Excitement at launch of Hudd Music Hall Archive exhibition

15/08/2013

The exhibition is an outcome of a project focused on the unique collection of music hall texts, scores and memorabilia of actor, comedian and published historian Roy Hudd. The collection comprise over 25,000 separate items including original song sheets, programmes, posters, music scores, variety acts, audio recordings in various formats, letters and postcards. In addition there are some 30,000 photographs. Many of these resources are unique. Items from the archive have been a source of inspiration for many radio and television documentaries and programmes by Roy Hudd including the News Huddlines which remains the longest running audience comedy programme in the history of British radio.

The exhibition aims to make the magic and excitement of the music hall available to new generations and includes banners telling the story of the music hall based on material from the archive, original song sheets and posters, and rare audio-visual material. It will also offer table-based activities for children.

Commenting on the exhibition, Roy Hudd said: “I have been collecting the archive for over 50 years. Each item, each song sheet or poster tells a unique story which is as relevant today as when it was performed. I want the archive to live and to be enjoyed; this exhibition will make that happen.”

Oakmere Solutions Ltd is leading the project, which is directed by Suffolk New College and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Dr Peter Funnell, Director at Oakmere Solutions Ltd said: “The exhibition will bring the music hall to people in new and interesting ways. Through its portrayal of both the everyday and historically dramatic the heritage and artefacts of the music hall paint a vivid picture of how people lived and found comfort and solidarity in laughter, story and music. Indeed the music hall and variety were the life-blood of popular entertainment from the mid nineteenth century until television established itself in the fifties and sixties.”

Christine Walters, Vice Principal at Suffolk New College, said: “We are delighted to have been involved in supporting this project, the vast range of materials have given staff and students an insight into this period of entertainments, its presentation and performance.”

Stuart Hobley, Development Manager at the Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: ""This extraordinary archive uses music hall and the delight of being entertained to bring a different and unique perspective on our social history. It has also given young people the opportunity to get actively get involved, from volunteering and performance, and for the first time, the wider public can enjoy this heritage through exhibitions and events.”

The exhibition will open at the Ipswich Town Hall on Wednesday 14 August and run until Saturday 31 August, 10–4pm Tuesday–Saturday. Entry is free of charge. In September and throughout the autumn the exhibition will be on tour in Suffolk and Norfolk.

Note to editors

The Hudd Music Hall Archive project launched in early 2012 and is scheduled to complete its work by end September 2013.

The project has been led by heritage consultants Oakmere Solutions Ltd, directed by Suffolk New College and supported by funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Since January 2012 the project has:

- recruited and trained 19 dedicated volunteers
- contributed over 1,500 volunteer hours
- catalogued and recorded onto a searchable database over 20,000 song sheets and 900 posters
- conserved and repaired damaged archive items
- organised the collection using archive quality folders and materials
- engage local people in shared their stories of Music Hall and Variety
- produced an mobile exhibition of the archive including original material, display boards and audio-visual material
- supported students and staff of Suffolk New College use the archive
- supported UEA interns research local stories through the East Anglian Film Archive and the Suffolk and Norfolk Record Offices, and engage with all aspects of exhibition design and delivery
- made the archive catalogue available to the public on-line

Further information

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