

A photograph of the Marlowe Theatre building, a historic stone structure with a prominent blue clock face and Gothic-style windows. The building is set against a bright sky with a sun flare on the left. The foreground is partially obscured by a purple geometric shape.

**MARLOWE  
THEATRE**

**THE POOR PRIESTS' HOSPITAL**

# **THE MARLOWE THEATRE'S CREATIVE LEARNING CENTRE AND HERITAGE DESTINATION**

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*"This landmark development will consolidate Canterbury's status as the performing arts capital of Kent, contributing to a rich and revitalised city centre and boosting the local economy. Ultimately this development project will make Canterbury a better place to live, study and work."*

**ALAN BALDOCK, LEADER OF CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL**



## MARLOWE THEATRE

# KENT'S ENGINE HOUSE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

The Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury is one of the most successful independent large-scale touring theatres in the UK. We are a registered charity that receives no regular subsidy and raises all of our income through box office, secondary spend and fundraising.

### Last year we:

- Staged **484** performances to nearly **400,000** audience members.
- Delivered a thriving learning and participation programme working with **4,000 young people** in schools, community groups and partnering with East Kent College Group, Canterbury Christ Church University and our resident companies including Royal Shakespeare Company and Matthew Bourne's New Adventures.
- Were the largest performing arts employer in Kent providing **240 jobs**, **3 apprenticeships** and over **100 work experience opportunities**.
- Built our Artist Development programme supporting **230 local artists** through our Artists' Network, and developing **95 writers** through our Writers' Room.

AWARD WINNING  
**UK THEATRE OF THE YEAR IN THE STAGE AWARDS 2022.**

**1,200**  
SEAT MAIN HOUSE

Presenting everything from West End musicals to the Royal Shakespeare Company in a year-round programme of theatre, dance, opera, music and comedy.

**150**  
SEAT STUDIO

Dedicated to the development of new ideas through research and development, sharings, presented shows and home-produced family shows.



# OUR COMMITMENT TO THE NEXT GENERATION

**We work with young people and local communities who are most in need of opportunities to experience culture and we focus on developing their creative lives and building vocational pathways.**



We partner with schools and education providers where there is a high uptake of free school meals and a high proportion of pupils on Education Healthcare Plans.



We engage with local organisations making a difference to some of the most marginalised members of our community, using the performing arts to enrich their lives and build social bonds.

Theatre is a vital part of the UK's fast-growing creative industries, contributing £3.34bn to the UK economy annually.

The Marlowe Theatre aims to be the beating heart of an ecosystem that provides unfettered access to arts experiences and education for people of all ages, offers informal and formal training opportunities, and creates jobs for people who want to build their lives and creative careers in Kent.

We also want to play our part by training the creatives of the future and building a stronger sector nationwide which will ensure theatre remains one of the fastest growing creative industries in the UK.

*"Unless you have a creative education, you don't have a complete education."*  
**LISA NANDY, MP, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**

## DID YOU KNOW?

Young people living in neighbourhoods with higher levels of deprivation are far less likely to engage with arts, culture, and heritage.

## KENT'S NEIGHBOURHOODS

Within Kent there are 51 neighbourhoods that are within the top 10% most deprived in the country. A high proportion of these are in East Kent and two of them are within Canterbury itself.



<sup>1</sup> BMC Public Health; Wak, Coulter & Fancourt 2021 (<https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-021-11740-6>)



## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

# THE POOR PRIESTS' HOSPITAL - THE MARLOWE THEATRE'S CREATIVE LEARNING CENTRE AND HERITAGE DESTINATION

**Our vision is to preserve, protect, and re-present the Poor Priests' Hospital, a Grade I and II listed, 12th Century heritage building, creating a world-class Creative Learning Centre and Heritage Destination for Kent.**

### **This ambitious capital project will mean we can:**

- Almost double the number of Kent schools we partner with delivering long-term investment in teachers and young people.
- Develop the Marlowe Academy for the Performing Arts and grow Further Education opportunities.
- Grow our over-subscribed Youth Theatre and offer more bursary spaces.
- Build a diverse community of local people who can develop their skills, love of theatre, and connection to their heritage.
- Regenerate a neglected part of Canterbury and offer the only free heritage destination in the city meaning visitor numbers will rise to 50,000 each year through events and activities.

Young people and the community will be able to thrive and develop their creative lives. They will be able to feel a sense of belonging and place, learn new leadership and theatre-making skills and find pathways into employment in the performing arts.



*"This next chapter builds on a decade of artistic and commercial success in the heart of the city, with the Marlowe Theatre expanding to match our creative ambitions as the engine house of the performing arts in Kent.*

*Responding to growing needs, and to help our city fulfil its potential, we propose a landmark development for Canterbury."*

**DEBORAH SHAW, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE MARLOWE THEATRE**



# OUR CHALLENGE

Since 2017, the Marlowe Theatre has been making use of the Poor Priests' Hospital but sadly, the ancient building is no longer fit for purpose and we have reached capacity in terms of the number of young people we can work with.

## The Poor Priests' Hospital is:

- Not fit for practical use with a warren of ill-connected spaces, confusing circulation and multiple level changes after 800 years of adaptations.
- Unable to host full school classes of 30 young people.
- At capacity in terms of space for our Youth Theatre resulting in a long waiting list and limited bursary spaces.
- Unsuitable for hosting Matthew Bourne's New Adventure's Cygnet Group of young dancers in training with no appropriate studio space or sprung floor.
- In danger of becoming a heritage 'At Risk' building without intervention.
- Currently closed to the public, not accessible nor environmentally efficient.



# THE VISION

## We will rejuvenate the building and create:

- A world-class **Creative Learning Centre** with dedicated studios, class rooms and break out spaces.
- A beautifully presented and free-to-access **heritage destination** focusing on the Great Hall, Solar Room, and the chapel.
- A **riverside café** for events and private hires in the building, capitalising on Canterbury's visitor economy.
- A **sensitively repaired** Grade I and II listed building, with environmental sustainability at its heart.
- A **public space** brought to life with interpretation based on our uniquely creative approach of the history of the site, its people and stories.

*"I used to think that heritage buildings were just old buildings full of nothing. But this building, it's home. The old feeling inspires you."*

**ELI, 15 YEARS OLD**  
MEMBER OF MARLOWE YOUTH THEATRE

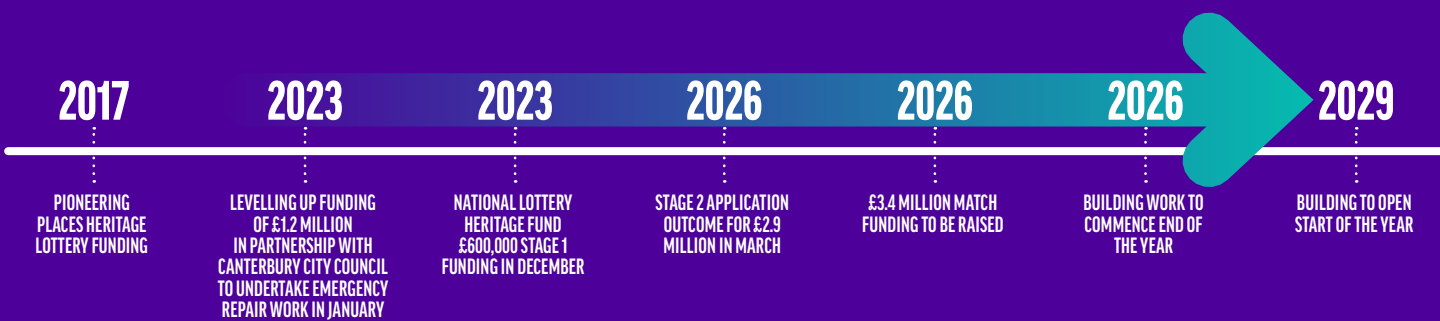


# MAKING IT HAPPEN

We need to raise £6.92m to make our vision for the Poor Priests' Hospital, the Marlowe Theatre's Creative Learning Centre and Heritage Destination a reality.

We will submit our round 2 application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for £2.9 million with an outcome due in March 2026.

We are building a fundraising campaign chaired by Marlowe Theatre trustee David Harrel and led by passionate advocates who share our ambitions to raise the remaining £3.42m.



## SUPPORTING OUR PROJECT

If you'd like to discuss supporting this project or learn more about it, we'd love to hear from you.

Please email Kate Bierman, Campaign Director, on [kate.bierman@marlowetheatre.com](mailto:kate.bierman@marlowetheatre.com) or call the Development Office on **01227 935767**.

