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THE STAGE

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Nationwide campaign launches to support local theatres

My Theatre Matters! gives audiences a chance to speak up for their local theatre

Embargoed until 0900 on Thursday, March 14, 2013

My Theatre Matters!, a nationwide campaign aimed at galvanizing public support for local theatres across the UK, has been launched today.

The campaign comes in response to a series of damaging cuts in local government funding for theatres across the UK, including cuts to theatres in Newcastle, Sheffield and Westminster.

My Theatre Matters! will give local audiences a chance to voice their support for their local venue and encourage politicians to do the same. It features a website (www.mytheatrematters.com) where audiences can sign up and download information about how to lobby local politicians to convince them to continue funding theatres in their area. Audiences are also able to follow the campaign via twitter (@**theatre_matters**) and on Facebook.

My Theatre Matters! will be publicised in theatres across the UK, with actors giving curtain call speeches encouraging theatregoers to lend their support, while, thanks to the support of **John Good**, theatre programmes will feature information about the campaign and postcards will be available for audience members to send to their Council Leaders.

The campaign has been created and launched by actors union **Equity**, theatre publication **The Stage** and theatre trade association the **Theatrical Management Association** (TMA), with support from **Cog Design** and **John Good**.

Brian Attwood, editor of **The Stage**, explained:

“Many theatres are facing reductions, and in some cases complete cuts, in support from their local authorities. It is the single biggest threat currently facing our industry. One need only look to see



PRESS RELEASE

what has happened in Taunton, Sheffield, Newcastle and even in Westminster to see that this is a national problem, facing theatres up and down the country. While there are many enlightened councils out there who continue to support their local theatres, we fear there will also be many who see them as an easy target at a time of cuts.

“We need to show that theatres aren’t an easy target, but are public services that are really valued by their audiences.”

Equity president **Malcom Sinclair** said: “The relationship between actor and audience is the essence of theatre so it seems to me to be entirely appropriate that the My Theatre Matters! campaign should be about mobilising audiences to defend their theatres from cuts. I hope every Equity member will get behind this campaign – but especially those currently working in theatre. This is about our right to work and if we won’t campaign to save theatres who will?”

TMA president **Rachel Tackley** added: “It seems theatres are increasingly seen by decision makers as a luxury, not the beating heart of a community providing benefits for everyone from cradle to grave. Ask a Councillor what they associate with the word ‘theatre’ and most would probably say words associated with fun, entertainment and enjoyment. That’s no bad thing, but as the purse strings get tighter and tighter, they need to know how much their communities value the economic, social and educational impact of their investment in local theatres.

“My Theatre Matters! is designed to help real people tell their stories about how important their local theatre is to their life, and help them be heard. If we all shout loud enough, we can ensure theatres get the investment they need to play their full role in safeguarding and revitalising our communities in these challenging times.”

As well as The Stage, TMA and Equity, supporters of the campaign include the Independent Theatre Council, Creu Cymru, Writer’s Guild of Great Britain, Theatres Trust, Dance UK and the Society of London Theatre. The campaign is sponsored by John Good and Cog Design.

For more information, or to sign up to the campaign, please visit www.mytheatrematters.com
Or contact TMA general manager David Brownlee on david@solttma.co.uk or 020 7557 6709

Notes to editors

The Stage is often referred to as the theatre industry or actors’ bible. Founded in 1880 by the Comerford family and still owned and run by them, it is the only trade paper for the performing arts and entertainment industry in Britain. It is published weekly on Thursdays. The newspaper’s



PRESS RELEASE

website, www.thestage.co.uk attracts 350,000 unique visitors and two million page impressions every month.

Equity is the UK Trade Union representing more than 37,000 professional performers and other creative workers from across the spectrum of the entertainment, creative and cultural industries. www.equity.org.uk

Established in 1894, the **TMA** is the leading trade association representing the interests of and providing professional support for the performing arts in the UK. Our members include theatres, multi-purpose venues, arts centres, concert halls, commercial producers, touring theatre, opera and ballet companies, sole traders and suppliers to the performing arts. www.tmauk.org