



## **Tall Stories Theatre Company to open a rehearsal and performance space in Central Library, Islington**

Tall Stories, the internationally recognised storytelling theatre company, is partnering with Islington Council to transform a currently unused section of Central Library into a storytelling hub for the company. The project will create an administrative base for the company, alongside a large studio space suitable for rehearsals and performances for an audience of up to 80. Tall Stories, a registered charity, will be contributing to the capital costs of the project, and will be renting the space from the library as part of the partnership.

Tall Stories' programme of work in the studio space will include free performances for Islington school groups and residents, opportunities to give local young people an insight into how a stage production is created, workshops for actors and theatre creatives, a programme of support for emerging theatre companies, sharing of works-in-progress and preview performances of new shows.

The studio will also be available to hire by local groups and other companies as a rehearsal/preview space with technical facilities. Tall Stories and Islington Council look forward to a positive partnership, working together on community events such as the Summer Reading Challenge and the Islington Word Festival.

In anticipation of this relationship, last year Tall Stories became one of the Council's partner organisations for the '11 by 11' scheme, which aims to deliver eleven outstanding cultural experiences to every child in Islington schools by the time they reach Year 11. In 2019 Tall Stories' production of 'Future Perfect' was performed to over 600 children in Year 6 classes across the borough free of charge.

Outside of its new space in the library, Tall Stories will continue its extensive touring work to venues large and small in the UK and abroad. The creation of this space will allow the company to have a physical home with office and rehearsal space on the same site and will embed the company within a local community.

Islington Central Library was built in 1906 with the aid of a Carnegie grant. Tall Stories will be taking over the section of the library originally designated as the 'juvenile room' and reinstating the space's original Edwardian proportions, later divided up as part of a 1970s redevelopment. The refurbishment is expected to be completed by summer 2020.

The development will also reinstate the original library entrance on Holloway Road as an alternative entry point to the building. A ramp sympathetic to the library's frontage will be added to enable accessibility. The project has been designed by architects Haworth Tompkins (renowned for their work on theatres), with technical input from Gary Beestone Events and Theatre.

Lucy Wood, Tall Stories' Executive Director, said, 'We are thrilled to have found a permanent home for Tall Stories at Central Library, Islington, and look forward to embedding ourselves within the Islington community.'

Olivia Jacobs and Toby Mitchell, Joint Artistic Directors of Tall Stories, said, 'A historic library hosting a storytelling company feels like an ideal partnership. We're very excited about the creative and community-based opportunities ahead.'

Councillor Asima Shaikh, Islington Council's Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs, and the council's lead on libraries, said: 'We're delighted with this innovative partnership with Tall Stories, which will take a vacant, underused space and convert it into a brilliant new rehearsal space which will provide creative learning experiences for local people. As part of this partnership, children, families and adults in the borough will benefit from a range of free activities to help our libraries promote reading.'



**Tall Stories**  
Somerset House, West Wing  
Strand  
London WC2R 1LA  
020 8348 0080  
info@tallstories.org.uk  
www.tallstories.org.uk

### **Note to editors**

Tall Stories is dedicated to bringing great stories to life for audiences of all ages. The company is a registered charity which tours the UK and the world with its exciting blend of storytelling theatre, original music and lots of laughs. Tall Stories was founded in 1997 by co-directors Olivia Jacobs and Toby Mitchell and is best known for its work for family audiences, including 'The Gruffalo' and Olivier Award-nominated 'Room on the Broom'. The company performs nationally and internationally in a vast range of venues, from rural UK venues to the West End, from London schools to South Africa, from Broadway to Sydney Opera House.

[www.tallstories.org.uk](http://www.tallstories.org.uk)