

## **THEATRE BUILDINGS AT RISK REGISTER 2009 ANNOUNCED**

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*London, UK*

The Theatres Trust, the National Advisory Public Body for Theatres, publishes its 2009 Theatre Buildings at Risk Register (TBAR) today. The top ten include the threatened *Opera House* in Blackpool, and *Derby Hippodrome*, whose owner is being prosecuted by Derby City Council. A total of eighty-two theatres are covered in the Register.

The Trust's TBAR Register highlights theatres that have been abandoned and those suffering neglect under the hands of their owners. But it also highlights the efforts of groups across the country that are working to rescue theatres, such as the *Tivoli* in Aberdeen, the *Theatre Royal Hyde*, and the *Doncaster Grand*.

The Register also provides good news. Whilst 13 theatres were added this year, 11 have been removed. From the 2008 top ten, two have been downgraded. *Wilton's Music Hall* is now talking to the National Trust about the future of this historic Grade II\* East London theatre, and Sussex University has announced plans for the refurbishment of the *Gardner Arts Centre*.

Theatres Trust Director, Mhora Samuel said, "The Trust exists to promote the better protection of theatres. Each year we publish the Theatre Buildings at Risk Register to raise awareness of the threats facing theatres. Some of our most architecturally significant theatres still lie abandoned or are under threat from redevelopment. Many could come back to life as theatres or become cultural centres for local communities. We must do everything we can to make local authorities and owners aware of their responsibilities. The Trust's aim is to prevent the loss of theatres, such as Glasgow's *Coliseum* which was lost in a fire in May and had to be demolished."

The Theatre Buildings at Risk Register can be searched online at [www.theatrestrust.org.uk](http://www.theatrestrust.org.uk). It covers 71 theatre buildings in England, 4 in Scotland and 7 in Wales. More information on each theatre is provided through a link to the Trust's Theatres Database, which includes around 2,000 existing theatres. Each top ten entry has a downloadable information sheet.

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### **Protecting theatres for everyone**

**Director** Mhora Samuel **Chairman** Rupert Rhymes OBE  
**Trustees** Jason Barnes, Simon Callow CBE, Marilyn Cutts, Venu Dhupa, Mark Foley, Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall, Chris Shepley CBE, Sam Shrouder, Ronald Spinney CBE, Dr Phyllis Starkey MP, Pat Thomas OBE  
**Consultants** John Earl, Jonathan Lane, Peter Longman

## Notes For Editors

**About The Theatres Trust:** The Theatres Trust is the National Advisory Public Body for theatres and a statutory consultee on planning applications affecting land on which there is a theatre. This applies to all theatre buildings, old and new, in current use, in other uses, or disused. It was established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976 '*to promote the better protection of theatres*'. The Theatres Trust champions all theatres, historic, contemporary and new, as important places in our lives and supports and develops awareness of the protection and needs of UK theatres.

**About the Theatre Buildings At Risk register:** Since it began in 1976 The Theatres Trust has been protecting theatre buildings throughout the UK. The TBAR was started in 2006 in response to growing public interest in theatres, to identify important theatres, and to create a Risk Register to work alongside others similar lists and Local Authorities Local Lists.

### The 2009 top Theatre Buildings at Risk:

#### England - Top Ten:

Winter Gardens complex (Opera House), Blackpool (Grade II\*): New entry. Reports of possible threat of demolition and in a poor state of repair.  
Swindon Mechanics Institute (Grade II\*): Threat of demolition and in a poor state of repair.  
Plymouth Palace (Grade II\*): Empty and in a poor state of repair.  
Brighton Hippodrome (Grade II\*): New entry. Cost of reopening.  
Derby Hippodrome (Grade II): Partially demolished.  
Burnley Empire (Grade II): Empty and semi-derelict.  
Doncaster Grand (Grade II): New entry. Cost of purchase by Friends of Doncaster Grand.  
Hulme Hippodrome and Playhouse, Manchester (both Grade II): Empty and in poor state of repair.  
Stockton-on-Tees, Globe Theatre (Grade II): Empty.  
Theatre Royal, Hyde (Grade II): New entry. Empty. Campaign by Theatre Onward.

#### Scotland:

Tivoli Theatre, Aberdeen (Category A): Poor state of repair and cost of purchase by Tivoli Theatre Trust.  
Odeon/New Victoria, Edinburgh (Category B): Application for partial demolition.  
Gateway Theatre, Edinburgh (Category C(s)): Threat of demolition.

#### Wales:

Patti Theatre, Craig-y-Nos (Grade I): Poor state of repair.  
Gwyn Hall, Neath (Grade II): Severely fire damaged in 2007.  
Palace Theatre, Swansea (Grade II): Empty and in poor state of repair.  
Theatr Gwynedd, Bangor (not listed): Closed 2008, replacement not due to open until 2014.

#### Downgraded:

Wilton's Music Hall, London (Grade II\*): In negotiations with National Trust regarding potential purchase of the freehold and potential grant from English Heritage for repairs.  
Gardner Arts Centre, Brighton (Grade II\*): Sussex University working to refurbish and re-open in 2012.  
Bradford Odeon (not listed): An application for demolition is still under consideration.  
Farnham Redgrave (not listed): Lost. Planning permission granted for demolition.

### Further information:

Of the 82 buildings on the 2009 register, 46 face an immediate threat to their future and are at high risk. Four of these are in Wales, including the *Theatr Gwynedd* in Bangor, where there is a significant gap between the closure of the theatre (2008) and the opening of the new one in 2014. In Scotland the three high risk theatres include Aberdeen's *Tivoli Theatre*, which requires a significant amount of repair work to the structure to make it watertight. The remaining 39 high risk theatres are all in England – an increase from 2008. In the top ten, *Blackpool Winter Gardens complex* has been added because of press reports regarding the possible demolition and poor state of overall repair. *Burnley Empire* still features because its owners appear uncontactable and it remains in very poor condition. In 2008 *Derby Hippodrome* was partially demolished (its owner is currently being prosecuted for these actions). It is now it is under further threat as an application has been submitted to replace it with a car park.

Focussing on Doncaster and Hyde, the Trust is working to help secure ownership by local building preservation and arts groups of the *Grand Theatre*, Doncaster and *Hyde Theatre Royal*.

The Trust helped raise awareness of the closure of Brighton's *Gardner Arts Centre* (Grade II\*), one of 2008's top ten. It is now at lower risk as Sussex University recently agreed to spend a substantial sum of money on refurbishing the *Gardner* in order to bring it back into use by 2012. Other success stories for 2009 include London's *Westminster Theatre*, where developers gained planning permission for alterations to the building that would secure the fit-out of the 320-seat theatre; the *Edinburgh Odeon* (Category B) where there may be a possible reprieve as an application for partial demolition is now to be considered by Scottish Ministers; and the *Neptune* in Liverpool (Grade II) which has been closed since 2005, but the Council has now agreed a five year tenancy from the owners.

The TBAR Register differs from the risk registers of other bodies in that it includes **all** types of theatre building, whether statutory listed, in a Conservation Area, or not listed. This means that the Trust can monitor theatres such as the *Gateway*, Chester, and *Theatre Royal*, Barry, both of which are closed and threatened by demolition, but not afforded any statutory protection.

Risks to theatres are assessed by: Ownership/Sale (Threat through sale or ownership); Funding/Finance (Where difficulties in obtaining capital or revenue funding puts the building at risk); Building Operation (Where quality of operation threatens continuing or future theatre use of building); Cost of works (Where the cost of maintenance/refurbishment works to comply with regulations is high); Local development (Where development adversely affects access to the theatre or restricts future expansion/improvements); Demolition (Where there is a clear threat of demolition); Use class (Risk of future alterations to another use to be made without referral/control); Building fabric (Decay of a building not in use or removal of significant features); Theatre fabric (Irreversible works which may prevent a return to theatre use in the future).