

## PRESS RELEASE 09 January 2017

### Theatres Trust announces winning theatres In Spend a Penny campaign

Theatres Trust today announces the eight theatres selected to receive £15,000 each from the Spend a Penny campaign, financed by the philanthropic Chairman of Albourne Partners, Simon Ruddick. Deeply empathetic of his wife's complaints about the ladies' loos in many theatres, this theatre-going entrepreneur decided last summer to do something, and offered the funding to Theatres Trust to make a start on the improvement of facilities for women primarily, but also gender neutral and unisex toilets.

Submissions for these grants were received at the end of October, and after thorough scrutiny the following theatres have been selected:

**Shelley Theatre, Bournemouth**

**Darlington Hippodrome**

**Liverpool's Royal Court**

**Little Angel Theatre, Islington, London**

**Marine Theatre, Lyme Regis**

**Tyne Theatre and Opera House, Newcastle-upon-Tyne**

**Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough**

**Theatre Royal Wakefield**

An incredible variety of theatres throughout England have been successful – ranging from a small community theatre in Dorset to the Grade I listed Tyne Theatre and Opera House in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The projects too are varied – some involve major re-workings, whilst others involve a more creative use of existing space. Further details of the theatres and their individual schemes can be found in Notes to Editors.

The scheme attracted a lot of media attention when it was originally announced last summer, but now the hard work begins and in at least eight venues and communities, ladies (and in the case of Little Angel girls) will have a more agreeable theatre going experience in future.

Simon Ruddick today says, "Although my original impulse was simply to 'lift the lid' on this specific issue, we hope that other donors will bear in mind the contribution that theatres make to the community and the contribution that the Theatres Trust makes to the community of theatres."

#### For further information, photos and possible interviews:

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The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### **Shelley Theatre, Bournemouth**

The Shelley Theatre and its supporting rooms are in the mid stages of a full restoration programme. This historic, Grade II listed private theatre has been in use since 1870, when it was built by Sir Percy Florence Shelley, the son of the poet and authoress Mary Shelley of *Frankenstein* fame. It was acquired in 2005 in a derelict condition and supported by volunteers and puts on a varied programme including touring theatre, film and music of various genres. The theatre currently only has ground floor unisex toilets and with the help of the Trust's funding can add six ladies' loos.

### **Darlington Hippodrome, formerly Darlington Civic Theatre**

Opened in 1907 as the New Hippodrome and Palace of Varieties, this Edwardian Grade II listed building has been entirely owned and managed by Darlington Borough Council since 1964. It is the most complete surviving example of the unique house style of architects Owen & Ward. It serves as the main venue for arts and entertainment within the Borough and is a sought after venue for touring companies. The theatre is currently closed for a major capital project which will now include four new unisex toilets in the Upper Circle thanks to this timely funding.

### **Liverpool's Royal Court**

A Grade II listed art deco theatre in Liverpool, the Royal Court has been brought back to life over the past ten years. It operates entirely without subsidy and has combined a popular artistic programme with phased capital works which have transformed the theatre. The Trust's funding will specifically upgrade provision in the Balcony area, where it is currently very poor. It will not only transform the existing toilets but improve access to them from the seating area.

### **Little Angel Theatre, Islington**

One of only three building based puppet theatres in England, the Little Angel Theatre opened in 1961 and remains dedicated to the celebration and development of puppetry and live animation in all its diverse forms. It produces its own work for children and family audiences and tours nationally and internationally as well as hosting puppet companies from the UK and abroad. It has a very active Creative Learning programme and provides training opportunities for puppeteers and puppet makers. There are currently only three toilets available – female, male and disabled. The funding received from the Trust will help create three new unisex loos as well as a larger accessible, baby-changing toilet. The new lavatories will make basins, soap and towels much more accessible to children who find it difficult to use the ones currently in situ.

### **Marine Theatre, Lyme Regis**

The Marine Theatre is a much loved cultural and historic centre in Lyme Regis, holding a significant place in the life of this small town. It has 220 seats and provides a mixed programme of up to 200 performances a year. It also hosts four local festivals, three amateur dramatic societies and the Lyme Youth Theatre. Toilet facilities are currently old, badly sited and of inadequate number. After extensive work including repair work to the aged drainage system and total gutting and rebuilding of the toilets, there will be four new ladies' loos thanks to Spend a Penny.

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### **Tyne Theatre and Opera House, Newcastle-upon-Tyne**

The Tyne Theatre and Opera House is a Grade I listed building of national importance and only one of 20 such listed theatres in Britain. The restored wooden stage machinery, original hemp flying system and wooden gantries provide a unique living picture of the workings of a Victorian theatre. The auditorium is one of the finest of its date in Britain and is structurally the same as when it was built. The theatre survives as an entertainment venue in spite of numerous setbacks and against a backdrop of closing theatres locally and throughout the country, with 2017 the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its opening. The theatre has been owned by the Tyne Theatre & Opera House Preservation Trust since 2008 with an international company managing the theatre through an existing lease. Two years ago the Trust took over the operation of the theatre itself, providing a varied programme including ballet, opera, comedy, amateur musicals and live music, and currently runs at about 130 performances a year. The toilets are dilapidated and out-of-date and the project will substantially upgrade the Stalls, Grand Circle and Upper Circle ladies' toilets.

### **Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough**

Named after Stephen Joseph, one of the pioneers of theatre-in-the-round, this theatre became famous under the Artistic Directorship of Alan Ayckbourn and was the place where his plays premiered. The converted Odeon Cinema became their base 20 years ago and they are now looking forward to a bright future under their new Artistic Director, Paul Robinson. Because of Scarborough's location and tourist economy, this theatre has its busiest season in the summer months supplemented by toured-in work at other times of year. The female toilets are very dated with slow flush mechanisms; the Trust funding will allow them to be entirely re-plumbed so that they work off the mains connection water supply. The improved toilets will not only flush faster but will be complemented by new hand basins, anti-slip flooring and redecoration.

### **Theatre Royal Wakefield**

The Grade II\* Theatre Royal Wakefield was designed by renowned theatre architect Frank Matcham and opened in 1894. It is partly a presenting theatre and has a varied programme including drama, family friendly work, music and comedy. It also produces the work of its Creative Director John Godber and an annual in-house pantomime. Its poor toilet provision will be enhanced with the opening of its new Centre for Creativity which includes a 100-seat studio theatre and will have direct access to the main auditorium with fully accessible new toilet facilities. Three ladies' loos will be created and financed by the Trust.

### **Further information from:**

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