

MEETING: 15/06/2017

Ref: 13924

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London More Inclusive

Royal Court Theatre

**Adv: Geraldine Page
Base: Kensington & Chelsea
Benefit: London-wide**

Amount requested: £73,660

Amount recommended: £73,700

The Charity

The Royal Court Theatre (RCT) (operating as The English Stage Company Ltd), located in Sloane Square, was founded in 1956. It was set up as the writer's theatre and this mission still drives the organisation today. RCT has a reputation for delivering pioneering and often cutting-edge theatre; it regularly produces new plays which are original, contemporary and provocative. It produces a minimum of 12 plays per year in its two small theatre spaces, reaching an audience of over 120,000 annually. RCT also runs the Young Court – an inclusive programme of activities by, with and for young people up to age of 21 and Beyond the Court which sees them engage London's Communities in the work of the theatre.

The Application

In January 2016 you awarded RCT £2,700 (£1,800 for an access audit and £900 for staff training). This application seeks funding to carry out a programme of works identified in the access audit to improve the accessibility of RCT, enabling Disabled people to engage fully with the theatre's work as audiences, participants, creators and staff members. This project will support RCT's strategic approach to inclusiveness that is at the heart of their artistic and engagement programmes.

The Recommendation

The project will transform RCT's ability to support disabled people to access the opportunities they provide through their artistic, community and learning programmes. The project will enable RCT to deliver:

- Step-free access to both Front and Back of House, leading to greater equality and an enhanced visitor/user experience.
- At least two relaxed performances per year in 2017-18, ideally building to a total of at least eight over three years, an increase of 800% over three years.
(A relaxed performance is intended specifically to be sensitive to and accepting of audience members who may benefit from a more relaxed environment, including those with autistic spectrum conditions, anyone with sensory and communication disorders or learning disabled people).
- At least 12 additional captioned performances in the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs and Downstairs (total 24) an increase of 100% from current position.
- All performances becoming fully accessible for Deaf and hard of hearing patrons through both captioning and access to infrared headsets and induction loops.
(Captioning converts the spoken word into text which provides people with hearing loss access to live performances. In captioning, the words appear on a screen at the same time as they are sung or spoken)

£73,700 to refurbish lifts; for additional assisted hearing equipment, improved signalling and signage; upgrades and supplements to emergency evacuation system. The grant is conditional on renewal of the lease with Cadogan Estates.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
18/03/2016	£2,000 to match CEP funding towards the wage costs of an Arts Apprentice for 1 year.
28/01/2016	£2,700 (£1,800 for the access audit and £900 for staff training).
14/10/2010	£17,820 towards the costs of promoting, staging and staff development around a play around deafness and deaf culture.

Background and detail of proposal

Disabled people face multiple barriers to engaging with the arts, including practical issues with physical venue accessibility. They are also severely under-represented within the arts and cultural sector workforce. Arts Council England reported that just 1.9% of the workforce across their National Portfolio Organisations in 2014-15 were disabled. In order to establish the full extent of works and actions required to bring the building to an appropriate standard of practical accessibility, RCT carried out a full Access Audit with funding from you. This resulted in a comprehensive and prioritised list of recommendations. Some of these RCT have begun to address from their own funds. However, to fully address the issues identified by their Access User Group and the Access Audit, they need to undertake the programme of improvements listed above. The work is planned to be carried out in summer 2017 around the theatre's production schedule. It will be led by an in-house team with significant experience of delivering capital projects. RCT are in the process of negotiating the renewal of their lease with Cadogan Estates from 2020, when it expires, to 2035. It is anticipated that the renewal will be straightforward, but condition of grant has been added nonetheless.

Financial Information

The restricted deficit in 2017 and 2018 is related to the ACE Capital Project Fund, a grant awarded for theatre refurbishment which is being depreciated proportionally against this fund. Reserves include three funds in addition to the general fund that are internally designated for activities that fulfil their charitable objectives. These unrestricted funds are available and used as part of their cashflow.

Year end as at 31 March		2016	2017	2018
		Audited/Examined Accounts £	Forecast £	Forecast £
Income & expenditure:				
Income		7,503,690	7,547,276	7,735,958
- % of income confirmed as at 15/02/2017	a	n/a	n/a	47%
Expenditure	b	(8,694,030)	(8,435,103)	(8,623,040)
Total surplus/(deficit)	c	(1,190,340)	(887,827)	(887,082)
Split between:				
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)		(1,112,598)	(888,307)	(917,640)
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	d	(77,742)	480	30,558
		(1,190,340)	(887,827)	(887,082)
Cost of Raising Funds	e	1,351,067	1,371,063	1,398,484
- % of income	f	18.0%	18.2%	18.1%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	g	6,787,744	6,608,783	6,774,003
Free unrestricted reserves:				
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end		658,000	659,102	689,660
No of months of operating expenditure	h	1.2	1.2	1.2
Reserves policy target		658,000	658,000	658,000
No of months of operating expenditure	j	1.2	1.2	1.2
Free reserves over/(under) target	k	0	1,102	31,660