

## Exeter Northcott Archive Project

### Digital Exhibitions Curator brief

#### Overview of the Brief

We are seeking an experienced and creative freelance Digital Exhibitions Curator to oversee the design and delivery of three permanent digital installation pieces celebrating the key outputs of our Heritage Lottery Funded project.

#### About The Project

Exeter Northcott Theatre's (ENT) archive is housed with the University of Exeter Special Collections and comprises of operational and production records spanning the period from its opening in 1967 to its refurbishment in 2007. There is also a collection of photographic records of productions and actors. The archive is a valuable piece of South West theatre history, showcasing the theatre as a training ground for writers, makers and performers of note. Other themes of interest include: the role of the theatre in the community; the development of regional theatre in the southwest; the changing face of stagecraft; the treatment and portrayal of women, black actors and people with disabilities in the theatre; radical female voices; talent development; and censorship.

Our heritage project is a partnership with the University of Exeter and community partners. Its aim is to connect Exeter communities to the Northcott archive, enable them to explore the voices and stories within the archive; and to expand this resource through capturing and generating new memories. The archive will enable stakeholders to debate the relevance of the archive and its stories to our understanding of the role of theatre today.

Key research and public engagement activities will inform the creation of three permanent digital installation pieces which will create a legacy for the project and provide lasting interpretation of selected stories within the archive for audiences now and in the future. Open calls will be made for artists, performers, facilitators or technology innovators, to deliver two of these, with the third piece being an "Interpretation station" to be developed by the Digital Exhibitions Curator.

These digital installations will be complemented by a website which will host the project and key archive elements; a community engagement/performance piece; a mobile exhibition with activities/workshops featuring key outputs of the project which tour in local arts/museum venues (e.g. RAMM) and community spaces/schools; and a series of heritage open days within the archive, theatre and other cultural spaces to encourage communities to experience heritage in its setting.

All activities will follow accessibility best practice where possible to reach the widest of audiences.

ENT will work with a range of community partners as well as its traditional audiences and networks, to:

- engage new voices within the project,
- explore representation and voice within the archive,
- identify key themes emerging,

- and develop a commissioning circle where communities co-commission heritage activities / installations.

As such, the content and form of commissions will be informed by the process of research, community engagement and co-production activity.

Community partners working with young people include: Schools/Young People: ISCA (secondary), and special educational schools Exeter Deaf Academy, WESC (for the visually impaired), and Southbrook School (SEND). Those working with adults facing barriers to accessing heritage/theatre: CEDA (disability), community groups with diverse heritages, WESC (adults with visual impairment), and Age UK (older people with health and care needs).

The digitisation of the archive materials will be delivered by Digital Humanities at the University of Exeter to ensure that it remains integral to the project website, but may draw in additional partners as appropriate. Archive material such as historical stage plans, photographs, film, oral histories, play scripts etc will be digitised to bring to life key aspects of producing and performing a play and the theatrical process; using innovative technology. The digitisation project will enhance key themes identified by communities earlier in the project. It is anticipated that this digitised work will be integral to the installations in the front of house area.

### **The Brief**

This is a freelance role across 16 months, allowing time and space for an innovative Digital Exhibitions Curator to respond to the diverse activity and outputs produced by this project.

The key function of the role is to oversee the co-commissioning of two permanent installations, and the delivery of a third “interpretation station” which we anticipate will make innovative use of technologies such as interactive screens and projection to reflect the outputs of the engagement and research phases of the project as digital content. These outputs include: research undertaken by the project’s Heritage Manager and archivist on key themes of note; reflections from 6 ‘opening up the archive’ events with a range of community partners; outputs from a series of 4 workshops with older people with memory loss; 140 newly recorded oral history interviews (20 in-depth and fully transcribed) plus a further 100 crowd-sourced contributions: new work produced by ENT’s Young Company, guest companies and community groups; responses from 4 secondary schools; and digital content co-created with users of the project website/platform, volunteers and project experts including the digitisation of heritage items.

These digital installations will become a permanent part of the theatre’s front of house areas and, working with the theatre’s brand consultants, the Curator will create a dynamic, interactive experience for visitors, with connections to the project’s online presence. The successful candidate will have a flair for producing high quality digital experiences for the public, an eye for detail and design, and will be an excellent team player.

Freelance fee: £4,500 for a 16 month contract.

### **Main duties and responsibilities**

The Digital Exhibitions Curator will take overall responsibility for the successful development, commissioning and delivery of three permanent installations between January 2021 and April 2022.

They will oversee the selection, interpretation and display of a varied body of project content. This is an excellent opportunity for a creative mind to apply innovative and exciting ideas about the presentation and interpretation of heritage and community responses with the support of an experienced team of colleagues, freelance artists/makers and community representatives.

A collaborative approach is very important – the Curator will work closely with the Heritage Manager, the project Advisory Group, the Commissioning Circle, the Marketing & Development Director and our team of brand consultants, while also liaising with an extended team of project experts and volunteers who have contributed to the outputs and reach of the project. However a clear vision and experience in the stewardship of an idea from conception to final cohesive outcome is also crucial to this post, to ensure that the final products are of a suitable quality to showcase the significance of regional theatre as demonstrated through the archive, in a local and national context.

The Digital Exhibitions Curator has responsibility for managing the process of curating the final outputs, and will:

- Work to an overall Commissioning plan formed by the project team in partnership with the Commissioning Circle and the Advisory group.
- Develop briefs for two interpretations by local creators/makers and oversee the commissioning, selection and delivery/installation process in consultation with the Commissioning Circle and the Advisory group.
- Source technologies and equipment to create the foundations of an “Interpretation Station”
- Collaborate with the theatre’s brand consultants on the overall look and messaging of the installations to ensure these align with the theatre’s brand identity and visitor experience.
- Select images/audio/content for exhibition within the “Interpretation Station” to highlight the project’s research findings, liaising with the Heritage Manager and Digital Humanities for inclusion of audio/transcription work, community responses and digitised content.
- Liaise with the Heritage Manager and Front of House team to ensure maximum accessibility of installations.
- Liaise with the Heritage Manager on the production of a temporary exhibition and workshops to complement the installations.
- Work with Marketing Manager on an appropriate marketing strategy.
- Contribute to the development of content for the Heritage Open Days events, Festival of the Archive week and mobile exhibition planned for the project.
- Contribute to evaluation work as needed.

### **“The Interpretation Station”**

A permanent “Interpretation Station” will be developed and installed in the theatre’s front of house spaces to display the project’s digital findings and outputs. This will be an interactive installation which will enable visitors to engage with the different themes, voices, viewpoints and outputs of the project. It will provide an entry point into the Archive’s website as well as visual displays, audio and ways to leave responses.

### **Reporting/Contract Management**

The post-holder will report to the Heritage Manager and will be expected to liaise closely with the Advisory Board, Commissioning Circle, brand consultants and the Marketing & Development Director.

## **Location**

This is a freelance role but the successful candidate will be required to work frequently from the Exeter Northcott Theatre to ensure there is a suitable level of collaboration between key stakeholders and to ensure the installations are of a high quality.

## **Skills and Experience**

This role will suit someone with proven experience of curating high quality and multimedia/digital public installations to set deadlines who also has experience of working collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to showcase community outputs and responses. We will also be looking for someone with the following skills and experience:

- Proven experience as a creative thinker and problem solver
- Experience of working with innovative technologies for exhibition curation/display
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills and ability to work with individuals from a range of groups.
- Experience of collaborating with artists, community representatives and academics
- Experience of budget management

## **Budget**

A fee of £4,500 is available for this role, spread over 16 months. Please note that any additional expenses such as travel are inclusive of the above fee.

A further £8,000 will be available for the production of the “interpretation station”.

A further £11,500 will be available for two heritage/arts installations (see attached).

## **Timescale**

Key Milestones relevant to the brief:

Nov-Dec 2020: Recruitment, & Appointment of Curator

January 2021: Induction of Curator into the project

January-May 2021: Development and installation of Interpretation Station

May 2021: Heritage Open Day and launch of Interpretation Station

May 2021: Inaugural meeting of the Commissioning Circle

June – August 2021: Briefs developed by Commissioning Circle and projects commissioned.

September 2021: Artists engaged and Heritage Open Day hosted

September – April 2022: Artists develop and complete commissions, and commissions installed

April 2022: Festival of the Archive week and display of project outputs

April-June 2022: Touring of temporary exhibition at community/arts/cultural/heritage venues.

**Please apply via: <https://www.exeternorthcott.co.uk/get-creative/work-with-us/>**

**The deadline to apply is Midday on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020.**

The interviews will be conducted over zoom and will take place on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> December.