

Elton's piano fine tunes new Isle of Dogs venue

Written by Administrator

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Yamaha have donated Elton John's £120,000 grand piano to a new converted performance space in the Great Eastern Enterprise Estate of Millharbour on the Isle of Dogs.

The Tower Hamlets-based venue is working to encourage musical development in the area and bring wider audiences to east London.

The woman behind the project, and Director of Lanterns School of the Performing Arts, Janet Viola, hopes the arrival of Elton's favourite warm-up piano heralds success for a venue which should soon accommodate pantomimes, ballet, comedy events and jazz nights.

Lanterns, offers a range of music and dance tuition, and is popular with children and adults alike, especially those wishing to work in the West End.

Since the arrival of Elton's piano, via the upstairs fire escape, interest in the school's new studio space has rapidly increased.

"Some of the children we teach have never touched or seen anything like this. He even donated his stool," said Janet.

Water City Festival, an east London-based orchestra, will perform here next year, as well as a host of other artists including the BBC's Adam Kay, half of the parody musical duo 'Amateur Transplants' who cut their teeth at the Edinburgh Fringe and were recently recommended by Time Out.

February 8 will see Lanterns' first comedy night housed within the Studio Theatre. "With Adam Kay's act incorporating the Piano, it will be a unique night that will be the first of many to come," said Project Manager Jay Laurence.

Yamaha is considering donating more equipment to Lanterns School of the Performing Arts' Music Department and will meet Janet's team in the New Year to discuss transforming the space into a pioneering Yamaha Music School. This will allow the local community to participate in performances from both professional and studying musicians.

Small-scale shows are already being performed at the venue, and organisers are seeking crucial investment to improve the facilities and put the Isle of Dogs on the map.

They hope to raise £35,000 to upgrade the performance area, and a further £50,000 towards the installation of a Harlequin Dance Floor – a sprung dance floor renowned internationally for its standard of design and installation for dance studio and theatre floors.

With the recent closure of the nearby Docklands Arena and Cabot Hall, Lanterns has a large east London audience to cater for.

"The Harlequin sprung floor, offered to the school at a huge reduction, will attract the highest calibre of dance performer and bring classical ballet and contemporary to East London's Isle of Dogs," said Laurence.

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“The Lanterns Studio Theatre is starting to give audiences acts that they had not had access to within their vicinity after only an 8 month conversion period from offices”.

The space already houses the DockSide Dancers, a hip-hop group who perform everything “from Classical to Krump”, and a new classical dance group is just starting up.

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