PRESS RELEASE

Bloomsbury Theatre at UCL to reopen

UCL has confirmed that the Bloomsbury Theatre will reopen in Autumn 2018 following a major refurbishment. The capital programme of works has now been approved and the Theatre, situated at 15 Gordon Street in Bloomsbury, will undergo extensive renewal. This will enable UCL Culture, who manage the Theatre, to increase the level of student activity, expand the use of the space to the wider UCL academic community and enable commercial hire from across the theatre world to start up again.

Given the substantial scale of the work required to reinstate the Theatre, UCL decided to embark on a review of the 1968 theatre configuration to see if it was still right for current and future user needs, what new technologies could be employed and if other configurations could work.

When the Theatre reopens it will give increased access to student society shows and productions. These will be accompanied by a programme of work that will create opportunities for collaboration between academics, artists, performers, directors and companies. The Theatre will also continue to host a range of commercial shows that will be presented in a curated seasonal format.

Simon Cane, Director of UCL Culture said: “The closure gave us the opportunity to assess the value of the Theatre to UCL and to consider a new operating model. The views of the students have been essential in informing our understanding of how important the Theatre is to the student experience and what they want from the space in the future. I am excited by the opportunity to develop a refreshed approach to our programming where we will mix leading edge, research driven, co-produced content with a curated commercial programme.”

A key aim of UCL’s Education Strategy is to provide high-quality opportunities for students to develop and learn outside their academic programmes. The newly refurbished Bloomsbury Theatre will be an excellent platform for these activities.

Frank Penter, Head of Operations, UCL Culture said: ”The designs will re-open the theatre with significant technical and infrastructure improvements allowing UCL Culture to support shows at the cutting edge of theatre. Student and academic input has been key to the design process so I’m confident that we will end up with a theatre fit for the University use and also commercial users.”

The project is a collaborative enterprise with UCL Culture and UCL Estates as part of the Transforming UCL programme, the largest capital programme in the university’s history which involves the investment of £1.2 billion to upgrade and expand UCL’s accommodation and facilities.

Notes to editors
About UCL Culture
UCL Culture manages museums, theatres, collections and facilitates engagement within and outside of
UCL. This includes the Bloomsbury Theatre, the Grant Museum of Zoology, the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, the UCL Art Museum, the Pathology Museum and collections including the auto icon Jeremy Bentham. We bring diverse performers and audiences into the heart of UCL to energise the student experience and fuel UCL’s creative culture with cutting edge cultural experiences. We collaborate with UCL students and staff to provoke, connect and engage more powerfully. We use our objects, insights and expertise to reframe questions and surface new ideas. We believe that open minds see further.

**About the Bloomsbury Theatre and Studio**
The Bloomsbury Theatre Building was officially opened in 1968 as The Central Collegiate Building. The auditorium, which held over 500 people soon became the Collegiate Theatre. It was renamed in 1982 as Bloomsbury Theatre to reflect its geographical location as well as the artistic associations of the name. The main theatre was closed for building works in 2015.

Prior to closure, the main theatre had gained a reputation in a number of fields, from small scale opera work to innovative stand-up comedy. Drawing on its University base, the theatre had developed a reputation for science-based comedy and broader science events. It also provided an early stage for some of this country’s greatest comedy talent including Lily Savage, Eddie Izzard, Jo Brand, Jeremy Hardy, Mel and Sue, John Shuttleworth and Sooty! More recently top name comedians such as Ricky Gervais, Jimmy Carr and Harry Hill have chosen Bloomsbury Theatre as a venue for their DVD recordings. The Bloomsbury also hosted many music events such as the Zombies, Adele, Paul Simon and Ray Davies. The Bloomsbury Theatre was built to support student activity and prior to closure hosted 12 weeks a year of student productions from UCL.

The Bloomsbury Studio opened in 2015. It is a flexible flat-floored performance space for up to 70 people. The studio has already become a popular venue for stand-up comedy, spoken word, music and small-scale performance. The studio regularly hosts events from UCL including Bright Club.

**Further information**
For further information, images and interviews please contact Sarah Wishart s.wishart@ucl.ac.uk at UCL Culture.