

Funding from Sir Ian McKellen provides new seating bank for Leith Academy

Sir Ian McKellen raised funds from the shows he performed in his 80th birthday year, 2019 including a show which was part of the Edinburgh International Festival. Now some of that funding is coming back to Edinburgh, specifically to provide new seating for Leith Academy.

The new seating bank which will accommodate up to 92 people will be installed in Leith Academy's drama studio. The new arrangement will improve the use of the space for lessons, assemblies, parents' evenings and performances.



Leith Academy pupils and Drama teacher Jenna Hamill enjoy their new seating bank. Photo courtesy of Edinburgh International Festival

Sir Ian McKellen said: "I'm so pleased that income from my show at the 2019 Edinburgh International Festival was sufficient to install a seating bank for Leith Academy's drama studio. May the pupils enjoy performing in their academy's wonderfully versatile space. May audiences enjoy watching them. I hope one day soon I maybe among them, to try out the

new seating!”

The Edinburgh Festival has also announced the extension of their residency with Leith Academy to 2022 which will be the festival’s 75th anniversary. This residency is designed to enrich the life of the school by supporting social and vocational development among pupils and creating cultural opportunities for the wider school community.

Despite the lockdown the festival used digital resources to deliver a Personal Development Award qualification to seven pupils who have been working with Festival staff to develop key social and employability skills.

The Festival supported Leith Academy’s wellbeing week by creating a ‘persevere pack’; five days of creative activities designed to nurture positive mental health.

The Festival also launched projects to support Higher and Advanced Higher Drama and Music qualifications nationally by connecting students with leading theatre practitioners and composers. These two projects – Digital Direction and Digital Composers – feature a series of video interviews with industry professionals including National Theatre of Scotland, Grid Iron, Cassie Kinoshi and Sir James MacMillan. These resources are available free of charge at eif.co.uk/L&E

Mike Irving, Headteacher of Leith Academy, said: “As a school and as a community we are delighted to accept this wonderful gift from Sir Ian McKellen, whose outstanding work is an inspiration to us all. I look forward to the presentations and performances that can be viewed from the new seating and I sincerely hope that one day Sir Ian accepts my open invite to Leith Academy and can be part of a crowd enjoying a performance from our many talented young people!

“Young people and staff thrived over the first two years of our Edinburgh International Festival residency, so I am delighted that we have adjusted our terms to extend the

residency by a further year. The innovative and exciting work the International Festival team brings to the table is an inspiration to our young people and staff.”

Councillor Donald Wilson, Culture and Communities Convener for the City of Edinburgh Council, said: “It’s great to see the proceeds from Sir Ian McKellen festival shows here in Edinburgh being used to build this new seating bank in Leith Academy. I’m sure there literally won’t be a seat to spare when the school puts on performances again which we all hope will be very soon. This inspiring partnership with the Edinburgh International Festival continues to provide unforgettable artistic opportunities for our young people – long may it continue!”



Ian McKellen on Stage | Edinburgh International Festival |
Assembly Hall | 22-25 August 2019 | Photographer Oliver
Rosser, Feast Creative