

V&A to open new Theatre and Performance Galleries

Opening 18 March 2009

The V&A's Theatre and Performance Galleries will open in March 2009 exploring all performance types from theatre and ballet to pantomime and rock music. More than 250 objects from the V&A's collections will be on display including a first folio of Shakespeare's plays compiled in 1623, costumes and sets from award winning productions, a guitar Pete Townshend smashed during a 1970s performance with *The Who* and the original 1957 poster for *Look Back in Anger* at the Royal Court. Specially commissioned films of playwrights, directors and actors will include interviews with Michael Frayn and Sir Peter Hall.

The new galleries will present the collections in a fresh way, focusing on the process of production and performance from initial conception and design to opening night. Set models, stage props, costumes, original posters, paintings and photographs will be on show, representing live performance in Britain over the last 350 years.

Original scores, documents and manuscripts will include the only known Handel promptbook produced during his lifetime (1720), the score for *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971) marked with alterations made by the conductor during rehearsals and an early draft manuscript of Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* (1777). The pages of each will be digitised to allow visitors to explore the texts in detail.

A large section on costume design will feature garments worn on stage by leading actors such as Richard Burton as Henry V (Old Vic, 1955) and Laurence Olivier in *Oedipus Rex* (Old Vic, 1945) as well as musical performers including Jimmy Page and Brian Eno. On display will be the red dress and hat designed by Christian Dior for Vivien Leigh in *Duel of Angels* (St James Theatre, 1955) and the tutu worn by Margot Fonteyn in *Swan Lake* (State Opera House, Vienna, 1964). An Ossie Clark jump suit worn by Mick Jagger on the 1972 *Rolling Stones* world tour, a horse headress worn during the first performance of *Equus* (Old Vic, 1974), and a Showgirl costume from *The Producers* (Theatre Royal Drury Lane, 2004) will also be on view.

Stage models, sketches and paintings will reflect the role of set designers. On show will be one of the earliest surviving set models from 1793 for a production of *The Wonders of Derbyshire* by landscape painter Philip James de Loutherbourg. There

will also be models by some of the most internationally acclaimed set designers of the 20th and 21st centuries including Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966), Alison Chitty and Ralph Koltai, as well as designs for ballets at Sadler's Wells by British painters John Piper and Edward Burra.

Posters and programmes from productions spanning over 200 years will include an early playbill from a 1759 production of *The Earl of Essex*, a souvenir red silk program from 1958 marking the 2239th performance of *The Mousetrap* (making it the longest-running show in the West End) and the original artwork by Jamie Reid for a *Sex Pistols* promotional poster, 1977.

A new film specially commissioned for the gallery will explore what performance is and feature interviews with playwright Michael Frayn, directors Sir Peter Hall, Peter Brook and Paulette Randall, actor Henry Goodman and Director of the Royal Ballet, Monica Mason. Visitors will also be able to see archive footage and photographs of well-known performances and performers including Rudolf Nureyev, Marlene Dietrich, Daniel Radcliffe, Fiona Shaw and Carlos Acosta and highlights from the National Video Archive of Performance including work by Complicité, the Royal Shakespeare Company as well as West End musicals, pantomime and fringe theatre.

The V&A is also touring exhibitions from its Theatre and Performance Collections and presenting them online (www.vam.ac.uk/collections/theatre_performance). The V&A will stage the exhibition *Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes* in 2010.

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Notes to Editors

- Admission to the Theatre and Performance Galleries will be FREE;
- The new displays have been curated by Kate Dorney, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Performance at the V&A;
- The galleries will be situated on the first floor of the V&A and have been designed by V&A Design;

For further PRESS information and images please contact Alex Bratt in the V&A Press Office on 020 7942 2503 or a.bratt@vam.ac.uk (not for publication)

High resolution images are available to download from www.image.net