

PRESS CONFERENCE RELEASE

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THE NEW TALISMAN THEATRE, KENILWORTH:

The new theatre that is to arise in Kenilworth in the near future will be in Barrow Road, in the heart of a large new residential development and within a few hundred yards of the shopping centre. It will be only a quarter of mile from the site of the old theatre demolished in May last year. The site, which adjoins the telephone exchange, is a corner one and is large enough to provide generous parking space for theatre patrons.

The building, designed by Crouch Butler & Savage A/ARIBA, of Birmingham, on clean, modern lines, will present a most attractive front to Barrow Road, with wide glass areas on two floor levels. The basic structure is a steel framework with visible wall areas of facing brick. There will be a flat roof surrounded by a precast mineralite fascia.

The seating capacity (172) will be almost the same as that of the old Talisman but all the seats will be on a very steep rake. The "line of sight" will thus be perfect. Every member of the audience will have a completely clear view of the low, wide stage. There will be only nine rows of seats and nobody will sit farther than 30 feet from the front of the stage.

In accordance with modern practice, the stage will be raised only six inches from the floor. It will be of the proscenium type, with an "apron" jutting some five feet into the auditorium. While the stage is a proscenium one, as distinct from a peninsular or in-the-round stage, the action of plays at the new Talisman will not be confined within a picture frame. The stage will be open the full width of the auditorium except for five feet on each side, giving an opening 29 feet wide (as wide as the auditorium is deep, roughly speaking, and half as wide again as the opening at the old theatre). It will also be possible to carry sets right up to the level of the auditorium ceiling if it is desired to do so. Thus the stage will be adaptable -- extremely open for spectacular productions but capable of being masked in to accommodate box sets of limited size. The stage will be 22 feet deep to the cyclorama, which will probably be curved.

Backstage arrangements include dressing rooms and toilets on stage level, also a work area upstage on the o.p. side with loading doors opening on the car park. On the first floor, there will be a rehearsal room and wardrobe. It is hoped to transfer the lighting gallery from the position shown on the plan to the back of the auditorium.

Planned for audience comfort

The Talisman Theatre Company realises that the theatregoer of today  
can only ...

can only be expected to leave the delights of his modern home to visit a theatre that offers pleasant and cheerful surroundings with every provision for comfort and convenience, in the intervals as well as during the show. So the new Talisman Theatre will have a bright and spacious entrance foyer, entered through wide glass doors and provided with a cloak room, box office and excellent toilet facilities.

Off this foyer, there will be a members' bar, with the whole of its outside wall made of glass. Part of the foyer will be of double storey height, forming a well through which stairs will rise to first floor level, where patrons will enter the auditorium at the back of it, and at the top of the steep rake. On this first floor, there will also be a most charming lounge, with a glass wall commanding a wide view of the theatre's surroundings and open on the inner side to the staircase well.

Downstairs, reached from the foyer and running under the back of the auditorium, there will be a long coffee room with, beyond it, a kitchen with separate entrance for supplies.

Broad emergency exits are provided on both sides of the auditorium, ensuring the highest degree of safety in case of fire.

Planned for economical construction

If the theatre is to be a viable proposition in the comparatively small town of Kenilworth (and the old Talisman was entirely self-supporting for 22 years), it is obvious that its capital cost must be as modest as is consistent with providing efficient playing conditions and attractive audience accommodation. Consequently, the architects have designed an extremely simple building that can be constructed sturdily at relatively low cost. The building is also so designed that the stage and auditorium can be built separately from the block containing the foyer, etc. This may well enable the Talisman Theatre Company to get back into production sooner, although audiences may be asked to put up with temporary arrangements for their comfort until the foyer block is complete.

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# The New Talisman

— help us bring it to life

The Talisman Theatre Company which has staged over 200 productions in 22 years is in danger of extinction. Redevelopment has deprived it of the theatre built largely by members.

Land has been obtained for a new theatre but unless building funds can be raised it must be sold.

If you have ever enjoyed a Talisman production and would like to see another please help now. Your contribution will help endow Kenilworth with a theatre of which it may be proud and ensure the survival of the Talisman tradition.

## THE ORIGINAL TALISMAN

The Talisman Theatre Company originally known as Rover Players Productions, was formed early in 1940, presenting plays in local halls.

At the beginning of 1942 a need for a home of their own became acute. Good fortune smiled and they were able to acquire an old drying shed which belonged to the Kenilworth Tannery Company. This was converted by the members themselves to a Little Theatre and opened on the 26th October 1942 with Shiela Donnithorpe's comedy, "Children to Bless You".

The Theatre stood in the middle of a field, off the main Street of Kenilworth and was primitive in the extreme,



there being no dressing rooms for the actors and actresses, or even toilet facilities. During the years however the Company continued its building operations, adding dressing rooms, foyer, coffee lounge, kitchens, rehearsal room and wardrobes, as well as full main drainage toilet facilities. When the Theatre originally opened, it had a flat floor with loose seats, although this was eventually changed to a fully raked floor with comfortable upholstered 'tip-up' seats.

Since the Talisman opened, an exceptionally active policy has been pursued and in the twenty-two years of its existence 228 full productions have been staged. Normally 11 productions a year are presented in a season which runs from August until Whitsun. In order to maintain its nationally acknowledged high standard, the Company has two plays in rehearsal at once, and in addition organise and tutor a student group for the training of new actors and actresses. These courses are run in association with the Warwickshire Education Committee.

In 1964 the Talisman's long run of successes came to an end but not through lack of talent or support. The Company was never allowed to buy the land on which their theatre stood and it had to be demolished when the whole area was sold for redevelopment.

## THE FUTURE

After a long search for a new home, which included the possible purchase of the local cinema and converting it to a Little Theatre, the Talisman have been fortunate in obtaining a piece of land in Barrow Road, Kenilworth, which is approximately 250 yards from the main Warwick Road. The imaginative design and plan of the new Talisman Theatre is the work of the Birmingham firm of Architects, Crouch, Butler and Savage, and incorporates a steeply raked auditorium and open acting area which has been designed so that exciting productions can be more easily staged. There will be a licensed club bar, coffee bar and spacious foyer, and for the greater convenience of our Members, ample car parking facilities. Back stage there will be adequate dressing room accommodation as well as a rehearsal room and wardrobe.

**To bring this plan to life £12,000 is needed urgently. Unless the money can be raised the land must be sold. Will you help by sending a donation now? In return the Talisman Company promise a theatre worthy of Kenilworth and stimulating drama of the highest standard.**

*Left: Auditorium of original Talisman Theatre. Photograph by Richard Sadler, A.I.B.P., Coventry. Above: Artist's impression of the new Talisman with plan of the ground floor.*

