



## Our Belfast

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# THE GRAND OPERA HOUSE

## The Tour

The children began their tour of the building in the main auditorium where William told about the history and importance of the building. They were able to lie back and look at Matcham's painted ceiling and to count the number of elephants on display.

Having the opportunity to be in the theatre on their own gave the children the opportunity to investigate it as much as they wanted. Some used the rows of seats as a racetrack, others made their way, albeit cautiously, up on to the stage where it was wonderful to see their expressions – full of wonder and fear as looked at the theatre from the vantage point of the performers.



A Seating in 'the stalls'  
 B The view of the stage from 'the gods'  
 C Looking up at the newest addition, the Baby Grand



Conrad, age 11



Cuisle, age 9



Roise, age 7



Brendan, age 9

While often we presume that children are fearless, and while many of the group took to standing on the stage easily, their first expression of comprehending of the scale of the space was wonderful to watch: have you ever turned to look at the whole theatre from the front row of the stalls? Sometimes it takes the wonder of a child's expression to make us turn round and experience the space that we're in.

The children progressed up through the different tiers of the theatre and their excitement grew as they got higher and higher above the stalls.

The tour continued into the new section of the building where the children were able to see the new Baby Grand studio theatre and all of the backstage spaces including the dressing rooms and the orchestra pit.

These children are the next generation – part of a generation of video games and skyscrapers, however all of them, when asked which part of the building they liked most, replied by saying the old part. Perhaps it is due to the opulence and splendour of the main theatre, or possibly the fact that it does feel a little like being part of another world, that the memories that they took back to the workshop to draw were of the original building.



Both images: Nicole, age 7



**“I liked the old part best because its got a ghost and I like the elephants as well.”**

Roise, age 7