HLF helps lift the curtain on Citizens Theatre



Originally opened in 1878 as a variety theatre in Glasgow's Gorbals, the Citz, as it is affectionately known, became home to the Citizens Theatre Company in 1945, launching the careers of actors such as Stanley Baxter, Bill Paterson, Rupert Everett, Gary Oldman, Helen Baxendale, Alan Rickman and David Hayman amongst many others. Over the years the building has seen a number of small-scale extensions and developments but at its heart is a Victorian auditorium with the most complete working Victorian theatre machinery in the UK, including a unique paint frame that continues to be used to paint backcloths. It is with respect to this incredible heritage that the building will be redeveloped by leading architects Bennetts Associates to provide contemporary facilities for audiences, actors, staff and the local community, and safeguard its role as a vital part of the city's cultural provision for years to come.

Today, HLF announced earmarked funding of £4.9million for the redevelopment of the theatre, including the award of a grant of £500,000 to assist the Citizens Theatre in developing the project to the next stage of the application process.

The planned redevelopment will see improvements to the auditorium and other historic parts of the building, twentieth-century additions which are no longer fit for purpose will be removed and replaced, and new spaces, including a new foyer, learning and rehearsal studios, classes for workshops, an administration hub and improved catering facilities, will be created. Accessibility around the whole building will be improved with lift access to all levels while public viewing windows will highlight the building's historic machinery and the auditorium, visible to all visitors to the theatre.The exterior of the building will also be revitalized with statues of Shakespeare, Burns and the four Muses, originally from the

roof of the 1878 building, adorning the new façade.

With its roots firmly in the local community as expressed in its name, a busy programme of events and activities will be developed to involve people in exploring and celebrating the fascinating social and cultural heritage of the theatre and its place in the history of Glasgow. Its impressive archive and collection of artefacts, materials, pictures, literature, scripts and costumes will be centralised and catalogued so that many can be accessed for the first time.

Colin McLean, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, said: “The Citizens Theatre is held in great affection in Glasgow and far beyond although I don’t think anyone would disagree that it has seen better days. We are delighted to give our initial support to a project which will bring those better days back. We have a shared vision of the Citz becoming a place where friends can gather for a coffee, enjoy outstanding performances, learn about the performing arts, and discover the wonderful working heritage behind its scenes. It will reaffirm people’s pride in the Citizens Theatre and in their community.”

Dominic Hill, Citizens Theatre Artistic Director, said: “I am incredibly grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for their support of our ambitious plans. Our vision for this project is to create a building which honours and celebrates the remarkable history of this theatre, while remaining a vibrant and vital landmark in our community. The Citizens work on stage has long been celebrated for being bold, innovative and accessible to people from all walks of life, and I’m looking forward to working in a building that reflects that philosophy.

Adrienne Scullion, Citizens Theatre Chair, said: “This is an important capital project for both the Company and the city and with the announcement of HLF’s funding we are a major step closer to realising our plans. The Citizens has always valued its place in the heart of the Gorbals and now, with the Laurieston regeneration project underway, it’s the right time for us to invest in a more efficient, more sustainable building for future generations to enjoy.”

Alasdair Gordon, Associate Director at Bennetts Associates’ Edinburgh office, said: “We are delighted that the Citizens Theatre has secured this generous support from Heritage Lottery Fund. The theatre’s heritage is at the centre of our design proposals, and will be revealed in new ways alongside much needed new foyer, rehearsal, education and studiospaces. All parties involved have a shared vision to create a landmark building for the community and this vital funding brings us one step closer to realising that vision.”

Notes to editors

Heritage Grants applications are assessed in two rounds. A first-round pass is given when HLF has endorsed outline proposals and earmarked funding. A first-round pass may also include an immediate award to fund the development of the project. Detailed proposals are then considered by HLF at second-round and as long as plans have progressed satisfactorily and according to the original proposal, an award for the project is confirmed.

Heritage Lottery Fund
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 invested over £611million in projects in Scotland. Twitter: @heritagelottery.

Citizens Theatre
The Citizens Theatre is an iconic venue and theatre company based in the Gorbals area of Glasgow. It has been one of Scotland’s flagship producing theatres since 1945, recognised internationally as a leader in its field. It is led by Artistic

Director, Dominic Hill.

Within a beautiful Victorian auditorium that dates from 1878 the Citizens presents a world-class, contemporary repertoire based on British and foreign classics and new writing. The Category B listed building opened as His Majesty's Theatre and was also known as the Royal Princesses Theatre until the building was first leased to the Citizens Theatre Company in 1945. The theatre retains many of its Victorian architectural features; it is the only theatre in Scotland still to have its original machinery under the stage and features an original Victorian paint frame and related fly system, which is still used today to paint backcloths. The remnants of an old bowling alley and a shooting range are closed up beneath the theatre.

As its name suggests, the Citizens believes that its work can enhance and transform the lives of people of all ages, cultures and social backgrounds. Every week of the year, the Citizens Learning team run activities for children, young people, students, older people and families as well as working closely with marginalised groups, people with additional support needs and in disadvantaged communities across Scotland.

Citizens Theatre Capital Project
The Citizens Theatre is planning to undertake its most comprehensive redevelopment since the building opened as a theatre in 1878. The Citizens Theatre announced the appointment of Edinburgh-based Bennetts Associates as architects for the project in February 2013 and has since announced financial support for the project from Glasgow City Council and Creative Scotland totalling £5.5m. The total projected cost of the project currently stands at £16.5million, with work expected to commence in Autumn 2016.

Bennetts Associates
Bennetts Associates is one of the UK's leading architecture practices with a portfolio of work that has won more than 125 awards, with projects in education, commercial and public-sectors as well as theatres, cultural and historic buildings. The firm has a reputation for its design quality, approach to sustainability and for its collaborative style of working.

The practice was behind the Stirling Prize shortlisted transformation of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, completed in 2010, and the new Hampstead Theatre in London. It is currently working with leading UK theatres on a variety of projects, including the proposals for the Old Vic Theatre and Shaftesbury Theatre in London.

Bennetts Associates is based in Edinburgh and London and is currently around 75 strong.

Further information

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