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IN HIS HONOUR: The 500-seat Stevenage playhouse is named the Gordon Craig Theatre

£65,000 grant to celebrate a famous son

By Cristina Perez cristina.perez@hertssexnews.co.uk

ONE of Stevenage's famous sons will be celebrated through a series of events.

Edward Gordon Craig was known by just seven per cent of a sample of audience members at the theatre that bears his name in a recent poll.

But that is set to change. This

year marks the 50th anniversary of Craig's death and the Stevenage Arts Guild has received £65,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to celebrate the visionary and radical theatrical pioneer.

Born

Craig was born in Stevenage in 1872.

He was an actor, stage director and theatre theorist who aided the

development of modern theatre.

In 1975, the 500-seat Stevenage playhouse was built and named Gordon Craig Theatre in his honour.

A temporary exhibition will launch in December 2016 for three months, focusing on Craig's life, a celebration will take place at the theatre on Sunday, July 31 and a permanent exhibition will be unveiled in March next year.



POLYMATH: Actor, stage director and theatre theorist Edward Gordon Craig

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SAH/EO1-S2

# £65k project will honour pioneer

## Guild leads way in telling the story of Gordon Craig

By Martin Ford

[martin.ford@hertssexnews.co.uk](mailto:martin.ford@hertssexnews.co.uk)

A £65,000 project will shed light on the life of Stevenage's "forgotten son".

Despite being regarded as a "visionary and radical theatrical pioneer", Edward Gordon Craig was known by just seven per cent of a sample of audience members at the theatre that bears his name in a recent poll.

Andy Purves, project manager of Who Is Gordon Craig?, said: "Stevenage Arts Guild has received £65,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to celebrate the town's forgotten son, the visionary and radical theatrical pioneer Edward Gordon Craig.

"Marking 50 years since his death and working in partnership with Stevenage Museum, the Guild are planning a series of fascinating activities and events in 2016 and 2017 in Stevenage and beyond, thanks to National Lottery players."

Craig, born in 1872, was an actor, stage director and innovative theatre theorist whose productions, designs and writings were a crucial force in the devel-



opment of modern theatre.

He was the son of Ellen Terry, one of the most revered actresses of the English stage, and architect Edward William Godwin.

### Architecture

In the 1890s he worked as an actor alongside Sir Henry Irving but soon undertook his first ground-breaking designs for productions, asserting his revolutionary theories of theatrical design.

Working mainly in Europe in the early 1900s, Craig advanced towards a new "art of the theatre"

– a joining of architecture, movement and music.

When a 500-seat theatre was built in the town of his birth in 1975, it was named the Gordon Craig Theatre in his honour.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Craig's death in France, aged 94.

A partnership of Stevenage Museum and Stevenage Arts Guild will recruit a group of local volunteers who will work alongside museum staff and a professional curatorial adviser to produce a temporary exhibition focusing on Craig's life and work

as well as Ellen Terry, Godwin and their connection with Stevenage.

Launched in December 2016 for three months, the exhibit will be free to visit and feature artefacts from the V&A archive, Eton College, Ellen Terry's National Trust home of Smallhythe and the Craig family estate.

This month, the museum is looking to recruit one group of 14 to 18-year-old Arts Award students and a second open to all, but spearheaded by members of Stevenage Local History Society, Stevenage and Knebworth Arts Group and the Stevenage U3A.

The celebrations will also include the unveiling of a permanent exhibition at the museum in March next year and a series of free talks and events leading up to a celebration on Sunday July 31 at The Gordon Craig Theatre.

In the long term, a resource pack will be produced for school students aged 16 to 18 years old to help the teaching community introduce Craig's concepts.

For more information about volunteering, email [takepart@whoisgordoncraig.co.uk](mailto:takepart@whoisgordoncraig.co.uk) or [museum@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:museum@stevenage.gov.uk)



**FAMOUS SON:** Edward Gordon Craig and, left, the theatre that bears his name

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