# Citizens Theatre takes top honour as inaugural Great British Theatres Awards celebrate the nation’s extraordinary buildings

The winners of the inaugural Great British Theatres Awards have been announced tonight, celebrating the extraordinary buildings, organisations and individuals making an outstanding contribution to the UK's cultural life. Citizens Theatre in Glasgow took home the evening's highest honour, Great British Theatre 2026, alongside the Great Renovation award, recognising its remarkable transformation and commitment to the community it serves.

The winners of the Great British Theatres Awards 2026 are:

**Great New Build – @sohoplace, London**
In partnership with Charcoalblue and presented by Alfie Boe

The first purpose-built West End theatre in 50 years, @sohoplace has transformed a previously neglected corner of Soho into a vibrant cultural destination. Combining innovative design, accessibility and environmental responsibility, it is also the only West End theatre to hold BREEAM Excellent certification.

**Great Renovation – Citizens Theatre, Glasgow**
In partnership with Arup and presented by Siobhan Redmond and Gary Kemp

The remarkable transformation of Citizens Theatre has preserved its historic Victorian auditorium while introducing modern facilities, improved accessibility and new creative spaces. A reimagined public court connects the street to the heart of

the building, opening up the life of this much-loved producing theatre to its community.

**Great Amateur Theatre – Sherborne Studio Theatre, Dorset**
In partnership with The Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain and presented by Su Pollard

Originally a corrugated iron Baptist chapel, Sherborne Studio Theatre has been transformed by the volunteer-led Amateur Players of Sherborne. Improvements including new seating, a hearing loop, insulation and better access have created a more welcoming, inclusive and energy-efficient theatre for its community.

**Great Found Space – The Dipping House, Stoke-on-Trent**
In partnership with Tysers and presented by Michelle Collins

Claybody Theatre has transformed a former industrial building on a disused pottery site into a permanent 130-seat theatre. After a decade of producing work in temporary spaces, the company now has a home that strengthens Stoke-on-Trent's cultural offer and demonstrates the potential of repurposed buildings.

**Great Community Connection – Joint winners: Eden Court, Inverness and Polka Theatre, London**
In partnership with Plann and presented by Shanay Holmes and Tobias Turley

Recognising the exceptional standard of entries, the judges selected two winners for their outstanding commitment to their communities.

Eden Court was recognised for tackling rural isolation through creative programmes reaching remote schools and communities, while providing inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ and disabled people and rural artists to connect, collaborate and create.

Polka Theatre was celebrated for making theatre accessible to children and families through affordable ticketing, inclusive programming and outreach. Its free play areas and role as a Warm Welcome space demonstrate its importance as a year-round community resource.

**Great Use of Space – Natural Dye and Wellbeing Garden, National Theatre, London**
Presented by Melanie La Barrie

The National Theatre has transformed an underused terrace into a garden supporting sustainable costume production, biodiversity and wellbeing. Growing around 20 plant species for natural, non-toxic dyes, the garden also provides a peaceful space for staff and visitors.

**Great Placemaking Partner – Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council**
Presented by Zoë Armer

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council was recognised for its vision in creating Shakespeare North Playhouse in Prescot. Through investment and collaboration, the council has helped establish a major cultural destination that celebrates the area's Shakespearean heritage and plays a central role in the town's regeneration.

**Great Green Theatre – Chichester Festival Theatre**
Presented by Janie Dee

Chichester Festival Theatre was recognised for placing sustainability at the heart of its operations and artistic practice. Guided by the Theatre Green Book, its initiatives include carbon offsetting for audience journeys and the creation of The Nest, a new low-carbon studio venue built using recycled materials.

**Great Public Space – Storyhouse, Chester**
Presented by Michèle Taylor and Obioma Ugoala

Storyhouse was celebrated for creating welcoming social spaces that have become an integral part of daily life in Chester. By removing barriers to access, it has established a genuinely inclusive public building where people can meet, work and connect without needing to attend a performance.

**Great British Theatres Shining Star – Joint winners: Leith Theatre Trust and Daniel Shrimpton, Joseph Rowntree Theatre**
In partnership with White Light and presented by Hammed Animashaun and Jenna Lee James

The judges recognised both an organisation and an individual for their exceptional commitment to protecting and improving theatres.

Leith Theatre Trust was honoured for two decades of dedication to safeguarding Leith Theatre, protecting a building with almost a century of cultural history while laying the foundations for its future as a thriving community hub.

Daniel Shrimpton was recognised for his leadership as Chair of York's Joseph Rowntree Theatre, overseeing significant building improvements and strengthening fundraising to secure the theatre's future while remaining true to its original purpose.

**Great British Theatre 2026 – Citizens Theatre, Glasgow**
Presented by Josh McTaggart and Denis Lawson

Selected by the judges as the theatre that best embodies the spirit of the awards, Citizens Theatre was recognised for its exceptional commitment to accessibility, inclusion and community engagement. Its ambitious redevelopment has preserved the building's historic character while creating new public spaces and facilities for artists, cementing its position as one of the UK's leading producing theatres.

Joshua McTaggart, CEO of Theatres Trust, says: “Theatres Trust is thrilled to be celebrating the winners of the first ever Great British Theatres Awards. The winners reflect the diverse nature of theatres across the country with winners ranging from a new West End theatre to a venue created in an adapted industrial unit. Whether historic or modern, amateur, commercial or subsidised, each winner demonstrated the far-reaching impact it has for its audiences, communities and artists.

“With so many exceptional theatres, there was stiff competition for the title of Great British Theatre 2026, but the Citizens Theatre thoroughly deserves this award. The return of a reinvigorated Citz is not just a boost for the Gorbals neighbourhood or the city of Glasgow, but for the nationwide theatre community.”

The evening also saw acclaimed actor and theatre advocate Julie Hesmondhalgh honoured with the Great British Theatres Lifetime Achievement Award 2026, presented by Olivier Award-winning playwright James Graham, recognising her exceptional contribution to championing theatre buildings and widening access to the performing arts. A passionate supporter of regional and community theatres, she has campaigned for the future of venues including Oldham Coliseum and Oswaldtwistle Civic Arts Centre and Theatre.

Organised by Theatres Trust as part of its 50th anniversary celebrations, the awards brought together the theatre sector at Central Hall Westminster for an evening hosted by West End and Broadway star Marisha Wallace. Following nearly 200 nominations from across the country, the winners represent the remarkable breadth of theatre buildings and the people who sustain them, from major cultural landmarks to small, volunteer-led community spaces.

Unlike traditional theatre awards that recognise productions and performances, the Great British Theatres Awards celebrate the buildings themselves and the people who protect, transform and sustain them. The inaugural winners demonstrate the vital cultural, social and economic contribution theatres make to communities nationwide, underlining the importance of continued investment and support to ensure these spaces thrive for generations to come.

## Notes to Editors

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## Theatres Trust

Theatres Trust is the national advice and advocacy body for the UK's theatres supporting all forms of theatres, whether old or new, commercial, subsidised or community-run.

We protect theatres and champion the future of live performance by advising and supporting our nation's theatres to develop best practice in design and management following the four principles of resilience, environmental sustainability, inclusivity and placemaking.

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