

Mission Appeal Goes Through the Roof – thanks to Brownsword’s Matched Funding

Next Stage has just announced that **roof repairs at The Mission Theatre have been completed**, thanks to the generosity of theatregoers, local businesses, The Joyce Fletcher Charitable Trust, Next Stagers, and The Brownsword Charitable Foundation.

In September 2006 Next Stage Theatre Company, the custodian of Bath’s newest theatre, The Mission, announced the launch of ***A Roof Over Our Heads***, an appeal intended to raise the **£20,000 needed to repair the 200-year-old roof**.

Andrew Brownsword, whose support in the creation of The Mission Theatre had already seen **The Brownsword Charitable Foundation** providing £11,000 towards the theatre’s lighting, **pledged matched funding for *A Roof Over Our Heads***.

Response from the public was instant and generous. **Within 2 months over £2,000 had been raised** from donations alone. **Regular theatregoers local businesses, Next Stagers and the public ‘bought’ tiles for £5 each**. A chart in the foyer recorded the Appeal’s progress and acknowledged support. Weekly donations, ranging from £5 to £300 came in for the appeal. **Director Ann Garner said, “I was moved by the number of people who, whilst not having large incomes, were prepared to find £5 and donated it - often anonymously -but always with accompanying messages of support for the revitalisation of this building.”**

The **Next Stage Theatre Company** raised money from productions, holding charity nights, extra performances and retiring collections.

Local auctioneer Neill Saint volunteered his services and an **Auction of Promises** was held in March 2007 in The Theatre Upstairs at The Mission. Many local businesses contributed and there was fierce bidding for such goodies as original paintings, designer goods, and even the chance of a walk-on part in Next Stage’s groundbreaking production of *His Dark Materials*. **Over £3,000 was raised** at the event.

In August work began on replacing the old and cracked tiles on the roof, releading all the gutters and outlets, repairing the crumbling parapets and relining the flat roof over the Bistro. All work had to meet requirements set down for a Grade 2 listed building.

In September came confirmation that **The Brownsword Charitable Foundation would match the £8,500 that Next Stage had managed to raise with its Roof Appeal**. This meant that there was only £3,000 needed to reach the target of £20,000.

As Bath's new bus station rose from the dust opposite The Mission Theatre, so developers Multi became interested in the performing arts centre that had opened against all odds in the heart of the city. Hearing how close we were to our goal, **Multi pledged a donation of £2,000 to the Roof Appeal.**

Finally, **the roof works were completed and signed off last week** and simultaneously a surprise **donation of £1,000** from the Bath-based **Joyce Fletcher Charitable Trust** enabled us to reach our target of £20,000.

Theatre Director Ann Garner said, "When we launched A Roof Over Our Head Appeal a year ago, we never dreamed that we would be able to raise £20,000 in a year. It seemed an impossible target in a day and age when there are so many demands on people's generosity and so little funding for the Arts. We had set ourselves a deadline of Summer 2008 to have raised the money, but achieving our goal in half that time has enabled us to undertake all the roofing works this year and thus guarantee that the degeneration from water and damp that had been threatening the interior of this beautiful building has been halted in the fastest time possible. Without the continued support of The Brownsword Charitable Foundation our campaign would not have been so successful. It has made a huge difference knowing that a local benefactor believes in our work here at The Mission Theatre and is prepared to guarantee that this Grade 2 listed building is preserved."

For further information, pictures and reports of our fundraising year, and to find out all that is going on at The Mission Theatre, visit

www.missiontheatre.co.uk