

# Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS  
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



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THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON  
# A038 -- SHERLOCK'S NIGHT AT THE OPERA -- CONVENT GARDEN -- JANUARY, 2022



*WELCOME TO TOPIC # 038... TODAY HOLMES AND I  
WILL BE LOOKING AT A NIGHT AT THE OPERA AT  
CONVENT GARDEN.*





IN AT LEAST TWO CASES, YOU MARKED A MYSTERY'S END BY ATTENDING AN OPERA. IN THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, YOU MENTIONED HAVING A BOX FOR LES HUGUENOTS, IN WHICH THE DES RESZKES BROTHERS WERE PERFORMING.



AT THE CLOSE OF 'THE RED CIRCLE,' YOU NOTED  
YOU AND I WOULD BE ABLE TO CATCH THE SECOND  
ACT OF A WAGNER OPERA AT THE COVENT GARDENS  
IF WE HURRIED.



BY 1888, WHEN THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES OCCURRED, THE OPERA HOUSE IN COVENT GARDEN WAS THE THIRD CONSTRUCTED ON THE SAME SITE... COVENT GARDEN WAS ORIGINALLY A BENEDICTINE CONVENT GARDEN WHERE MONKS GREW THEIR VEGETABLES.







*IN 1536, KING HENRY VIII SEIZED THE LAND AS PART OF HIS DISSOLUTION OF THE MONASTERIES AND FINALLY AWARDED IT TO JOHN RUSSELL, THE FIRST EARL OF BEDFORD.*





IT REMAINED IGNORED UNTIL THE 1630s WHEN THE 4TH EARL OF BEDFORD, FRANCIS RUSSELL, HIRED THE ROYAL ARCHITECT INIGO JONES... AT THAT TIME, THE EARL OF BEDFORD DECIDED TO DEVELOP THE 20-ACRE PASTURE THAT WAS PART OF HIS ESTATE AND OPEN IT TO LEASES.





**JONES DESIGNED A PIAZZA (THE FIRST IN ENGLAND) BORDERED BY HOUSES, INCLUDING THREE BUILT BY THE EARL HIMSELF TO SERVE AS MODELS FOR LATER CONSTRUCTION.**



THE EARL'S OWNERSHIP WERE MEMORIALIZED IN  
RUSSELL AND BEDFORD STREETS WITHIN THE  
COVENT GARDEN AREA... IN ADDITION, HE  
COMMISSIONED JONES TO DESIGN A CHURCH FOR  
THE INHABITANTS – ST. PAUL'S CHURCH.







IN 1663, CHARLES II GAVE A CHARTER FOR THE FIRST ROYAL THEATER — ALSO BUILT IN THE AREA... THIS EDIFICE FOLLOWED A MARKET THAT APPEARED IN THE SQUARE AS SOON AS CONSTRUCTION BEGAN AND GRANTED A ROYAL CHARTER IN 1670.





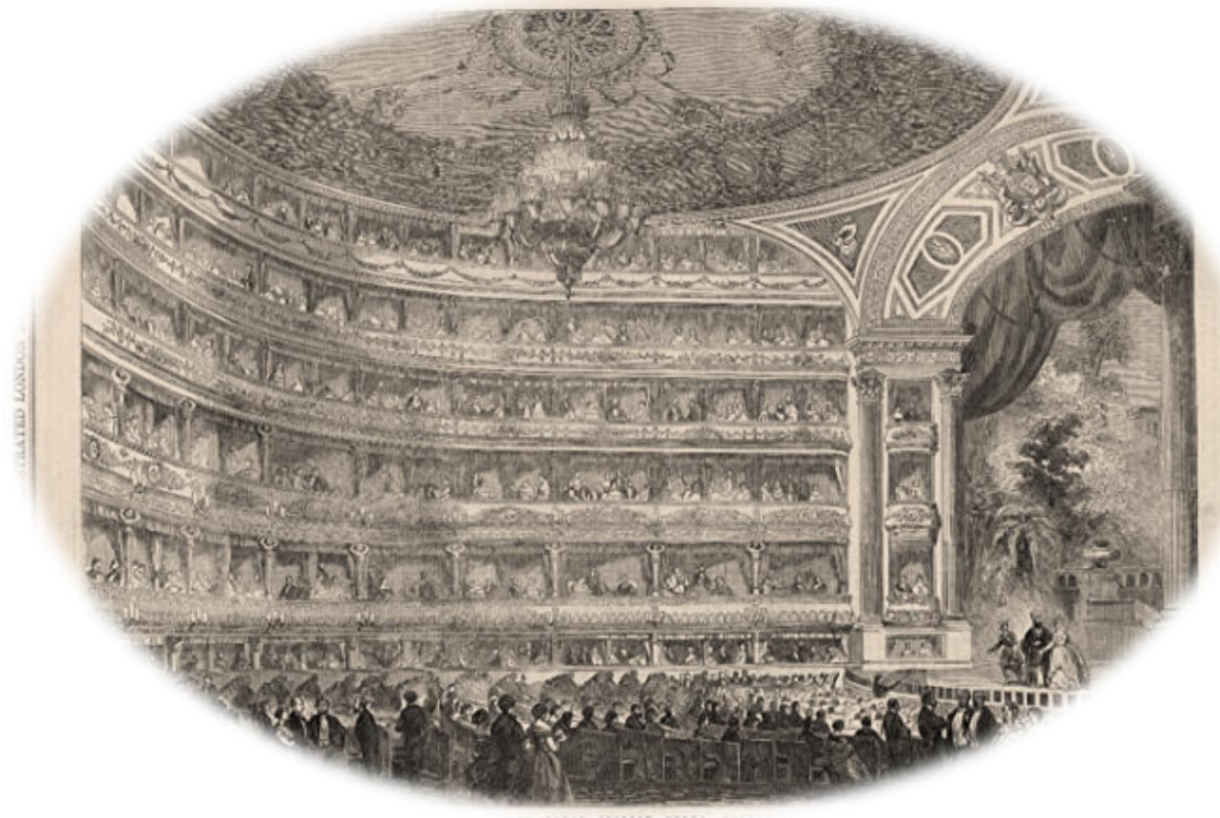
WHILE THEATER-GOERS MIGHT HAVE ADDED  
PRESTIGE AT NIGHT, THE ATTRACTION OF THOSE  
INTERESTED IN PROFITING FROM THEM... FROM  
FLOWER VENDORS TO PROSTITUTES TO THIEVES...  
AS WELL AS THE MERCHANTS DURING THE DAY  
SOON PUSHED THE ORIGINAL NOBILITY OUT OF  
THE AREA'S HOMES.



IN 1732, A SECOND THEATER, COVENT GARDEN THEATRE, OPENED... GEORGE FREDRIC HANDEL, WHO FAVORED OPERA, ADMINISTERED MUCH OF THE REPERTOIRE, MAKING IT PRIMARILY AN OPERA VENUE... IN 1808, THIS STRUCTURE BURNED DOWN AND WAS REBUILT ON THE SAME SITE.



BECAUSE OF FINANCIAL PROBLEMS, THE THEATER WAS REORGANIZED AS THE ROYAL ITALIAN OPERA HOUSE IN 1847, WELL-NAMED AS IT PRESENTED THE BRITISH PREMIERE OF VERDI'S RIGOLETTO AND IL TRAVATORE.





THE EMPHASIS ON 'ITALIAN' OPERA REFLECTED A DOMINANCE OF THAT LANGUAGE (REGARDLESS OF THE ORIGINAL LIBRETTO) THROUGHOUT THE 19TH CENTURY... ONCE AGAIN, THE THEATER BURNS DOWN IN 1856 AND WAS REOPENED IN 1858.





IT BECAME THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE IN 1892  
AFTER OFFERING THE BRITISH PREMIERES OF  
WAGNER'S LOHENGRIN AND VERDI'S AIDA.



*THIS THEATER ALSO HAD ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES  
AND WAS SOLD AND REOPENED IN 1888 AS ROYAL  
OPERA COMPANY... IN KEEPING WITH THE TRADITION,  
MOST OF THE WORKS WERE STILL IN ITALIAN.*





**IN 1892, IT BECAME THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE AND  
MORE GERMAN AND FRENCH PIECES WERE  
PERFORMED.**



ACCORDING TO ONE ACCOUNT, JEAN DE RESZKE, A POLISH-BORN TENOR, WAS INDEED AT THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE IN 1888 AND SANG IN A NUMBER OF OPERAS, INCLUDING LES HUGUENOTS AND WAGNER'S LOHENGRIN.





HIS BROTHER EDOUARD, A BASS, OFTEN APPEARED WITH HIM — JUST AS I MENTIONED — AND PERFORMED AT THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE IN 1888 IN LES HUGUENOTS.







**BARING-GOULD'S SUMMARY OF RESEARCH, HOWEVER, INDICATED THE BROTHERS WERE PERFORMING IN NEW YORK DURING THAT TIME, BUT DID LEAVE OPEN THE POSSIBILITY THEY DID APPEAR IN LONDON WHILE ON TOUR.**



BY 1902, BOTH BROTHERS HAD RETIRED AND  
COULDN'T HAVE APPEARED IN THE WAGNERIAN  
OPERA... MOST LIKELY TRISTAN AND ISOLDA...  
WHICH JUST MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN GERMAN  
(INSTEAD OF THE TRADITIONAL ITALIAN).



DURING BOTH WORLD WARS, THE OPERA HOUSE CLOSED BUT REOPENED AFTERWARDS... WHILE PARTS OF THE STRUCTURE WERE RENOVATED THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, THE FIRST MAJOR RECONSTRUCTION OF THE BUILDING DID NOT OCCUR UNTIL 2000.





AT THAT TIME, THE BUILDING WAS OPENED TO  
THE PUBLIC DURING THE DAY FOR TOURS,  
ALLOWING THE MODERN AFICIONADO AN  
OPPORTUNITY TO IMAGINE YOU AND I STROLLING  
THROUGH ITS DOORS IN FORMAL EVENING ATTIRE  
ON OUR WAY TO A PERFORMANCE.



*SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 038 IN OUR SERIES...*

*IN TOPIC # 039, WE WILL BE DISCUSSING A SMALL LUXURY IN OUR TIMES, THE  
TURKISH BATH.*



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# *Baker Street Elementary*

"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:

JOE FAY  
LIESE SHERWOOD-FABRE  
RUSTY MASON &  
STEVE MASON

