

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSORS...

GRAY BAYNES + SHEW

'And this our life... finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks... and good in everything'

And so Creation Theatre returns to Lady Margaret Hall after last summer's dark and intriguing *Macbeth* with the light-hearted *As You Like It*. You might think this Oxford College setting is a million miles away from that of the play, but you may be surprised. The farm, the court and the forest? They are all here. You just need a little imagination to be transported back, but not to Shakespeare's setting, to 1940s occupied France (with maybe a little 'allo 'allo thrown in). Lady Margaret Hall is one of the few Oxford Colleges on the River Cherwell and with its beautiful gardens and spacious grounds, it lends itself perfectly to this summer performance.

gbs architects is a sponsor of Creation Theatre and we enjoy seeing talented actors perform their unique adaptations in unusual settings. But, fortunately, we are also mad about buildings and architecture and Lady Margaret Hall is no exception. For more than 50 years Gray Baynes + Shew has been well known for its work in Oxford Colleges. A few years ago Lady Margaret Hall almost became one of our college clients when we were invited to compete in a national design competition along with John Simpson, Rick Mather and Hopkins. On that occasion John Simpson was selected to be the College's architect and the works currently proceeding on the campus are to his designs.

gbs's history stretches back to 1933, which is probably unique for an Oxford architects practice, but even a 'young' college such as Lady Margaret Hall can better that. Established in 1879 and founded by the then Warden of Keble College, it is a constituent college of the University and was the first Hall to admit women to read for degrees from the 1920s. The college is named in honour of Lady Margaret Beaufort, founder of the Tudor dynasty and a renowned patron of scholarship and learning. Lady Margaret Hall's first Principal was Elizabeth Wordsworth, the great-niece of William Wordsworth.

The original building, Old Hall, was a sad Norham Gardens yellow brick house which, in 1881-3, was extended by Basil Champneys in a Queen Anne style, following his work at Newnham College, Cambridge.

Over the next fifty years, the college embarked on four building projects. The first designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield was the Wordsworth building in 1896 (William and Mary style), followed by the Talbot building in 1909 and the Toynbee building in 1915 named after Charlotte Toynbee (nee Atwood, 1841-1931). In 1931 Sir Charles Gilbert Scott was commissioned to design the building known as Deneke which stretches towards the river. He also designed the Chapel which was an ambitious project and contains a Burne-Jones triptych (1863).

In 1957, Raymond Erith designed the Wolfson Quad where he continued to expand on his neo Georgian style with considerable licence. The most recent buildings at Lady Margaret Hall are designed by John Simpson and commenced on site in 2008.

Creation has chosen to use these gardens and buildings as the setting for today's performance, and I hope that an overview of the architectural history of the college will add to your enjoyment of this production.

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