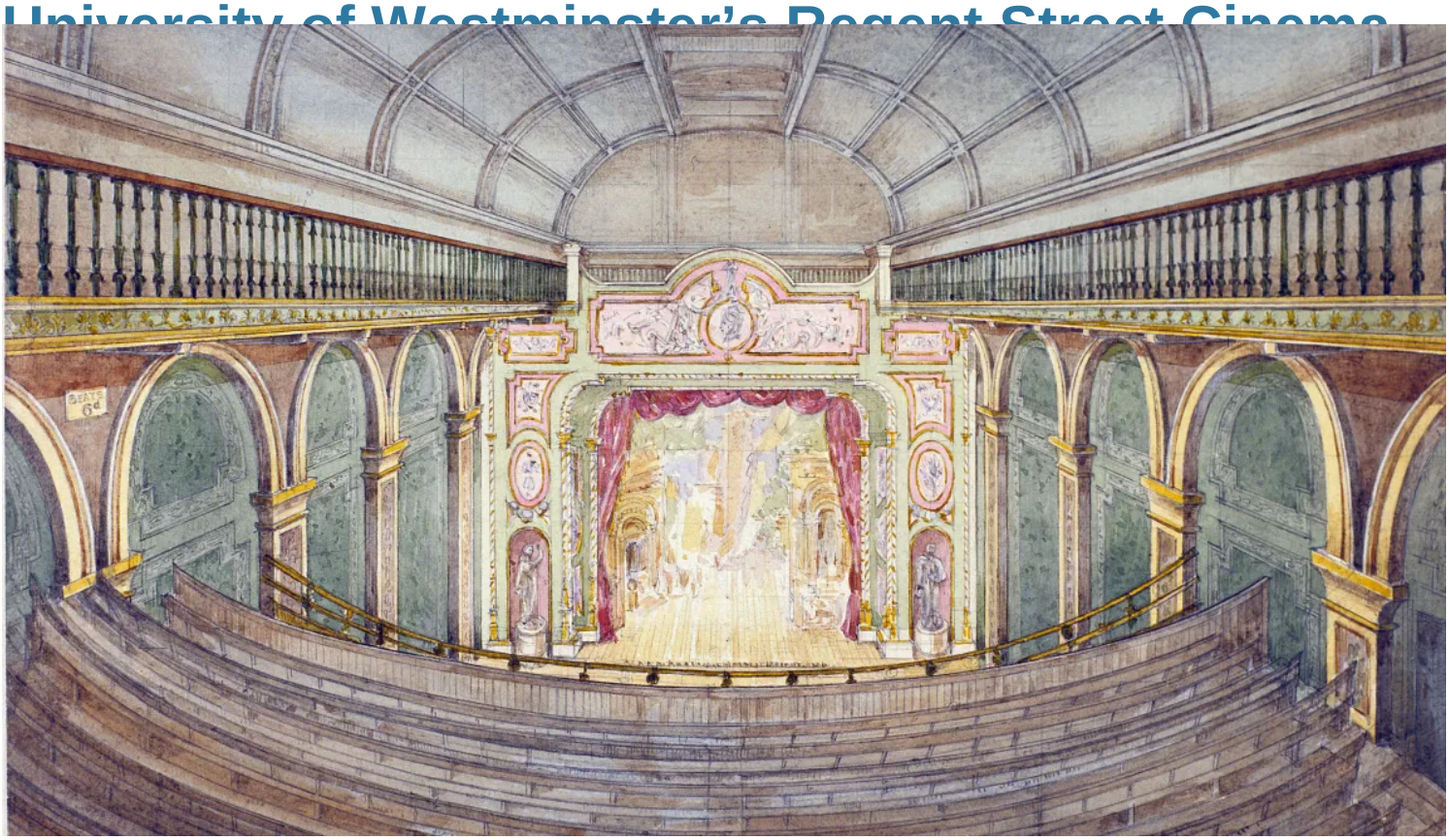
University of Westminster's Regent Street Cinema



Interior of Royal Polytechnic Cinémathèque Française

Housed within the University's Grade II listed flagship building in the heart of London, the cinema is considered to be the birthplace of British cinema having hosted the Lumière brothers' moving picture show in 1896 – the first public cinema performance to a paying audience in the UK.

The Heritage Lottery Fund award will support the restoration of the cinema to its former glory evoking its 19th century heritage and also bring it right up to date with the latest technology, making it accessible and available to public audiences, tomorrow's filmmakers, and the film industry. Currently used as a lecture theatre, the cinema will be reborn as an outstanding, state-of-the-art auditorium, offering a place for film lovers to see films from around the world and film students to showcase their work.

The University of Westminster launched its plans for this ambitious restoration and redevelopment of the historic cinema to funders and the film industry earlier this year. Backed by some of the biggest names in the British film industry, the fund raising campaign for the cinema has secured further capital support from the Quintin Hogg Trust and the Garfield Weston Foundation, and with this announcement today is now two-thirds of the way to meeting the £6.1million target to complete the project. Tim Ronalds Architects have designed the scheme for the restored Regent Street Cinema which is planned to reopen in 2014.

Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, says: "This cinema has an important place in the world history of film. Now, with this HLF grant, the University of Westminster can share this special story not only with film students and academics, but with the wider public too. We look forward to seeing the working cinema, lecture theatre and activities spaces open and accessible to all in the future so that everyone can get involved in this fascinating part of our heritage."

Professor Geoffrey Petts, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Westminster, says: "The University is delighted to be awarded this substantial grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore and reopen the Regent Street Cinema which will offer a place for our students and staff, filmmakers and public audiences to enjoy and learn about film. We are well on our way to meeting our target for getting the restoration underway thanks to the fantastic public and private funding contributions we have received so far. We are going all out to close the gap on the final leg of financing that we need, however we do not underestimate the challenges of finding that elusive final tranche of funding in today's tough climate for ambitious projects."

Tim Bevan CBE, film producer and Chair of the Regent Street Cinema Advisory Board, says: "The Lottery grant to the Regent Street Cinema is fantastic news for the University of Westminster, its students, the industry and filmmakers. The investment made in education and training has been an enormous factor in the success of the UK film industry which creatively and technically is a world leader and Westminster continues to be very much part of that. This summer, 2011 Westminster graduate David Winstone won the top prize for his short graduation film For Elsie, at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' 39th Annual Student Academy Awards, held in Los Angeles. At the same time making the cinema open to public audiences is a good example of business, culture and education working in unison. The Regent Street Cinema development team has done a fantastic job in taking us two thirds of the way to securing funding for the project and we now just need to be as resourceful as possible to bring it to completion."

The Lumière brothers chose the Regent Street Polytechnic (the University of Westminster’s previous incarnation) for their very first screening because it already had a reputation as a leader in scientific experimentation and entertainment. The Polytechnic was a pioneering institution and today the University of Westminster continues to lead the way. The newly opened cinema will give film students an unrivalled opportunity to premiere their work in London’s West End.

The University’s campaign benefits from a Cinema Advisory Board comprising leading figures in the UK film industry including Tim Bevan CBE, Co-Chair of Working Title Films (Anna Karenina, Tinker, Tailor, Soldier Spy), Paul Trijbits of Ruby Films (Jane Eyre, Tamara Drewe), cinematographer Seamus McGarvey (Anna Karenina, We Need to Talk About Kevin) and film composer George Fenton (One Life, Looking for Eric).

Graduates include filmmakers Michael Winterbottom (Jude, 9 Songs, The Killer Inside Me), Asif Kapadia (Senna, The Warrior, Far North), cinematographer Seamus McGarvey (Atonement, We Need To Talk About Kevin, The Avengers), editors Andrew Parker (East Is East, Calendar Girls), Lucia Zucchetti (The Rat Catcher, Merchant Of Venice, The Queen); writers Tony Grisoni (Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas, Red Riding,) and Neal Purvis (Skyfall (Bond 2012), Johnny English Reborn, Let Him Have It).

Notes for editors

The HLF grant to the project Reviving the Birthplace of British Cinema is for £1,489,700 (26% of project costs) and is a second-round pass, which means it is a confirmed award.

The University of Westminster boasts a vibrant learning environment attracting more than 20,000 students from over 150 nations and we continue to invest in our future with new developments, research projects and new ideas. They offer highly attractive practice-based courses which are independently rated as excellent, many with international recognition.

Their distinguished 170 year history has meant they lead the way in many areas of research, particularly politics, media, art and design, architecture and biomedical science.

Tim Ronalds Architects is an award-winning practice that specialised in arts, education and public projects. The practice has a reputation for buildings of outstanding quality and character and for working closely with clients to develop inventive solutions to complex requirements. One of their best known projects is the Hackney Empire which won a Royal Fine Art Commission / BSkyB Conservation Building of the Year Award.

Further information

For further information, visit Regent Street Cinema website or University of Westminster's page.

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