# Heritage Lottery Fund initial support for Swan Gallery transformation

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Following on from the transformation of the Royal Shakespeare and Swan Theatres, which re-opened to the public in November last year, the RSC aims to fully conserve the Swan Gallery as part of the fourth phase of the project. The Grade II Swan Gallery is the only surviving element of the original Victorian Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, which was designed by the theatre architects Dodgshun and Unsworth and opened in 1879.

Having opened in 1881, as a library and gallery for 'the study of Shakespeare,' the Gallery survived the fire that destroyed the rest of the theatre in 1926. It includes many beautiful features, including stained glass windows commemorating the famous Benson acting company that performed the first Shakespeare festival seasons in Stratford-upon-Avon, with scenes from Shakespeare's 'seven ages of man' monologue in As You Like It. On the exterior there are fine decorative terracotta panels designed by the German sculptor Paul Kummer.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund, said: "The Royal Shakespeare Company, a byword for theatrical excellence, is steeped in literary history. We're pleased to be giving our initial support for these visionary plans which once fully developed will see the complete restoration of the magnificent Swan Gallery."

Geraldine Collinge, RSC Director of Events and Exhibitions, said: "I'm delighted that we're able to move on to the next stage of the application. We look forward to conserving and returning the Swan Gallery to its original function as a gallery, but updated with a contemporary internal design incorporating digital technology, educational activity and exhibitions. The project will encourage visitors to explore and learn more about Shakespeare's international literary legacy beyond the stage, as well as bring alive the history and current practice of theatre-making, the history of the RSC's plays in performance and the superb RSC Collection.

"Before the Transformation of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, the Gallery did display items from our Collection, but space was severely limited and poor environmental control meant that objects could only be put on short term display. A fully transformed Gallery will do justice to the fantastic new development that sits beside it, which has already attracted 55,000 visitors since it opened in November."

**Notes to editors**

Collection and Archive: Our focus is to select and preserve images, recordings, artefacts and other materials from past productions and the work of the organisation to preserve the important history of the RSC for future generations. Where possible items are used as learning materials through the handling collection and the whole collection provides inspiration and context for new commissions and exhibitions.

The Archive includes records of all types, from photographs to prompt books covering productions from 1879 to the present. They are cared for by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and are available for research purposes at the Shakespeare Centre Library. The RSC Collection is managed by the Events and Exhibitions team and is maintained at our storage building in Stratford-upon-Avon, which is not open to the public, and is only partially on display within the RST.

*A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported more than 30,000 projects allocating £4.5billion across the UK.

**Further information**

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