Citizens Theatre Awarded £4.8million National



Artist's impression of the West Elevation of the Citizens Theatre

Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, this exciting and ambitious project will result in the conservation, repair and expansion of one of Scotland’s oldest, and much loved, working theatres. It will protect the physical asset for future generations whilst preserving and revealing the most significant parts of its heritage: the Victorian auditorium at the heart of the site; its rare collection of original 19th-century stage machinery and a unique example of a working paint frame. The project will also explore and celebrate the fascinating social and cultural heritage of the building and the Company, increase public engagement and ensure ‘The Citz’, as it is affectionately known, continues to make and deliver world class theatre for the benefit of local, national and international audiences.

The redevelopment, designed by architectural practice Bennetts Associates, is a radical reworking of the existing building to provide new learning spaces, rehearsal rooms and a 152-seat studio theatre. It will also improve working conditions for staff and transform front-of-house spaces for greater use by audiences, participants and the local community. The project will be underpinned by 12 creative heritage-focused activities including creating a heritage hub on the theatre company’s website; helping people to share their stories about the Citizens; providing volunteer opportunities; and bringing the work of the theatre to life through specially linked heritage productions, to wider audiences and visitors.

Commenting on the award, Judith Kilvington, Executive Director of the Citizens Theatre, said: “We’re delighted that we’ve received this significant support thanks to National Lottery players. This critical funding will allow us not only to preserve our Victorian theatre but also to tell stories which help to uncover and communicate the physical, architectural, social and cultural heritage of the Citizens Theatre to many future generations of theatre goers, participants, and visitors.

“With our increased heritage engagement plans, we will be able to attract new audiences and participants to the theatre for the first time and encourage a deeper level of engagement amongst our existing audiences by offering a variety of ways to explore the Citizens Theatre’s rich and multi-faceted heritage.

“Our redevelopment project is at the heart of the regeneration of the Gorbals and Laurieston and will create a vital cultural landmark and community hub for all the people who use the building.”

Lucy Casot, Head of HLF in Scotland, said: “We are delighted to bring some Christmas cheer to one of Scotland’s oldest and best-loved theatres. After 139 years of entertaining audiences, her future as one of the country’s outstanding production theatres is rosy.”

In June 2018, Citizens Theatre Company will move out of the Category B listed building, which it leases from Glasgow City Council, for over two years. Thanks to a partnership with Glasgow Life the Company will continue to produce its ground-breaking work at Tramway and provide its Citizens Learning activities at Scotland Street School Museum. The Company will move back into its iconic Gorbals home in autumn 2020.

The Citizens Theatre Building is now one of the few remaining old buildings left in the area and has been at the heart of the Gorbals since it opened as His Majesty’s Theatre in 1878. It was then known as the Royal Princesses Theatre until the building was first leased to James Bridie’s Citizens Theatre Company in 1945. The building has significant community and historical relevance for the city of Glasgow, and specifically for the Gorbals.

For more information please go to: http://www.citz.co.uk/support/citizens-theatre/theatre-redevelopment

Further information

For more information, interviews, photographs and design images please contact:

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Notes to editors

Citizens Theatre – A Building, A Company, A Community

The Citizens Theatre Company's vision is to transform and enhance lives through performance and participation that everyone can access. The Company has already successfully secured £16.3m in pledges towards the redevelopment project from Glasgow City Council, HLF, the Scottish Government (Culture Budget, Regeneration Capital Grant Fund and Historic Environment Scotland), The Robertson Trust and a variety of other trusts and individuals. An application (Round 2) to Creative Scotland for £1.5m has been submitted with a decision due in January. The theatre recently launched its 'We Are Citizens' public fundraising campaign which will inspire, engage, and encourage others to help raise £1.6m for the building redevelopment.

The theatre's first production at Tramway will be Cyrano de Bergerac, a co-production with The National Theatre of Scotland and the Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh from 1 to 22 September 2018.

Citizens Theatre Redevelopment

Auditorium and Stage House

The Victorian auditorium and stage-house will be overhauled to provide a much improved standard of accommodation and facilities. Effective heating and ventilation will be added to the auditorium resolving current issues around comfort. New seating will be installed in the upper level which will improve sightlines and capacity. There will be decoration and repairs throughout. The stage-house will receive significant upgrades with the addition of a new fly tower and a new stage with the original rake will be re-installed; new openings to improve access to the stage for actors, equipment and scenery; new band pit; and the development of a viewing gallery that takes the visitor into the heart of the historic stage machinery.

New Wing

Failing and poorly conceived architectural interventions and additions from the 1980s will be demolished to make way for a new wing that will link back of house and front of house effectively for the first time. The public will to be able to visit and see into key areas of Victorian heritage including the paint frame, fly floor, auditorium, under-stage and cellar including the historic stage machinery, on a day to day basis making the heritage some of the most readily accessible examples of its kind in Europe.

This wing will also provide a spacious new public foyer, characterised by the newly exposed sandstone gable wall of the Victorian auditorium, complete with café, ground floor and first floor bars, a bookable multi-function space, increased numbers of toilets including more disabled toilets, and new cloakroom and box office.

From the courtyard and the close that runs to back of house there will be easy access to the existing main rehearsal room (previously only accessible from backstage), a new studio rehearsal room, a dedicated learning rehearsal/workshop space, and two learning/events spaces. There will also be the creation of a new 152-seat studio theatre.

The new wing will incorporate a larger, more practical construction and carpentry workshop as well as new painting and metal work areas with the Victorian paint frame still in regular use at the heart of this operation. Additional dressing rooms with better facilities will be added along with new showers and toilets. There will also be improved facilities for backstage staff with new wardrobe making facilities and reorganised technical storage provided.

Backstage

The current arrangement of tiny offices spread throughout the building will be consolidated in a large open-plan office situated backstage but well connected to the foyer. It will be supported by a large breakout area for informal meetings, a green room/staff room as well as eight new spaces that can either function as office space, bookable meeting rooms or self-contained offices for external cultural partners to take up residency at the Citizens.

Accessibility

The current arrangement featuring multiple level changes and stairs has been redesigned to create level access and easy/transparent circulation routes for staff, participants and audiences members throughout the majority of the building. There is new and improved lift access from the basement right up to the top floor enabling those with impaired mobility significantly better access to the upper tiers of the auditorium and front of house in particular. There are also new positions for wheelchair users designed into the Dress Circle for the first time and a much improved selection of positions in the Stalls auditorium and studio theatre, as well as improved way-finding and technology to make the theatre more accessible.

Repairs/Environmental

There will be repairs to the external stonework and masonry, the statues, roof-works and drainage as well as replacement or refurbishment of windows and doors throughout. All mechanical and electrical installations will be replaced and modernised with efficient new installations as well as complemented with zero-carbon technology including photovoltaic solar panels and air source heat pump. This, along with much improved material performance and air tightness, will ensure the future sustainability of the company’s operations.