

Art on stage

1 Talk about the statistics with your partner. Answer the questions.

- Does the information about the theatre in London surprise you?
- Why do you think going to the theatre is much more popular than a football match?
- Do you enjoy going to the theatre? What sort of shows do you like or dislike?

Theatre in London

- 241 professional theatres
- more than 110,000 seats
- 24% of holiday visitors to London go to the theatre
- up to £620 million in box office revenue last year
- 22 million theatre visitors each year, compared to 13 million for major UK football matches

2a Read the theatre programme. Find two events that took place in 2003.

Art on stage

This month London sees four fabulous stage performances from all over the world, bringing a rich mix of cultural entertainment for all the family.



1–8 March: Riverdance

Our first show of March is a hugely popular dance production from Ireland. First performed in Dublin in 1995, the show has been seen by over 25 million people in 450 venues globally, making it one of the most successful dance acts in the world.

The dancing traditions of Ireland go back about 2,000 years to a time when the country was experiencing a lot of population changes. Migrants, mainly from continental Europe, brought with them different styles of music and dance. Over the centuries, these dancing techniques developed into the rich heritage of Irish dance known today. The style of dance is very particular, with rapid leg and foot movements and the body and arms kept mostly still. Dances are accompanied by traditional Irish musical instruments and performers wear costumes of the style worn in Ireland 200 years ago.



9–16 March: Wayang Puppet Theatre

We're excited to introduce a performance of the acclaimed Wayang Puppet Theatre from Indonesia. In 2003,

Wayang was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List as a masterpiece of Indonesian cultural identity, and is the most ancient form of puppet theatre known in the world.

Wayang is an ancient form of storytelling that's said to have been introduced to the Indonesian island of Java centuries ago. It uses a unique theatre style of light and shadow to act out traditional tales with characters from local, Indian and Persian legends. The beautiful puppets are handcrafted and made of leather, and the puppeteer moves their arms using bamboo sticks while narrating the story. Meanwhile, a traditional orchestra plays intense music and the puppeteer changes his or her voice to create suspense as the drama increases.



17–24 March: Kathakali Dance-Drama

In mid-March, we welcome a group of actors from Kerala in India with an inspiring performance of Kathakali, the classical dance-drama famous for its colourful characters and elaborate costumes.

With a history going back more than 1,500 years, Kathakali is based on folk dances and traditional stories

from southern India. The storytelling is very powerful and emotional, and is performed through song and gesture – the cast uses elaborate body and facial expressions to act. This is accompanied by musicians playing percussion instruments such as drums and cymbals.

25 March–25 April: Wicked the Musical

One of musical theatre's best-loved shows comes to London at the end of the month. *Wicked* first opened on Broadway in 2003 and tells an alternative version of the classic novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Musicals are popular shows in western culture combining song, dialogue, acting and dance. First appearing in the 19th century in the theatres of London as music hall concerts, they were then taken to the US where their popularity grew in the theatres of New York. The origins of musical theatre go back to the comedies and tragedies of Ancient Greece, which first joined music and dance together. This evolved into other European theatrical forms, such as opera. Today, musicals are mainly light-hearted and the stories they tell can be original or adapted from historical events, films, books, etc.



2b Read the theatre programme again. Are these sentences True (T) or False (F)?

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1 Kathakali is based on ancient storytelling, but the main characters aren't actors. | T / F |
| 2 Musicals are stage shows that are generally light and optimistic. | T / F |
| 3 Wayang is a unique style of theatre because it doesn't use actors. | T / F |
| 4 Irish dance evolved from the popular music hall concerts of the 19 th century. | T / F |
| 5 <i>Wicked</i> is a musical adapted from a well-known play. | T / F |
| 6 Expression plays an important role in Kathakali dramas. | T / F |
| 7 <i>Riverdance</i> is an international dance production. | T / F |
| 8 The narrator of Wayang stories also plays musical instruments to increase the drama. | T / F |

2b Read and tick (✓) the correct performances.

	Irish dance	Wayang	Kathakali	Musical
1 A performance that includes song.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 A performance without dialogue.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 A performance that tells a story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 A performance without actors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 A performance with characters from eastern culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 A performance originating in Europe.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Speaking
3a Work with a partner and discuss the questions.

- Which of the shows in the theatre programme in 2a would you like to see? Why?
- What kind of theatre shows are popular in your country?
- Is there any particular kind of theatre associated with your country?
- How important do you think theatre is as an art form?

PROJECT

3b You are going to prepare a theatre programme to include three different styles of theatre performances from around the world. At least one of the performances should be a theatre style from your country. Read the questions and prepare your project research.

- Work in small groups. Do some research on the Internet to find out more about theatre styles from around the world, as well as a theatre style from your own country. Make notes on the following points:
 - what kind of theatre it is, e.g. song, dance, music, acting, spoken word, etc.
 - who the performers are, e.g. actors, singers, dancers, musicians, orchestra, etc.
 - what props are needed, e.g. costumes, musical instruments, lighting, etc.
 - its origins and background
 - what makes it popular or successful
 - any other information you think is valuable.
- In your groups, think about how you would like to put the information for your theatre programme together. Design your programme and write the text to promote the performances, including photos if possible.

3c Display your theatre programmes around the classroom. Move around and read about the performances from the other groups. Which performances sound most interesting? Why? Is there a particular style of theatre associated with certain parts of the world?