

# ARCHITECTS ROBIN SNELL AND PARTNERS TO OPEN UP LONDON COLISEUM

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English National Opera (ENO) and Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) today (8 April 2015) announce the winner of the competition for the revitalisation of the ground floor foyer of the West End's largest theatre, the London Coliseum.

This prestigious redevelopment will be designed by award-winning architect Robin Snell and Partners, the architect behind the multi-award winning Garsington Opera Pavilion, the Island Pavilion at Wormsley and Arnolfini Centre for Contemporary Art.

The design strategy is inspired by the cultural identity of the London Coliseum, one of the country's finest theatres. Designed by the UK's most prolific theatre architect Frank Matcham, it opened its doors in 1904. The design will focus on the architectural qualities of the Grade II\* listed building and reclaim the Edwardian elegance of its front of house spaces to reflect the legacy of this great 2,359 seat theatre.

The first phase will concentrate on opening up the ground floor foyer, to provide uninterrupted views from the street, to create a sense of the excitement of the productions that take place within the Theatre. It aims to create a welcoming foyer space for a new wine bar and café.

Funded by restaurant group, Benugo, the first phase £1.2m renovation will revamp the ground floor and point towards the building's future.

Cressida Pollock, CEO of English National Opera, said:

"This is an exciting time for the London Coliseum. Artistic Director John Berry last year outlined his vision to open up the Coliseum and I'm delighted we've taken this project forward alongside our catering partner, Benugo. We look forward to throwing open the doors of the theatre and welcoming the public into the beautiful surroundings of this iconic building.

"For years, audience members have enjoyed Matcham's masterpiece, now it's time to share its splendour with many more people."

Robin Snell commented:

"Our work will aim to create the complete theatre experience; "From Stage to Street and from Street to Seat", with renewed foyer spaces as an important architectural component.

"Architecturally our design strategy will be to open up the ground floor foyer to the street, bringing the inside outside; re-form the elegant Edwardian foyer rooms, which have become lost; restore the Roman mosaic floors to their original splendour; re-light the exterior and interior spaces and position contemporary objects and furniture within - all with the aim of bringing theatrical sparkle to the place."

Turlough McNamara, Benugo Managing Director said:

"We're proud to be part of the building's future and are absolutely delighted to be involved in this project.

"The London Coliseum is an iconic building and is worthy of this transformation. Creating a restaurant and wine bar that is in keeping with the space is our top priority and we're confident that we can do that with this exceptional team."

Keith R Williams, founder of Keith Williams Architects on behalf of RIBA Competitions, said:

"The proposed upgrade of the Coliseum's foyer presents an enormous design challenge to any designer, and the contest to select an architect for the project was hotly contested.

"Robin Snell & Partners were in the end chosen for the sensitivity of their approach to Matcham's famous theatre as well as the breadth of their vision in seeing opportunities for the ultimate transformation of this much loved building. We can expect modernity and sensitivity, vision and careful transformation and I think as chairman of the awarding jury, this is the right approach. Congratulations to Robin Snell and his team!"

The London Coliseum, built in 1904, was extensively restored in 2000-2004 and this is the second stage of the restoration project that aims to bolster the future of this iconic building. A shortlist of architecture firms were approached to proceed to the design phase, with the winner selected by the judging panel which included Prof. Alan Penn, Dean of the Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment at University College, London, Ben Warner, Founder of Benugo, John Berry, Artistic Director of ENO and Keith Williams, Director of Keith Williams Architects, acting as the RIBA Architect Adviser.

This proposal is currently at its initial design phase. ENO and Robin Snell and Partners will be seeking consultation from Westminster City Council, English Heritage and the Theatres Trust for the project. The work, subject to planning permission, will get underway in early 2016.