

**PRESS RELEASE
EMBARGOED UNTIL 4th NOVEMBER 2021**



Streatham Hill Theatre added to the national Heritage At Risk Register of most valued historic places and those most at risk of being lost.



From left to right: From The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre: Chair David Harvey, Patrons Baroness Floella Benjamin, DBE DL and Simon Callow CBE, and Lead Architect Armeet Panesar, photographed in the dress circle of the auditorium.

© Historic England Archive, Chris Redgrave. This and other photos available as per notes below.

Today, 4th November, Historic England has published its Heritage At Risk Register 2021, with the Streatham Hill Theatre being added to it. The Heritage At Risk Register sets out the historic sites in England most at risk of being lost forever as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development.

The 2021 Register describes the Grade II listed Streatham Hill Theatre as “an unusually lavish example of a theatre built outside of the West End and was designed by William George Robert Sprague, one of the leading theatre architects of his generation. It is a rare survival as only a few of his buildings still exist today”.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan said: “In London our theatres are the envy of the world, they provide a stage for aspiring artists and bring a wide range of benefits to our communities.

The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre, a CIO and registered charity 1193643.

Patrons: Akram Khan MBE, Baroness Floella Benjamin DBE DL, Catherine Russell, Jessica Thom, Paul Merton, Renato Balsadonna, Robert Glenister, Samira Ahmed, Simon Callow CBE & Sir Mark Rylance

“That’s why I’m supporting efforts to ensure the magnificent Streatham Hill Theatre is saved for future generations, and why it’s so encouraging Historic England have recognised this is a place like no other and added it to the Heritage At Risk Register.

“I hope others will join me in supporting this remarkable building being transformed into an inclusive, cultural space that will serve the local community for years to come.”

Volunteer-run organisation, The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre (FoSHT) are campaigning to find a sustainable solution to the future of the building, and to promote its return to use as an arts and culture venue. The campaign is supported by a number of high-profile patrons from the world of arts and theatre.

Also responding to the addition of the theatre to the register:

“Regenerating this unique building would be a game-changer in strengthening our community and supporting our local area. This recognition by Historic England will help us redouble efforts to save the building for cultural use for future generations. We call on all stakeholders to work together actively to save this landmark building and unlock the array of benefits it would bring.”

David Harvey, Chair, The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre

“Adding Streatham Hill Theatre to the Heritage at Risk Register recognises that this extraordinary listed building needs attention. This is an opportunity to take stock, and build strong relationships between all partners to work towards a better future for this cherished historic place.”

Simon Buteux, Partnerships Team Leader at Historic England

"This announcement adds welcome impetus to the campaign to revamp Streatham Hill Theatre as a community-led arts venue, which would ensure the preservation of our iconic theatre and be a big boost for Streatham's growing creative scene and local economy."

Bell Ribeiro-Addy, MP for Streatham

“I’m delighted that Streatham Hill Theatre is now on the Heritage At Risk Register. As we come out of the Covid pandemic, it’s just the right time to save this beautiful building for the cultural benefit of our hard-hit, local community. I’ll do all I can to support its rejuvenation.”

Cllr Sonia Winifred, Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture, Lambeth Council

“It is fantastic news that Streatham Hill Theatre has been added to Historic England’s Heritage at Risk list. This glorious W. G. R. Sprague theatre has been on our Theatres at Risk list since 2017 and we’ve supported it through our Theatres at Risk Capacity Building Programme and by giving advice to The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre. Theatres Trust believes it has the potential to be returned to use by the community in south London and to, once more, become an important, lively venue at the heart of the high street. Today’s announcement makes that future seem more realistic, giving the building greater protection.”

Claire Appleby, Architecture Adviser, Theatres Trust

Patrons of The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre commented:

“It’s wonderful to see Historic England recognising the amazing heritage of the Streatham Hill Theatre. It would be such a joy to be able to bring dance back to this South London gem of a theatre! To think that its stage is around the same size as the London Palladium’s is amazing, as is the history of dancers and dance troupes who performed there in its day. We must do everything we can to bring it back to life for new audiences to enjoy!!”

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

“It’s wonderful that Historic England has included the Streatham Hill Theatre on its At Risk list, and almost as wonderful that they consider this fine and unique theatre a part of historic England - our heritage - which it most certainly and deservedly is.”

Simon Callow, CBE. Actor, Writer and Director

“With the recent pandemic requiring more and more people to work from home rather than centrally in cities, perhaps many disregarded live performance spaces like ‘The Streatham Hill Theatre’ will become vital for revived touring circuits as existed in the past. I never forget that a location as close to the West End as the Elephant and Castle once had 5 theatres serving the local community, and in Brixton where I live, during my life we have lost a beautiful old venue. I think we live performers and producers may need to reconsider the benefits of touring to audiences who are working more disparately from home even in the suburbs of cities. I welcome Historic England’s support for neglected regional live performance venues.”

Sir Mark Rylance, Actor, Theatre Director and Playwright

“I am thrilled and grateful that Historic England has acknowledged the exceptional value of the Streatham Hill Theatre. It is a huge help in raising awareness of the conservation needs of such a stunning heritage building at risk, and the invaluable benefits this extraordinary venue would bring to the London scene and local community culture.”

Renato Balsadonna, Opera and Symphonic Conductor

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

Contact for The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre

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Further resources including a selection of photos are available via www.streathamhilltheatre.org

Contact for Historic England

For further information on the [Heritage at Risk Register](#), please contact Celia Knight: celia.knight@historicengland.org.uk | 07900 770 423

For new Historic England [photographs of Streatham Hill Theatre](#) please contact their Archive at archive@historicengland.org.uk

Interviews

Patrons Akram Khan, MBE, Simon Callow, CBE, and Renato Balsadonna are potentially available for interview subject to scheduling commitments. Please contact David Harvey, details above, to discuss further.

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 W G R 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. The theatre was added to Theatres Trust's Theatres at Risk Register 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 against 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, Merkur Casino UK (formerly 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 an entirely volunteer-run organisation with around 1200 members and associates, supported by the Mayor of London, Lambeth Council and The Theatres Trust, and have recently been granted 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 January 2021 it was announced that they were

being joined by Akram Khan, MBE. In addition, over 200 creative industry individuals and organisations have so far given their support to the campaign and many others continue to add their names.

Community support

The [Lambeth Local Plan 2021](#) 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 and Lambeth Council to help reach a total of £41,680, as well as a £6,000 grant from the Theatres Trust.

The viability study report summary is available [here](#), along with a statement of historic significance [here](#).

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