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The Decline of Modern Theatre - a Reality or Simply Industry Paranoia? by [Hannah Hill](#)

Article published on May 21st 2012 | [Theater](#)

There has been much concern over recent years that the medium of theatre is failing in its popularity; there have been speculative comments that as a result of the economic downturn it is becoming more difficult than ever for rising talents to find opportunity for success, as more and more people seem to bypass the theatre in lieu of cheaper alternatives.

The increasing prominence of digital media is something that many people argue has created a situation in which a director can have almost immediate access to any already successful actor whom they want in their role with comparative ease, which leaves little in the way of opportunity for new talent to be recognised. This seems to be supported by the fact that so many lead roles in top West End shows appear to have celebrity names cast in them.

The TV talent searches conducted by Andrew Lloyd Webber might have to shoulder some of the responsibility here. Shows such as 'How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?' met with great success, however it essentially provided a shortcut to theatrical success that many long-standing professionals feel is simply not conducive to theatrical performance.

Imminent stars such as Ian McKellen have warned in recent years that Britain's reputation for producing exceptional stagecraft is at serious risk if the focus on an actual career path isn't instilled in the rising talent of today. He expressed his belief that he feels that the focus has now shifted to instant gratification in the form of money and overnight fame; meaning that youthful talent simply isn't nurtured and developed in the way it once was.

Whilst there is certainly some truth to this statement, this is far from the full picture. The medium of theatre has survived through two world wars, great depressions, economic boom and bust; theatre will adapt, because good theatre is always relevant. Many would argue that theatre becomes even more relevant in times of austerity - humans are the story-telling species after all.

At times when human experience is rich, whether in times of feast or famine, human beings will instinctively feel the compulsion to document and to relate. There can be no doubt that the rising dominance of digital media and the ease of which various forms of entertainment can now be accessed has presented somewhat of a challenge to theatre, this is by no means a threat to its long-term survival however. It will evolve; as it has through innumerable social changes since its conception in ancient Greece and its roots in our 'story telling' ancestral past.

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Article Keywords:

top West End shows,cheaptheatreticketsLondon

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