Wilton’s is saved from dereliction at last

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This will complete the full preservation of the building, following the re-opening of the fabulously repaired Grand Hall in February 2013, finally saving fully this Grade II listed internationally significant building from ruin.

The HLF funding represents a significant contribution towards the total £2.6 million cost of the project, enabling the Wilton’s team, under the guidance of expert conservation architects firm, Tim Ronalds, to begin work on repairing the fabric of the building, whilst retaining the unique aesthetic charm that lies at the heart of Wilton’s popularity.

Frances Mayhew, Wilton’s Managing Director acknowledges, "Without the support of major funders like HLF, charities like ours would take years to raise these kinds of monies. We’ve been incredibly lucky with the support we’ve received from other sources, like Viridor Credits, Garfield Weston and Aldgate and Allhallows, but this decision means that we can finally take the permanent steps needed to stop this much-loved building from falling down."

Due to complete in 2015, the project will open up a further 40% of the building, currently derelict, bringing these unseen and unused spaces back to life and making them accessible for the first time, including creating a new learning and participation studio. Beyond that, securing the building also secures the future of Wilton’s as an arts and heritage venue, enabling more strategic long-term artistic programming, creating more venue hiring potential and offering the opportunity to plan and incorporate a wide range of community and learning activities, developed so everyone from local school children and community groups, businesses and volunteers can get involved in Wilton’s revival.

Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: "We are delighted to be able to help save the oldest music hall in the world. This truly unique project will enable the rebirth of one of London’s most remarkable theatrical buildings. Once completed the restoration will enable a wide range of people to enjoy its authentic atmosphere and learn more about its amazing history."

This exciting new chapter in the life of Wilton’s follows a chequered history that has seen this unique architectural gem transformed from one of London’s earliest music hall venues, home of the original Can Can dance and where stars like such as Champagne Charlie regularly appeared, to become for decades a Methodist mission that retained the name of the Mahogany Bar, serving tea and cocoa instead of ale and porter. Further reincarnations as a rag warehouse and popular film location, it was saved from destruction in the 1960’s slum clearances by a campaign led by Sir John Betjeman.

Having survived fire, two World Wars, riots and strikes, this grand Grand Music Hall is finally receiving the care and attention it deserves.

Wilton's Music Hall's website.

Further information

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