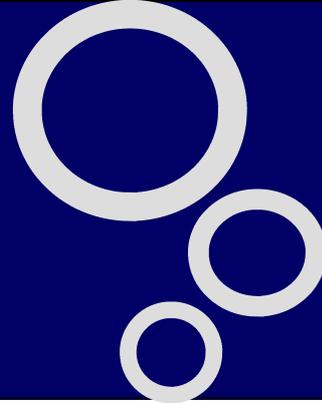


The Gallery

@Idea Store Whitechapel



Half Moon Theatre: *Stages of Half Moon*

Thursday 6 Oct - Fri 4 Nov 2016



Half Moon Theatre: [L-R] Alie Street (photo by Gordon Harris), Mile End Road (photo by Conrad Blakemore), White Horse Road

From its inception in 1972, Half Moon Theatre played a key role in the development of the theatre sector, as well as in the involvement in the arts of the broader East End community. Although the parent company closed in 1990, the young people's section continued and still thrives as an independent charity and the UK's leading professional small-scale young people's venue and touring company.

An award from the Heritage Lottery Fund Young Roots programme in 2015 enabled the company to work with young people to research the history of Half Moon Theatre. As much information as possible was collated and digitised to create a dedicated website (www.stagesofhalfmoon.org.uk) which also includes filmed interviews with over 100 people who have been involved with the company in various capacities over the years: artistic, backstage and administrative; as an audience member or youth participant. Entitled *Stages of Half Moon*, this project was a great opportunity for young people to discover the heritage of such an important body of work.

Amongst those who shared their memories for the project were the theatre's two surviving co-founders and artistic directors, Guy Sprung and Michael Irving, and subsequent artistic directors Robert Walker, Chris Bond and John Turner, as well as many of the other people who played a key role in the success of Half Moon Theatre, including Steven Berkoff, Simon Callow, Josie Lawrence, Maggie Steed and Frances de la Tour.

Half Moon was founded in 1972 in a disused synagogue in Aldgate and moved to an old Methodist chapel in Stepney, which was later refurbished into a state-of-the-art modern theatre. During this period, Half Moon was known for bold work, such as Steven Berkoff's *Sink the Belgrano!*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *Can't Pay? Won't Pay!* and Frances de la Tour as a female Hamlet. The company had, for its time, a radical ethos of inclusivity, involving local communities in the work. In 1989 the company went into voluntary liquidation, but Half Moon Young People's Theatre established itself as a separate entity and moved to its current premises on White Horse Road.

Half Moon are still looking for photographs, reviews, design sketches, programmes, photographs and other artefacts from its history, particularly from its time at Alie Street and Mile End Road in the 1970s and early 1980s, as an arson attack in 1981 destroyed some of the archive. Anyone wanting to help should email history@halfmoon.org.uk