

# BBC Learning English

## 6 Minute English

### *London's Theatreland*



NB: This is not a word for word transcript

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- Rob:** Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Rob.
- Amy:** And I'm Amy.
- Rob:** Hi Amy. Today we're off to the theatre, to London's **Theatreland** to be more precise.
- Amy:** Great! Theatreland. That's the area of London where many of the big theatres are located, also known as the West End.
- Rob:** Yes and these theatres put on many popular operas, ballets, plays and plays where the story is told in songs and music, we call them **musicals**. So Amy, do you have any favourite musicals?
- Amy:** Well, do you know, I am not a massive fan of musicals but I have seen one, a few years ago, called **Bollywood Dreams** which I really loved, it was great!
- Rob:** So, lots of Bollywood songs in there.
- Amy:** Yeah, and dancing. Brilliant!
- Rob:** Fantastic! Many world famous shows have been performed in these theatres in London, and Theatreland has received some good news which I'll talk about soon. But first Amy, as always, we'd like to kick off the programme with a question. So, are you ready?
- Amy:** I am.
- Rob:** Excellent. What do you think is the name of London's oldest West End theatre? Is it:
- a) London Coliseum
  - b) The Palace Theatre
  - c) Theatre Royal
- Amy:** I think it's London Coliseum, but I'm not sure.
- Rob:** OK, well, we'll find out the answer at the end of the programme. But now more about this good news for Theatreland – or London's theatre district. More people than ever are going to see, or take in, a show.
- Amy:** Shows like *Les Miserables*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Mama Mia*, even *Shrek the Musical*!
- Rob:** Even *Shrek the Musical*! The BBC's Zoe Conway can tell us why it's been good news. Listen out for the reason why theatre owners have been surprised:

**Zoe Conway, BBC**

*Last year 8 million people were off to see the Wizard of Oz and other musicals. 6 million went to the opera, to the ballet or to see a play. London's West End is not cheap - tickets to see a play can cost \$75 - so there's been surprise here in the UK that when the country is going through one of the worst economic downturns for decades, people can still afford to go.*

**Amy:** So she says last year, 8 million people went to see a musical. She said they were "off to see the Wizard of Oz" because it sounds like the song from the show "we're off to see the Wizard"!

**Rob:** Oh, I thought you were going to sing! And 6 million people have been to see an opera, ballet or play. That's a record number and although it's good news it's a bit surprising.

**Amy:** That's because ticket prices are quite expensive. Some can cost more than 50 pounds. So if you take the whole family, that's a lot of money!

**Rob:** Yes and all this in an economic downturn, when people are supposed to be 'tightening their belts', or in other words, spending less money.

**Amy:** But it seems people can find the money to go to the theatre.

**Rob:** Mark Rubinstein from the Society of London Theatres says it's not hard to understand why people are spending the money...

**Mark Rubinstein from the Society of London Theatres**

*Great shows. There's nothing that's going to work better than having fantastic shows. But London Theatreland has got great real confidence, and it's producing World class drama.*

**Rob:** He thinks people attend London theatres because of the great shows or fantastic shows and Theatreland has confidence. It believes it's good at putting on World class drama. That's plays that are the best in the World!

**Amy:** So that's why people are prepared to pay lots of money to go to the theatre. Some shows are sell-outs and others transfer to New York's Broadway, where they're also drawing, or pulling in, big audiences.

**Rob:** But now some people are worried that this year's London Olympics will have a negative effect on theatres. People might favour seeing sport over going to see a show.

**Amy:** Theatre owner and impresario, Andrew Lloyd Webber, thinks this might cause theatres to close. Would that really happen?

**Rob:** Well it's a gloomy prospect but not everyone agrees. Adam Spiegel is the producer of the musical Midnight Tango and he thinks the Olympics will actually be good for London theatre. How does he describe London?

**Adam Spiegel**

*I think we don't know how the Olympics will affect the theatre because the Olympics haven't been held in a theatre capital since they were last in London. And think the World generally believes that coming to London involves going to the theatre, going and taking in a show.*

- Amy:** So he's not sure about the effect of the Olympics on what he calls a 'theatre capital'. That's a city which has a **thriving** theatre district. But he's confident that people visiting London will still want to take in a show.
- Rob:** Yes, it's one of those things you really have to do on a visit to London. Anyway Amy, it's time now to see if you're confident about your answer to today's question. Earlier I asked you, what is the name of London's oldest West End theatre? Is it:
- a) London Coliseum
  - b) The Palace Theatre
  - c) Theatre Royal
- Amy:** And I said London Coliseum.
- Rob:** And unfortunately you are wrong. The answer is actually the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. The first venue on the site opened in 1662. That first theatre burnt down but a new one was built and there's been one on the site ever since.
- Rob:** OK Amy we've just got time for you to remind us of today's words.
- Amy:** Yes, we heard:  
**Theatreland**  
**musicals**  
**economic downturn**  
**attend**  
**world class**  
**drawing**  
**impresario**  
**gloomy**  
**thriving**
- Rob:** Thanks very much Amy. And that's all we've got time for today, but please do join us again for more 6 Minute English very soon. Bye.
- Amy:** Bye.

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>Theatreland</b>	area of London where all the theatres are located
<b>musicals</b>	plays in which some or all of the story is told using songs and dancing
<b>economic downturn</b>	periods of time where trade and industry are performing less well
<b>attend</b>	to be present at
<b>world class</b>	as good as the best in the world
<b>drawing</b>	attracting
<b>impresario</b>	person who arranges plays in theatres
<b>gloomy</b>	sad or without hope
<b>thriving</b>	continuing to be successful

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