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'Theatre at Risk' Intimate Theatre rejected for Historic England listing

Theatres Trust, the national advisory public body for theatres, is disappointed by Historic England's decision to reject the **Intimate Theatre's** application for statutory listing.

The **Intimate Theatre** was added to the Theatres Trust's Theatres at Risk Register earlier this year after St Monica's Catholic Church announced its intentions to demolish the building to make way for a new church hall and accommodation.

The **Intimate Theatre** has been in continual use as a performance space up until January 2019 and is much loved as a venue within its local community. It has a rich social and cultural history, including hosting the first complete play to be broadcast live by the BBC. Many famous names have trodden the boards there, including **Richard Attenborough** who made his professional stage debut there in 1941 and **David Bowie** who appeared at the theatre in 1968 as a part of the Lindsay Kemp Company.

The building also has clear architectural interest as a rare survivor of a repertory theatre built in the inter-war period. Professional repertory theatres such as the Intimate played an important role in the history of drama within the UK. These theatres were where many actors, directors and playwrights learned their trade. They were also the creative bed for much of the commercial theatre of the day. The Intimate theatre also benefits from many original high quality and ornate interior features and fittings that survive intact.

The building is locally listed and a local group campaigning to save it has recently been successful in its application to list the building as an Asset of Community Value. However, national listing by Historic England would have given the building legal protection from alteration or demolition without the express consent of the local planning authority, which would have been a huge help in the ongoing campaign to save this important building.

Jon Morgan, Theatres Trust Director says 'We believe that the Intimate Theatre meets the Historic England's listing criteria of being of special architectural or historic interest. Theatres Trust will continue to engage with local stakeholders to make the case to protect this unique theatre.'

Theatres Trust

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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

Images available upon request

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Intimate Theatre was originally built as a church hall for St. Monica's Roman Catholic Church, by Father Gallagher, a former builder who was ordained in later life. It became a full-time repertory theatre in 1935 when actor John Clements, who had an ambition of operating his own company, leased the building from the church authorities. It continued to stage weekly repertory theatre until 1969, thereafter becoming home to local drama and music societies with performances continuing until January 2019.

St Monica's Catholic Church considers that the theatre building is no longer fit for purpose and wishes to redevelop the theatre to build a new parish hall and residential accommodation. It is understood that the new plans will not provide for any new theatre space.

The campaign to save the theatre is being backed by industry figures including actor, director and author Steven Berkoff and actor and presenter Nicholas Parsons, both of whom have also played at the theatre in the past.

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.

Theatres at Risk Register is published annually by the Theatres Trust to highlight and support the theatre buildings under threat across the UK. There are 31 theatres on the 2019 list. Every theatre on the register has strong architectural merit or cultural heritage and the potential to be returned to its original performance use and be a real asset to its community. Since 2006 Theatres Trust has helped save more than 80 theatres on the Theatres at Risk list.