

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Statement of Historical Significance on Streatham Hill Theatre released, giving a remarkable look inside the dormant building

- Statement by leading international architecture firm brings together over 100 pictures and drawings to show that the 1920's building is a potentially well preserved time capsule, but the clock is ticking
- Statement says that its significant architectural heritage value must be taken into account in any plans for the 2,500 seat theatre
- Also launched today, the Theatres Trust 'Theatres at Risk' register 2021 includes the theatre on its list of buildings at greatest risk
- Multi award-winning choreographer and dancer, Akram Khan, announced as a Patron of the Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre campaign to save the building for public use

Key quotes from the Statement of Historical Significance [\[link\]](#):

"The Streatham Hill Theatre is significant on a number of levels: its place in the work of the original architect W.G.R Sprague; being a rare example of interwar suburban theatre buildings; its aesthetic completeness, quality and scale - and its role in the collective cultural memory of its local community."

"At 2,523 seats (23 seats more than the London Coliseum) the theatre was one of the largest theatres in Britain – larger than the London Palladium."

"It has not suffered the ad-hoc and piecemeal additions and alterations that often diminish theatres of this vintage that have had changes of use during their lifetime."

"The statement of historical significance will underpin a potential future design and access statement to support both longer term or meanwhile uses."

The Statement of Historical Significance on Streatham Hill Theatre has been produced by [Aedas Arts Team](#), a world leading architecture and design practice for [The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre](#). It has been completed with support from 440 crowdfunders, the Mayor of London, Lambeth Council and the Theatres Trust.

It has been prepared to assist and inform the Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre as they look to secure a viable future for the building, and is the first output of their 2020 crowdfund campaign. This will also see a viability study and economic impact assessment on the use of the building published later in the year.

The statement includes over 70 pages of detailed analysis that will help inform decisions on the impact of any proposals put forward for the building. It also includes a list of over 80 world-famous stars and companies that performed at the theatre.

Today Akram Khan, leading choreographer and dancer, becomes the 10th Patron of the Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre's campaign to save the building for public use. He joins a list of Patrons that includes the likes of Samira Ahmed, Paul Merton and Sir Mark Rylance.

David Harvey, Chair, Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre:

"This statement shows there are huge cultural and heritage benefits to be unlocked if Streatham Hill Theatre was to be brought back into use. There would clearly be wide-ranging benefits to the local economy and community from reviving this magnificent theatre to support arts and culture for years to come."

Akram Khan, MBE, Dancer, Choreographer & Director, Akram Khan Company:

"Streatham Hill Theatre has such an amazing history of dance - to think that the likes of Margot Fonteyn, Alicia Markova, Anna Pavlova, Anton Dolin and Michael Somes all performed there! It would be so wonderful to be able to light up its stage again with the world of contemporary dance and other dance genres."

Sonia Winifred, Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture, London Borough of Lambeth:

"Streatham Hill Theatre is an important local asset that we want to see working for our community, as part of our commitment to preserving our heritage and culture in our diverse borough for future generations."

"The Council has been pleased to be able to support the Friends in their efforts to explore the potential for a more productive use of the former theatre."

"In a very practical way, production of a historical statement of significance will help everyone better understand the extent and limits of the potential for adaptation of this Grade II listed building, and inform considerations of the options for a sustainable and viable future and how that might be arrived at, which ultimately is our shared goal. I look forward to engaging with the Friends' forthcoming Viability Study."

Claire Appleby, Architecture Adviser, Theatres Trust:

"Theatres Trust has long considered Streatham Hill Theatre to be one of London's most lavish 'sleeping beauties' and it would be fantastic to see it rejuvenated. It has the potential to be a real asset and contribute to the regeneration to Streatham High Street. However, the project still has a long way to go and for now it remains on our Theatres at Risk list."

ENDS

Notes to Editors follow:

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Further resources including a selection of photos: streathamhilltheatre.org

Use of photographs from the Statement of Historical Significance document

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Streatham Hill Theatre

Streatham Hill Theatre originally opened in 1929 and is a Grade II listed building with an auditorium with a capacity of over 2,800. It was the last project by the renowned West End theatre architect WGR Sprague, whose other surviving theatres include the Wyndhams Theatre, Noel Coward Theatre, Aldwych Theatre and Gielgud Theatre.

After a direct V1 'doodlebug' hit in 1944, it closed for the rest of WWII and reopened in 1950 to entertain visitors for another twelve years, before being repurposed for bingo in 1962, until the closure of the bingo in 2017.

In 2019, after a flashmob of over 1,000 people demonstrated huge local support, Lambeth Council turned down an appeal by the theatre's owners to remove its Asset of Community Value status.

The Friends have no access to or control of the building, which is currently only partially in use as a small slot machine lounge by leaseholders, Praesepe. The freeholders are Poll Mount Ltd.

The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre

The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre's mission is to help find a sustainable solution to the future of the building, and to promote returning it to use as an arts and culture venue. They are a volunteer-run unincorporated association supported by the Mayor of London, Lambeth Council and The Theatres Trust, and have applied for CIO charity status.

On the 91st birthday of the opening of the theatre, on 20th November 2020, the Friends announced nine Patrons for their campaign: Baroness Floella Benjamin, DBE, DL, Catherine Russell, Jessica Thom, Paul Merton, Renato Balsadonna, Robert Glenister, Samira Ahmed, Simon Callow, CBE and Sir Mark Rylance. In addition, over 100 creative industry individuals and organisations gave their support to the campaign and many others continue to add their names.

Community support

The Draft Revised Lambeth Local Plan says "The council will support the regeneration of the former Streatham Hill Theatre to become a major leisure and entertainment venue alongside workspace for creative and cultural industries".

The Streatham Investment and Growth Strategy 2019–2030, adopted by Lambeth, sets out a priority action to explore the feasibility of refurbishing and rejuvenating the theatre, and says that

successfully restoring this building would bring significant improvements to the public realm and historic/cultural fabric of the area.

The Save Streatham Hill Theatre crowdfunding campaign to support a viability study and economic impact assessment was launched on 28th January 2020. It gained a huge groundswell of support from the local community, political leaders, and businesses, as well as support from the wider creative and heritage communities. It reached its funding target on 13th May 2020, along the way gaining funding pledges from the Mayor of London Lambeth Council to help reach a total of £41,680, as well as a £6,000 grant from the Theatres Trust.

Theatres Trust

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. The Theatres at Risk Register is their way of highlighting and supporting the theatre buildings under threat and at greatest risk across the UK. A working theatre plays an important role for its local community, both in terms of creating identity and also as an economic driver for creating employment and for the night-time economy. The register raises awareness of theatres at risk to ensure these incredible buildings are kept safe. It is launched annually to bring their stories to a national audience. Read about the 2021 list [here](#).

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