



For immediate release:

‘New Popular’ theatre programme launched for south east England

Farnham Maltings has secured £339,575 from The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to deliver a five-year programme designed to test new theatre ideas that aim to reach new, broader audiences. Following in the tradition of John McGrath’s *A Good Night Out*, the ambition is to explore what popular means in the twenty-first century. **New Popular** will seed-fund artists, venues and audience to test new ideas and take the most promising propositions into full production, potentially to tour through the house network across the south east of England.

The project will also host a series of conversations and events that explore the relationship between artists and audiences.

Gavin Stride, director of the Maltings says ‘*we are completely committed to developing a strand of work that is artist-led and audience-focused. We want to challenge the idea that popular and experimental are opposites, and that notions of high or low art are in any way relevant in a fast changing world. Thanks to Esmée Fairbairn and ACE we have a remarkable opportunity to encourage a ‘theatre for all’ culture across the South East of England which has the potential to connect with everyone.*’

This work builds on the experiences of *Greenhouse*, a four-year programme, also funded by The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, that set out to connect the ambitions of artists with venues and programmers. Over four years, more than 30 ideas were seed-funded, of which 16 were developed into full

production, including Pursued by a Bear's *The Lamallar Project*, which toured internationally and Mars.tarrab's *Roller*, which won the Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award in 2017.

With further investment from ACE and local partners a total of £553,000 is being committed to the **New Popular** programme which will be led by house, a network delivered by Farnham Maltings that supports 190 arts venues who are working together to build a vibrant arts ecology across the south-east region.

Following the appointment of a project lead in September, **New Popular** will start early in 2019 with an open call to theatre-makers for potential propositions.

www.farnhammaltings.com

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Ends

Notes to editors

1. Farnham Maltings is a cultural organisation that works with artists and communities of South East England to encourage the most people to make the best art they can. We believe that the arts help us to make sense of the world, bring people together and articulate new ideas. By encouraging people to participate in the arts, as audiences and makers, we will foster a healthier, happier and safer contemporary Britain. We are curious about how we make and build an audience for contemporary theatre. We support a network of 180 venues across the region, organise a bi-annual showcase of new English performance for an international audience, produce a stable of independent theatre companies and are working to diversify the makers and audience for the arts. farnhammaltings.com

2. Farnham Maltings is a registered charity (no 305034) supported by Arts Council England and Waverley Borough Council.

3. house is a development initiative which exists to increase audiences and improve the quality of contemporary theatre presented in south-east England. housetheatre.org.uk

4. Esmée Fairbairn Foundation aims to improve the quality of life for people and communities throughout the UK both now and in the future. We do this by funding the charitable work of organisations who are building an inclusive, creative and sustainable society. The Foundation is one of the largest independent grant-makers in the UK. In 2017 we made grants of £40.5 million towards a wide range of work within the arts, children and young people, the environment and social change. We also have a £45 million allocation to social investments for organisations with the aim of creating social impact. esmeefairbairn.org.uk

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