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Only permanent earth-floor theatre in England



Cross-cultural company Tara Theatre has unveiled its new home in south London, which includes the only permanent, earth-floor theatre in the country. Tara, which celebrates its 40th anniversary next year, has redeveloped its existing home in Earlsfield to provide a new 100-seat performance space as well as a studio space able to hold up to 40.

Its performance space has flooring made from compacted earth, making it the only theatre in the UK to have an earth floor as its default option. Artistic director Jatinder Verma said other flooring could be laid on top, depending on the show, but the earth floor symbolised the bringing together of cultures and the combining of traditional and modern performance.

He added that it met his ambition of having multiculturalism "stamped into the very fabric of the building". "People say diversity is happening, but there are very few instances where you can see it in the fabric of a building. For me, always, the point of multiculturalism – which for us comes from an Indian source – is opening up a window to the world, and that remains absolutely apparent," Verma told The Stage.



The company's new auditorium, increased from a capacity of 80, has flexible seating that can be configured a

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number of ways, while the new studio will be used for research and development as well as smaller-scale theatre and music performances. "The model for us is combining a laboratory and a performance space. It means there can be independent activity going on – some work in the studio while there's another show in the theatre. That's a major change," Verma said.

Work began on the new Tara Theatre, designed by RHWL Architects' arts team, in November 2014. It will open officially in September, with Tara's first season including the first stage adaptation of 19th-century Indian novella *Paradise of the Assassins*, and a pantomime, *Bollywood Jack*.

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