



13 December 2016

Dear Mr Glasgow,

Plans to redevelop the Ambassadors Theatre into the Sondheim Theatre
[Application Number: 2016/4869/P and 2016/5032/L]

Further to my letter of the 15th October 2014 (attached) offering Arts Councils England's support for the Cameron Mackintosh Group's proposed redevelopment of the Ambassadors Theatre - the application now having been made - I would like to reiterate our support for the project.

Without repeating what I said in my previous letter, it is apparent that the West End is short of flexible theatre spaces. There is a clear demand for spaces which are able to offer the sort of flexibility being proposed in the redevelopment of Ambassadors theatre and it is increasingly these types of spaces that theatre makers are turning to; midscale spaces where the constraints of the traditional proscenium arch doesn't impinge or compromise the type of work that artists and directors are making. I think if Camden Council were able to support this project then it would enable the work of a new generation of theatre makers find a more sympathetic space to present their work and also find a wider audience in the capital.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]
Sir Peter Bazalgette
Chair

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15 October 2014

To whom it may concern

Ambassadors Theatre

I am aware that the Cameron Mackintosh group are about to submit a formal planning application to Camden to extensively redevelop the interior of the Ambassadors Theatre, creating a flexible auditorium with an end-on stage. I would like to offer some context and support from Arts Council England's perspective.

It is a widely held view that London is enjoying a golden period in theatre both in terms of creativity but also in terms of attendance and popularity. A recent report stated that more than 22 million attended a London theatre performance in 12/13 – more than watched a premiership football match in that year. It also cited that, at any one time, London theatres are engaging more than 3000 performers in addition to employing a more than 6,500 full time staff. A significant creative and economic contribution to our capital that is the envy of many. In order to maintain the level and quality of activity in theatre (as with other artforms) there needs to be regular investment in artists, producers, new work, audience development and of course the building infrastructure in which performances take place. The types of spaces that theatre makers are increasingly turning to, and what London is short of, is flexible midscale spaces where the constraints of some of our wonderful old theatres doesn't dictate the type of work that directors make. To that end the investment in a more flexible space in London would not only be important in helping regional theatre activity to find a home and an audience in London (from spaces such as the RSC's Swan, Bristol Old Vic, the new Liverpool Everyman plus many regional producing theatres and touring companies), but would also enable productions to move within London (such as the Dorfman Theatre, the Almeida, the Soho Theatre, the Donmar Theatre etc.). It is currently not as easy as it might be for work from regional theatres to find a home in London.

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Whilst I have only heard about Cameron's plans in outline and have not seen the plans, it seems that London hasn't got a space quite like the one that is being proposed - although there is evidence of demand for similar smaller more flexible houses – witness the demand for spaces such as the Trafalgar Studios and the emergence of the St James Theatre, the Park Theatre and the Shed outside the National Theatre - and of course the new Dorfman. Whilst I am of course sensitive to the issues around preserving our theatres and their wonderful architecture, if there is a way of reconciling Cameron's plans with the heritage issues it would be significant for the presentation of theatre in London.

Finally the respected reputation of Cameron Mackintosh and his track record of investing many millions of pound in developing spaces in London is clearly well established and I am confident, if he is able to realise these plans, the space will flourish - and that can only be good for audiences and for Theatre.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Sir Peter Bazalgette
Chair



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David Glasgow
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Regeneration and Planning
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20 December 2016

Dear David Glasgow

Planning application for the redevelopment of the Ambassadors Theatre (Ref: 2016/4869/P and 2016/5032/L)

I am writing to give my support to the proposed redevelopment of the Ambassadors Theatre. This seems to me an excellent and extremely sensitive design, respectful to the original Sprague theatre, but creating a much needed new space for London Theatre.

Of course, I have so often been frustrated that there have been so few options in London for us to transfer our important work. Our Swan Theatre productions have no obvious venue to which we could transfer them successfully. If a theatre like the Sondheim were available there would be a real opportunity for this important work to be seen in the capital. And, of course, our relationship with our regional theatre partners around the country would suggest that providing them with a platform in the capital could be a huge help in promoting their work more widely.

It is a vital and exciting project and one with a potentially far-reaching impact for the cultural economy of the country as a whole - not just for the capital. I believe that the West End is in need of such a theatre and I hope these exciting proposals can come to fruition.

Yours sincerely


Gregory Doran
Artistic Director
The Royal Shakespeare Company