



Open air screening of Casablanca



B4 events



A DAY OFF AT LADY MARGARET HALL

Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.

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I recently took the time to stop, and look, at a wonderful outdoor screening of the classic feel-good movie 'Ferris Bueller's Day Off' at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford. This film never fails to bring a smile to my face and seeing it on a huge screen in the most beautiful gardens and warm summer evening weather increased the enjoyment tenfold.

The event was organised by The Phoenix Picturehouse (based in Jericho, Oxford), part of a small chain of European cinemas bringing you something different from the standard mainstream drivel you might find at other establishments. The Phoenix explain their 'Pop-Up Cinema' the best themselves: 'Two weekends of classic films / six balmy evenings of summer screenings'. Starting on Friday 18th July with 'Labyrinth', then 'Grease', 'Casablanca', 'The Grand Budapest Hotel', 'Ferris Bueller's Day Off' and finally 'Singin' In The Rain' on Sunday 10th August - You certainly can't fault their film choices. The Phoenix also provided food stalls with dishes like Paella and Chili, plus their own Picturehouse snacks as well soft drinks and alcohol. Nice weather, beautiful surroundings, great film, good

company, delicious food and tasty drinks. What more could I ask for?

I knew the film was going to be good, but I can not describe how impressed I was by the venue itself. Lady Margaret Hall truly is stunning. Its gardens are picturesque (as they should be, being the host of Oxfordshire's major annual flower show 'Flowers @ Oxford') and its architecture moody and intricate. As I arrived a bit early for the screening I caught a small glimpse of Creation Theatre's 'Macbeth' performance which was taking place and saw immediately how they used the surroundings to their benefit - the buildings becoming intense and foreboding under green spotlights and the shadows of great tall trees. The college and its grounds have even inspired novelists like Charles Finch, who based a fictional college on Lady Margaret Hall.

The gardens are large and tranquil, about 12 acres (49,000 m2), and open up into a variety of different potential event spaces. They extend to the River Cherwell and border the University Parks, making the entirety of the gardens quiet and peaceful save for the faint river and the

leaves. The area our screening was in is one of the playing fields which could easily hold over 500 people, and nearby were some tennis courts, a punt house, and a hidden 'manicured Fellows Garden'. The maximum capacity for this outdoor cinema event was set at 300 people, but the grounds could easily support many times more than that.

The size of the gardens regardless of their beauty makes them ideal as an alternative event space - There are no worries about noise or the passing public, and no real limit to the number of guests. The playing field leant itself perfectly to great acoustics and a grand atmosphere, with trees rustling gently and no other light sources to distract from the main event.

Before we sat down on the cute fold-out cardboard chairs provided by The Phoenix we had a quick chat with Alicia López Ríos and Martin Langley, Assistant Manager and General Manager respectively. Alicia told me that, despite some of the previous screenings not having the fortune of good weather like we did, the attendees refused to leave even in drizzle and chilly winds - The experience of outdoor cinema is one that you go to without worrying about the weather (especially in England) and the guests enjoyed themselves so much that they stayed regardless.

Martin Langley had this to say on the event: "Working in tandem with Bill Kemp and his wonderful staff at Lady Margaret Hall helped bring Picturehouse Pop-Up Cinema to life. Outdoor cinema is a fantastic event and is deserving of a suitably fantastic venue - of which there are many in Oxford - so finding the right fit for us was really important. Casablanca was my favourite night this year with a sold out passionate audience enjoying classic film on a

warm summer's evening. We hope to return in 2015 with more of the same."

As mentioned, it was obvious that an outdoor film screening was going to be a fun experience but the venue is what made this event truly memorable. Making an impact with an event can't always be guaranteed by blowing the budget on hiring a private mansion or hi-tech conference centre. Maybe you are organising a wedding reception that you want to stand out from the others you've been to, or perhaps you need a venue that is as diverse as the subject of your latest exhibition. Sometimes what your event needs is a location that is a bit different from your run-of-the-mill places, and that's where Lady Margaret Hall really shines.

Lady Margaret Hall is a college with a unique place in the history of the University of Oxford with its elegant classical and neoclassical buildings. It is a secure site with 24-hour access via an electronic key system and has on-site car parking. Both Alicia and Martin agreed that the staff at Lady Margaret Hall are great to work with when organising an event, extremely helpful and lots of fun. The college has a very flexible approach to conferences and events and are happy to work with you to create something just right for you.

So next year when the pop-up cinema rolls around again I hope you'll join me and many others for a wonderful evening. And next time you are thinking of organising a memorable event, look no further than Lady Margaret Hall.

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