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Five small London theatres improve the theatre-going experience with Theatres Trust funding

Theatres Trust has awarded five more small London theatres £5,000 each from its **London Small Theatres Grants Scheme** for meaningful projects that address viability and accessibility and improve the theatre-going experience.

The **Omnibus Theatre** in **Clapham**, an Off-West End theatre, will soon be able to broaden its programme and stage shows in a second performance space, created by installing a technical gallery in one of its current rehearsal rooms.

Islington charity **The Big House**, which is converting an old frame factory into a new youth theatre and community space for care leavers, will install acoustic screens to soundproof the new theatre, limiting potential noise disturbance to nearby offices and apartments.

Three other small London theatres will use Theatres Trust funding to improve the accessibility of their buildings. The **Queen's Theatre Hornchurch** will complete a package of accessibility works front and back of house to better support audiences, participants and performers. The **Tower Theatre** in Hackney, one of London's major amateur dramatics groups, will install a stair lift to allow those with limited mobility access to the theatre space on the first floor of the converted Methodist chapel; and **Soho Theatre** will install an automatic sliding front door to ensure easy access to the box office.

Tom Stickland, Theatres Adviser at the Theatres Trust said: "London is rich in all sorts of theatre, not just the West End in all its opulence, but tiny spaces that have made their homes in converted spaces and in communities throughout the capital. We launched this scheme following a GLA report into the challenges faced by small theatres and as you can see from our recent awards it is the smallest of those spaces that stand to benefit the most from some investment in their buildings; ensuring high quality experiences for theatre-goers, staff and performers."

The London Small Theatres Grants Scheme was launched in summer 2015 by the **Mackintosh Foundation** in partnership with the London Mayor's Office, to help small theatres in the city with vital capital funding. In spring 2016 **Soho Estates** joined the Mackintosh Foundation as the second major donor to the London Small Theatres Grants Scheme. These five awards bring the total number of small London theatres funded by the scheme to 25.

The next round of the London Small Theatres Grants Scheme is now open. To ensure the Theatres Trust can support the widest number of theatres in London, changes have been made to the tenure and charitable structure requirements, meaning that a greater number of small and pub theatres will be able to apply. The deadline for applications is Monday 27 May at noon. Further details about the scheme can be found:

theatretrust.org.uk/grants

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We believe that current and future generations should have access to good quality theatre buildings where they can be inspired by, and enjoy, live performance. We champion the future of live performance by protecting and supporting excellent theatre buildings which meet the needs of their communities. We do this by providing advice on the design, planning, development and sustainability of theatres, campaigning on behalf of theatres old and new and offering financial assistance through grants. theatretrust.org.uk

The Theatres Protection Fund London Small Theatres Grants Scheme is generously supported by the Cameron Mackintosh Foundation and Soho Estates.

The Mackintosh Foundation was founded in 1988 by Cameron Mackintosh to promote and develop theatrical, musical and dramatic arts; relieve suffering from and promote research into the causes and treatment of AIDS/cancer; provide for medical research generally and relief of sickness; relief for the homeless and poverty stricken; promotion of the conservation, protection and enhancement in the UK of nature and the amenities of the countryside, including areas of natural beauty.

Soho Estates began as a collection of historic buildings acquired from the 1970s to the 1990s by Paul Raymond. Today, the estate covers large parts of Soho's 87 acres, and its tenants reflect the vibrant mix found in Soho, including restaurants, bars and clubs, hotels, independent retailers, and offices. The company focuses its philanthropic activities on charities and projects in the local area, tackling issues affecting communities within Soho and the West End. This includes partnerships with Centrepoin, Terrence Higgins Trust, the Soho Parish School and Soho Create, as well as funding for events, festivals and markets.

More about the London Small Theatres Grants Scheme recipients

Omnibus Theatre, Lambeth Council | £5,000

Omnibus Theatre is a 110-seat multi award-winning independent theatre in Clapham, South London. Shortlisted Fringe Theatre of the Year 2019 *The Stage*, A recipient of the Peter Brook/Royal Court Theatre Support Award 2016 and Offie winner 2018. Its programme is inspired by the building's literary heritage, with both classics re-imagined and contemporary storytelling. The theatre also provides a platform for new writing and interdisciplinary work, aiming to give voice to the underrepresented and challenge perceptions. Thanks to the Theatres Trust London Small Theatres Grants Scheme funding the Omnibus Theatre will be

able to create a second performance space, increasing its capacity to stage shows in the new space, by installing a technical gallery in its current music room rehearsal space.

Queen's Theatre Hornchurch, London Borough of Havering | £5,000

The 500-seat Queen's Theatre in Hornchurch was purpose built in 1975. Thanks to Theatres Trust London Small Theatres Grants Scheme funding the Queen's Theatre will improve accessibility for audiences, participants and performers both front and back of house. The grant will fund equipment and improved facilities for wheelchair users and D/deaf audiences and performers as part of Q Access, its programme of accessibility works and part of the wider one million pound capital investment programme, Q New, to celebrate the theatre's 65th anniversary. It is a well renowned producing theatre and supports many other producing theatre companies.

Soho Theatre, Westminster City Council | £5,000

Soho Theatre is London's most vibrant venue for new theatre, comedy and cabaret, staging up to 6 performances a night across 3 spaces. Their mission is to produce new work, discover and nurture new writers, and target and develop new audiences. Thanks to Theatres Trust London Small Theatres Grants Scheme funding Soho Theatre will replace its outwards opening push button door at the box office with an automatic sliding door. The new sliding door will improve access to this important theatre, especially for wheelchair users and visually impaired audience members.

The Big House, London Borough of Islington | £5,000

The Big House will soon have a theatre space with capacity for 80 people, set in a former frame factory. It specialises in work with care leavers. The charity is already staging site specific productions inside the building. The next phase of the project is to convert part of the building into a multi purpose theatre space, and thanks to funding from the Theatres Trust London Small Theatres Grants Scheme, The Big House will be able to acoustically separate the theatre space from the office space and limit noise disturbance to the next door residential building. This will allow the theatre to function throughout the day without interference.

Tower Theatre, London Borough of Hackney | £5,000

The Tower Theatre Company recently moved into a new permanent home, a converted Methodist chapel in Hackney. Thanks to Theatres Trust London Small Theatres Grants Scheme funding they will ensure all audiences will be able to enjoy a show. The grant will fund the installation of a chair lift to help non ambulant participants and audience members to access the theatre space which is located on the first floor. It will bring clear benefits to one of the few dedicated spaces for amateur theatre in London.