



UNIVERSITY  
*of* DERBY

In 2012, the University of Derby launched the “Learning Theatre”, a groundbreaking new model for nurturing the next generation of theatre makers.

Based in Derby Theatre, a well-established regional venue acquired by the university 2009, it represents a unique creative symbiosis between the theatre itself, the university and the surrounding city, combining a strong commitment to the local community with the cultural imperative to invest in emerging talent.

The project is strongly supported by Arts Council England, whose incoming chairman, Sir Peter Bazalgette, singled it out in his inaugural speech as “really innovative” and “a novel and enterprising idea” to give an ailing theatre “a new lease of life, not only as a live venue but also as a training centre”.

Audiences, critics and students have all responded enthusiastically to the initiative. The theatre now puts on six of its own shows per year as well as well as receiving touring companies. A production of the Seagull secured four – and five-star reviews across the national press, while a musical version of Angela’s Ashes was taken on tour to Limerick, where much of Frank McCourt’s memoir is set, and acclaimed by his widow as “brilliant in its simplicity”.

Meanwhile, the project affords those studying on the university’s theatre arts courses an opportunity to work in a fully equipped city-centre theatre alongside professional artists, thus developing the industry-focused skills that will equip them for their future careers.