's Theatre stage. (Pantomimes, dramas, community theatre shows, operas)</p>	<p>Pupils share prior knowledge</p> <p>Pupils get context for the session</p>
<p>What is Variety Theatre? <b>5 - 10 minutes</b></p>	<p>Explain that today you are exploring Variety Theatre.</p> <p>Ask pupils to turn to the person next to them and discuss what they think Variety Theatre is. Give a timer of 1 minute then ask up to 3 pairs to share their thoughts.</p> <p>Variety Theatre is a show with a variety of acts, performed by a variety of people. This type of show was very popular in the mid-1900s.</p>	<p>Pupils learn about a genre of theatre</p>

	<p>In the early days of the King's Theatre, there was a regular Variety show called the Half Past Eight Show, which then became the Five Past Eight Show. (Slide 5)</p> <p>Some examples of types of acts in a typical Variety Show are: Comedy sketches, music, singing and dancing, and a big song and dance with every act involved.</p> <p>Explain that nowadays, you don't see much Variety Theatre on stages, but that pupils might have seen something similar on TV.</p> <p>Can anyone think of when they might have seen a Variety TV programme? Britain's Got Talent! (Slides 6 &amp; 7)</p> <p>Explain that the winning act from Britain's Got Talent goes on to perform at the Royal Variety Performance, a huge Variety Show performed each year for the royal family. The Royal Variety Performance actually came to Edinburgh in 2003 and was performed in the Festival Theatre.</p> <p><i>(Optional: follow the link on slide 7 and watch one of the performances from the Royal Variety Performance 2003  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bl08WTbVkJM&amp;list=RDbl08WTbVkJM&amp;start_radio=1">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bl08WTbVkJM&amp;list=RDbl08WTbVkJM&amp;start_radio=1</a>)</i></p>	
<p><b>Making: Design a costume for a dancer</b></p> <p><b>25 minutes</b></p>	<p>Share the images from the Five Past Eight Show programme (Slide 8)</p> <p>Explain that these were real performers in a Variety show at the King's Theatre.</p> <p>Read pupils the following descriptions of each performer, asking them to consider what type of performer each person is.</p>	<p>Pupils apply their learning</p> <p>Pupils explore the role of a designer</p>

**Bob & Jack Young:**

Multi instrumentalists from Newcastle who have had many TV appearances.

**Madge Stevens:**

A singer from Australia who has performed on cruise ships, in operas, and has done TV and radio work.

**Jim Hawthorne:**

A singer who was born in Scotland but grew up in Canada and has performed in operas and with orchestras.

**Alexandra Kirsta:**

A ballet dancer whose father managed and directed ballets. Alexandra was principal dancer in a King's Theatre pantomime.

**Glen Michael:**

A comedy performer who started as a serious actor before moving to Scotland and beginning his comedy career alongside Jack Milroy, another very famous comedy performer of the time known for the comedy double act Francie & Josie.

**Ethel Scott:**

A talented performer who could perform a wide range of parts from glamour to grannies. She was also married to Rikki Fulton, a very famous comedy performer and Jack Milroy's partner in comedy.

**Clement Ashby:**

A comedy performer and actor who once played for Tottenham Hotspurs, before deciding to leave the football field for the stage.

	<p>Ask pupils what they think the costumes for this show would have been like?      Explain that shortly everyone will have the opportunity to design a costume for a King's Theatre performer.</p> <p>Show some examples of Variety Theatre performer costumes. Highlight the over-the-top costumes, feathers, ruffles, top hats, bold colours. (<i>Slides 9-12</i>)</p> <p>Ask pupils why they think these costumes would need to be so big and bold?      (To be seen from the back of the auditorium, to highlight the performance, so dancers could move a certain way).</p> <p>Show the image of the Five Past Eight Show programme again (<i>also on Slide 13</i>) while pupils choose which performer they'd like to design a costume for.</p> <p>Hand out the body templates (<i>on pages 7 &amp; 8 of this lesson plan</i>) and resources. Encourage pupils to make their designs big and bold, but to not share the name of their performer yet. Their design will need to be appropriate for the type of performer they have chosen (i.e. ballet dancer, comedy performer).</p>	
<b>Plenary &amp; sharing</b> <b>5 minutes</b>	<p>Once finished, invite pupils to share their designs with the class.      Ask if other pupils can guess which performer a pupil chose based only on their costume design.      You may wish to frame this like a variety performance, acting as the compere and asking pupils to present their finished designs as their chosen performer.      Ask pupils to recap 1 thing they have learned from this session.</p>	<p>Pupils have the opportunity to share their work</p> <p>Pupils recap their learning</p>

## Opportunities for extension:

- As a class, create your own Variety show. Encourage pupils to share their own talents and skills with each other.
- Create your own programme for a Variety show. Consider which performers are taking part, what their acts are, and what adverts might be shown in the programme. Remember to include where and when the performance will be!
- Even more variety! While the Five Past Eight Show typically included singing, dancing and comedy, a Variety Show nowadays can include an even wider variety of acts, such as magicians, circus performers, and talented pets!
- As a class, see how many new magic or circus tricks you can learn!

Here is an easy 'how to' magic trick to get you started:

[Easy Magic Trick Tutorial: The Floating Pen](#)



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