

Citizens Theatre

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Gorbals school children amongst first to benefit as Citizens Theatre marks new era of community engagement

- Theatre's landmark new Participate programme offers Glasgow communities creative opportunities to grow, inspire and connect.
- Revamped education programme launches in August with G5 Creators, a new after-school drama project for Gorbals primary school pupils.
- Two community productions to open the brand-new Studio Theatre in October 2025, becoming some of the first work performed in the redeveloped building.
- New three-year Community residency programmes will break barriers and foster inclusion for vulnerable, isolated and displaced Glaswegians.
- All strands of the Participate programme will culminate in June 2026 with the Citizens' first Participate Festival.
- Major improvements to accessibility and new purpose-built spaces for Participate work ensure more participants will benefit
- Multi-year funding secured from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, William Syson Foundation, and National Lottery Communities Fund acknowledges scale and ambition of the programme.

As the Citizens Theatre prepares to re-open its doors later this summer, the company has revealed its new **Participate** programme, which will place Gorbals neighbours and the Glasgow community at the heart of its ongoing journey through 2025 and beyond.

Participate champions a range of new and evolving projects for all ages and backgrounds, including opportunities made possible by the new building. With major improvements to accessibility and new purpose-built spaces for Participate work, more participants than ever before will be able to take part and enjoy richer, more inclusive experiences within the Citz, as well as benefitting from the life-changing work that will take place beyond the walls of the theatre.

The programme represents a new era of engagement for the Citz, building on the legacy of over 20 years of community outreach and the projects and connections it has worked hard to nurture while the building has been closed for redevelopment – while celebrating the new opportunities that will be made possible by the theatre reopening

This will include innovative drama education in local Gorbals primary schools, long-term community residencies with vulnerable groups, adult education and social participation sessions in the heart of the theatre, and the long-awaited return of Participate groups to their home stages in the Citz itself.

Catrin Evans, Participate Director, Citizens Theatre, said: *"I am delighted to launch our Participate programme today and share our commitment to communities as part of the new era*

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of the Citizens Theatre when we reopen later this year. With the incredible facilities of the new building matched to an exciting range of activities to connect and create together, we are able to offer truly inclusive opportunities to more people than ever before. At the Citz, we believe that theatre and drama are a powerful tool to give voice to our collective stories, rooted in both the local and global. We want everyone to feel a sense of belonging as they embark on their journey with us, both long-standing participants and those visiting for the first time. We can't wait to welcome everyone through our doors to play their part in our story."

Deepening Engagement with Education

Education will be central to the new offer, with the Citz building long-term, meaningful connections with local primary schools, educators, and universities.

An exciting new after-school initiative, **G5 Creators**, will launch at the end of August, offering free, fully funded drama and creative sessions exclusively for P2 – P7 pupils from **Blackfriars** and **St Francis** primary schools in the Gorbals. Building upon two long-term school residencies, once the building reopens pupils will take the short walk to the Citz itself for weekly after-school creative sessions, culminating in sharing events across the next few years and even a Christmas Curtain Raiser for one of our Christmas productions in front of a busy audience including their fellow pupils, teachers and families.

Later this year, the Citizens Theatre will launch new learning packages for schools, supporting classroom learning and enhancing theatre visits linked to productions and the building's heritage. The theatre will also introduce **Teacher's Prologues**—informal gatherings for educators to connect and shape future collaboration.

The Citz continues its commitment to higher education through partnerships with the University of Glasgow and the University of the West of Scotland. In January 2026, as part of a unique partnership with the Theatre Studies department, Participate Director Catrin Evans will teach a module on Applied Theatre at the University of Glasgow. This will offer practical insights drawn from the theatre's community work, with Masters Students taking their course at the new Citz. Our UWS relationship will also grow, with Catrin and Artistic Director Dominic Hill supporting final-year performance students and with the Performance staff from UWS delivering guest talks on theatre as part of our heritage programme at the Citz — an initiative that develops future practitioners and widens the reach of academic research to our own audiences.

Community groups return to their home stage

The Citz Homecoming season will see Glasgow's community play a major role on-stage as well as off, with the building's brand-new 150-seat Studio Theatre officially being launched by productions from two of the theatre's longest-running Participate groups.

From 08 – 11 October **The Young Co**, the Citz's flagship young company for the past 20 years returns to the stage with **Close**— a new script devised by the ensemble alongside writer Jenny Knotts. Inspired by the [legendary, long-lost Close Theatre](#) — the Citizens' former studio space known for its radical spirit and boundary-pushing work — the show dives into the myths,

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memories and bold experimentation that defined it. What starts as an exploration of a long-lost venue evolves into a funny and heartfelt story about risk, rebellion, and imagining new futures at the Citz.

And from 22 – 25 October the **Community Collective**, the longest running participatory group at the Citz, will present *Making Your Mark* - a story about choice, and how powerful it can be when people come together. In a world where things often feel unfair or confusing, it asks: does your voice still matter? Does your vote make a difference?

The two Studio Theatre productions mark the beginning of an exciting new era for the Citizens Theatre, with the building's innovative new spaces including the Participate Studio, Studio Theatre, and dedicated rehearsals room ready to offer a place for theatre-makers of all backgrounds to hone their craft, push creative boundaries, and explore radical ideas - ensuring everyone can feel at home in the heart of the Citz.

Community residencies bring engagement beyond the theatre

As well as work within the building, the Citz will undertake a new strand of community residencies, working alongside partner organisations to bring engagement work out to Glasgow groups and communities where it is needed most.

A key new strand of this work is **Navigate**, a multi-year project supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. **Navigate** will see the Citz working with local partners including Gorbals-based **Freedom from Torture**, supporting individuals who have experienced torture and persecution, and **Amma Birth Companions**, who provide pregnancy, birth, and postnatal support to those facing isolation and inequality. These 18-month residencies, co-led by a Citizens Theatre staff member and a freelance artist with an emphasis on Global Majority practitioners, will take place directly within the partner organisations' spaces, offering tailored creative engagement for those facing the highest barriers. Participants will also benefit from studio sharings and access to theatre performances at the Citz. A dedicated coordinator will oversee this crucial work over the next three years.

In parallel, **Come Away In** will actively invite partner organisations into the Citizens Theatre itself, providing a supportive and creative hub for groups working with marginalised communities. Initially four groups, including local charity **Standing Tall Scotland**, will take part in the project.

Furthermore, work will continue on **All We Can Do**, a vital programme supporting women navigating the complex challenges of homelessness, the criminal justice system, addiction, and poverty. This programme will see close collaboration with local partners including **Tomorrow's Women**, **Martha's Mammies**, and the **Lilias Centre**, and the work created through these diverse residencies will be celebrated and shared publicly later in the year.

Opportunities for all ages & backgrounds

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As the Citizens Theatre prepares to reopen, a revamped package of workshops and classes that take advantage of the new opportunities presented by the building will help ensure the company's commitment to nurturing creativity across all ages.

A new structured programme will offer pathways for local young people, including **Young Creatives**, which launches in September 2025 for primary school pupils; **Young Artists**, which from January 2026 will offer weekday evening sessions for secondary school students; and the newly-rebranded **Young Makers**, which will offer bespoke practical learning for learning disabled and/or neurodivergent teenagers aged S4 - S6, and will culminate in a final sharing at the Citz in June 2026.

Adult participants will also benefit with the introduction of **Theatre Lab**, a new programme commencing once the building re-opens in September 2025. Designed for non-professionals passionate about theatre, Theatre Lab will offer themed blocks throughout the year. The sessions will offer everything from collective playreading ties to selected Citz productions, to practical modules led by freelance artists which see participants developing performance skills and a grounding in theatre design.

Additionally, the long-running Friday Club will return under the new name **119 Players**, continuing its tradition of community engagement for learning disabled and/or neurodivergent adults aged 18 years and over.

For press images, please click [here](#)

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Citizens Theatre is grateful to the generous support of the funders who support the Participate work. The following programmes are supported by:

RS Macdonald – Young Makers

A weekly creative programme for learning disabled and/or neurodivergent young people, offering opportunities to build confidence, develop theatre-making skills, and express themselves through performance.

RS Macdonald – 119 Players

An inclusive theatre group for learning disabled and/or neurodivergent adults aged 18 years and over, supporting members to develop as performers, collaborate creatively, and take part in regular workshops and sharings.

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National Lottery Young Start – Young Company

A performance company for young people aged 18–25, providing high-quality theatre training, performance opportunities, and pathways into the creative industries.

Morag Williamson – G5 Creators

A free creative programme exclusively for P2 – P7 aged pupils from **Blackfriars** and **St Francis** primary schools in the Gorbals, focused on developing skills, exploring identity and building community through theatre.

National Lottery Improving Lives – Community Collective

A group for adults living in or connected to the Gorbals, supporting creativity, connection and improved mental health through weekly sessions and performance projects.

National Lottery Awards for All & a small family charitable trust – All We Can Do

A creative collaboration between the Citizens Theatre and community organisations, offering workshops for women facing homelessness, addiction, poverty and violence. Taking place in safe, supportive spaces, the project uses theatre, music, visual art and spoken word to explore themes of climate, community and care, fostering personal development and positive change.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation – Navigate

A skills development programme offering tailored creative engagement for those facing the highest barriers. Navigate uses the arts to explore climate, community and care, and support personal growth in a safe, collaborative space.

The William Syson Foundation – Participate Programme

Multi-year funding that supports our core Participate programme, enabling a wide range of creative engagement projects with children, young people, and adults across Glasgow.

About the Citizens Theatre

The Citizens Theatre is Glasgow's major producing theatre and one of the leading theatre companies in the UK. It is internationally renowned for ground-breaking theatre productions and a pioneering programme of participatory and community work. It is led by Artistic Director, Dominic Hill who is regarded as having "*a talent for classical drama which is genuinely world class.*" (Daily Telegraph) and Executive Director, Kate Denby. The theatre presents bold new interpretations of classic texts alongside new writing. It is firmly rooted in the Gorbals community at the heart of Glasgow's cultural and creative offering, while maintaining a national and international outlook.

Redevelopment Project

The Citizens Theatre moved out of its historic home in the Gorbals in June 2018, ahead of the first major redevelopment of the Category B listed building since it began life as a working theatre in 1878. The redeveloped building will transform the experiences of audiences, participants and performers and secure the future of one of Scotland's most iconic buildings and leading producing theatre companies.

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Designed by Bennetts Associates, the extensive redevelopment has brought the iconic building into the 21st century. At its heart is a substantial restoration of the original sandstone Victorian auditorium, wrapped in an entirely new three storey building which crucially provides universal access for artists and audiences. It also delivers new rehearsal, participation, and studio spaces supporting expanded activities for the community and offering Scotland's rich ecology of theatre companies' new spaces to rehearse and perform in. This includes a new 150 seat Studio Theatre.

We are now in the final phase of internal fit-out to return the building to a working theatre. The Citizens Theatre will reopen in August 2025, with a full season programme launching in September 2025.

Key funders of the project include Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Creative Scotland and Historic Environment Scotland in addition to a range of trusts and foundations and individual supporters.

Listings

A Citizens Theatre Young Co. Production

Close

Script developed by Young Co. with Jenny Knotts

Wed 8 Oct – Sat 11 Oct

As we reopen our iconic building, the Young Co. is set to take you on a journey back to the legendary Close Theatre. This isn't just any trip down memory lane, it's an exploration of how culture emerges through controversy, and creativity! A café, a nightclub, the city's first unofficial gay bar, and the only place you could get a drink after 10pm on a Sunday! It was a place where the rules were broken, where art met rebellion, and where the impossible became possible.

And that's not all. The Young Co. is using their research to look to the future. What bold new stories will be ignited? What ideas need to be shared with a new audience?

As the first production in the Studio Theatre, Close marks the beginning of an exciting new era for the Citz, with the space offering theatre-makers a place to hone their craft, push creative boundaries, and explore radical ideas. Be there for the start of this next chapter.

Priority booking for Supporters/Members will open 21 May. General sale from 28 May.
£5 - £15

A Citizens Theatre Community Collective Production

Making Your Mark

Wed 22 Oct – Sat 25 Oct

Will Moira make it to Australia?

Will Hannah's campaign be heard?

Will Alison get to her appointment on time?

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Will Jeffrey finally teach everyone how to recycle?
And will everyone get to the voting station before it closes?

It's just another Thursday when the Flying Saucer Café opens its doors — but by 10pm, everything could change.

A group of people, each facing a challenge, find their lives crossing throughout the day. The Flying Saucer Café becomes more than just a café — it's a place where connections are made. People who started the day alone begin to support each other. Together, they start to feel like a community.

Making Your Mark is a story about choice, and how powerful it can be when people come together. In a world where democracy feels so fragile, and the challenges we all face seem almost impossible, what can we do to create a sense of hope?

Come and see the amazing creativity of our longest-running Participate group, as they bring this exciting new show to the stage — a story about helping each other, and the strength we find in our community.

This new play was created by The Story Room — a group of Community Collective members who meet on Friday mornings to share ideas, create the characters and develop the script.

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