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## **Theatres Trust report calls for better designed theatres and performing arts spaces in schools**

As MPs debate the Academies Bill this week, The Theatres Trust, the national advisory public body for theatres, publishes a report highlighting the need to improve the quality of theatres and performing arts facilities in schools.

Its Conference 10 report, *Designing School Theatres* addresses the differences in school theatre design in maintained and independent schools, and the importance of performing arts teachers' involvement in the design process.

The subject was heatedly debated by 200 people at its two day conference on the 26th and 27th April 2010 in Leeds, resulting in 26 key principles for school theatre design and 7 further actions. Practical ideas coming out included:

- designing main hall spaces so they are fit for purpose for performances – for example ensuring audience entry doors do not open onto the stage;
- design and procurement to include consultation with performing arts teachers and specialist theatre architects and consultants;
- enlarging drama studios to accommodate full class sizes;
- providing proper backstage and technical support spaces.

At a time when schools' capital investment projects are under review and the Academies Bill is being passed through Parliament, the report recommends that there needs to be good quality design guidance and consultative procurement processes to ensure young people have access to inspiring, fit for purpose performing arts facilities.

Theatres Trust Director, Mhora Samuel said, "Young people deserve better school theatres. Good theatre design delivers usable, practical performance space that builds young people's confidence, communication skills and underpins Britain's future excellence in the creative industries. Meaningful and informed discussion in this specialised area will lead to better schools theatres for less money, always important, but now crucial in these times of budgetary cuts."

### **Protecting theatres for everyone**

**Director** Mhora Samuel **Chairman** Rob Dickins CBE  
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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



A copy of The Theatres Trust Conference10: Designing School Theatres report can be downloaded from the Trust's website. [www.theatrust.org.uk](http://www.theatrust.org.uk)

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**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors:**

**About The Theatres Trust:** The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. The Trust aims to protect theatres on behalf of the nation. It advises in planning, regeneration and development, architecture and design, heritage, and theatre. It enables better planning to secure, improve and achieve sustainability for new and existing theatre buildings and to protect theatre use. Its aim is to ensure that current and future generations have access to good quality theatres that reflect our rich cultural heritage and offer inspiring new environments in which to enjoy theatre. [www.theatrust.org.uk](http://www.theatrust.org.uk)

**The Theatres Trust Conference:** The Theatres Trust holds an annual conference. Conference 10: Designing School Theatres looked at the design of theatres located within secondary schools, academies and independent schools. It considered the challenges associated with creating theatres that feel and work like theatres whilst also serving a range of educational, learning and community needs, their relationship to other theatres in their cities and towns, and the role they play in shaping the next generation of theatre activists, artists, and audiences.

**School Theatres Design Principles include:**

School theatres should be exhilarating and inspiring. They should help to create focus, have character and feel magical. Such performing arts spaces enable arts, culture and creative learning in schools. They also contribute to a school's overall success.

If the school is having only a Main Hall and performing arts are on the curriculum, it must be usable as a performance space.

The design of performing arts facilities should be defined in the first instance by the teaching and learning outcomes of the school. Performing arts facilities will need to promote creative development and provide imaginative rehearsal spaces in addition to providing a performance facility.

Entry doors to the theatre/hall should not be located directly onto the performing area or be designed with glass panels. Sound lobbies and acoustic considerations are vital.

Make sure all performance spaces are sufficiently high to properly hang and focus lights, and there needs to be a proper rear-stage cross over, good access to dressing rooms, storage space and wing space.

Consider carefully the number of teaching/rehearsal facilities in schools with bigger drama studios that can accommodate larger class sizes. The minimum height of a studio space and its size (recommended in BB98) should be revisited.

The Conference 10: Designing School Theatres report can be downloaded from the Trust's website at:

<http://www.theatrust.org.uk/events/conference-10/resources-10>

along with [Contributor presentations](#), [Further school theatre design resources](#) and [Conference photographs](#).