

The Victory Hall Tragedy

Words and Music: Nigel Harbron

The musical score is written in G major and 4/4 time. It consists of five staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes. Chord symbols are placed above the notes. The lyrics are: The Vic-tory Hall in Sun der-land was a grand, ma-jes-tic place. There were stalls be-low with gal le-ries high built a-round the ca-ver-nous space. But stair-ca-ses were hard to find, they were steep and nar-row too, With half-bol-ted doors at the end of each, to pro- tect the hall's re- ve-nue. Whilst some de-ligh-ted in their prize and shou-ted out for more, One hun-dred and eigh-ty-three chil-dren died, trapped be-hind a bol-ted door.

The Victory Hall in Sunderland was a grand, majestic place.
There were stalls below, with galleries high built around the cavernous space.
But staircases were hard to find, they were steep and narrow too,
With half-bolted doors at the end of each, to protect the hall's revenue.

*Ch: Whilst some delighted in their prize and shouted out for more,
One hundred and eighty three children died, trapped behind a bolted door.*

On the 6th of June, eighteen eighty-three, the Fays from Tynemouth were on stage,
With conjuring tricks and marionettes, their act was all the rage.
A penny was all a ticket cost, a sum most could afford,
With lucky numbers on each one, promising a rare reward.

At the end of the show some toys were thrown to those in the stalls below,
But the children in the galleries were keen to have a go.
They filled the stairwell leading down, family members side by side,
All trying to scramble through a gap only twenty inches wide.

Fred Graham was the caretaker, and saw the goings on.
He knew another way upstairs, and to it he did run.
Before he sprinted up the steps, he took the bolt out of the door,
Had he not led hundreds of children down, the death toll would have been more.

The tragedy touched the nation's heart, and donations soon rolled in,
But even warm words from the Queen could not console the next of kin.
An enquiry did not attribute blame to any women or men,
But new laws were soon put in place to stop it happening again.

At first the Victory Hall shut down as a tribute to the dead,
But gradually audiences drifted back as productions went ahead.
And then in 1941 as planes flew all around,
The Germans dropped a bomb on it and razed it to the ground.

Victoria Hall, Sunderland,
On Saturday Afternoon at 3 o'clock.
SCHOOL TICKET

THE FAYS

From the Tynemouth Aquarium,
We'll give a Grand Day Performance for Children,
THE GREATEST TREAT FOR CHILDREN EVER GIVEN
Conjuring, Talking Waxworks, Living
Marionettes, The Great Ghost Illusion, &c.

This Ticket will admit any number of Children on payment of
ONE PENNY Each ; Reserved Seats, 2d., Nurses
or Parents with Children 3d.

PRIZES !
Every Child entering the room will stand a chance of receiving
a handsome Present, Books, Toys, &c.

This Entertainment has been witnessed by thousands of
delighted Children throughout England.

Poster advertising the variety show at which the children died.



The Victory Hall