

Outline Brief

Job Title	Evaluator – <i>Mercury Rising</i> (Freelance)
Department	Executive
Responsible to	Executive Director/ Mercury Rising Project Manager (CBC)
Responsible for	None
Key working relationships	Chief Operating Officer (CBC) Mercury Rising Project Manager (CBC) Head of Corporate Facilities (Colchester Borough Homes) Executive Producer Deputy Executive Director Creative Learning & Talent Manager IT and Facilities Manager Audience Services Manager

About Mercury Theatre

The Mercury Theatre was born out of the Colchester Repertory Theatre founded in **1937** and has been a significant part of the civic life of Colchester and North Essex for **80** years. Throughout its history The Mercury has gained a local, regional and national reputation for producing critically acclaimed theatre across all genres of live performance. Last year our work reached a record audience of **125,000** people. This has been complemented for many years by an extensive Creative, Learning and Talent Programme - last year engaging a record **34,000** people.

In partnership with Colchester Borough Council, over the next few years the Mercury will be undertaking capital works to its current site built in 1972 (the building is currently listed as a building of local importance). As the organisation enters a new phase in its existence, *Mercury Rising* will ensure that the Mercury is able to provide world-class facilities for the next generation of artists and audiences alike.

About Mercury Rising

Mercury Rising is the creation of a simple, sustainable but exciting remodelling of the Mercury Theatre and its external environment that will unlock a moment of opportunity, transforming audience experiences and growing the creative industries in North Essex and further afield.

To date we have been successful in securing funding and pledges of **£8 million** towards the total scheme costs of **£8.9 million** from Arts Council England, Colchester Borough Council, Essex County Council, South East Local Enterprise Partnership and other funders and individuals.

Mercury Rising is a partnership project with Colchester Borough Council who are acting as the client for construction and applicant.

The Mercury's reputation is growing as a centre of excellence in the production and touring of family theatre and new musical theatre, as well as being a partner of choice for touring producers – John Cleese, Selladoor Theatre Company and English Touring Theatre all premiered shows last year prior to national and international tours.

Thanks to an audience-focused, outward-facing approach to the programme and partnerships, the Mercury is busier than at any other time in its history. Audiences are rising and diversifying. However, the level of activity around the building means that work is increasingly being pushed off-site into unsuitable spaces, hidden from the public eye.

The original design was appropriate for the activities of a producing theatre in the 1970s. In 2018, this is no longer the case. The role of the Mercury, as a regional producing theatre, has changed and developed in recent years and there is now greater and more varied demand on its building and facilities. The Mercury requires investment to provide a venue suitable to its current and future role as a producing and presenting theatre, a centre for learning and participation and creative and skills development.

The investment of capital funds will build on the recent successes of the organisation and enable the Mercury to consolidate and grow its audiences and artistic programme. New facilities will allow for further diversification of income streams and provide financial resilience in the challenging economic environment for the arts and culture.

The proposed scheme will also be the catalyst for the refurbishment of the public realm in the immediate vicinity. The redevelopment of the theatre offers the opportunity to establish a 'vibrant public square' in this area of Colchester and enhance the unique heritage assets surrounding the Mercury.

An expanded, more open and welcoming building, equipped with upgraded facilities will:

- Underpin our plan to significantly grow audiences
- Broaden the talent we can grow ourselves through the work of our Creative Learning and Talent Department, HE and FE partnerships, Associate Artist schemes and professional development programmes
- Increase our contribution to the local creative economy – through direct local economic impacts, and by supporting the national cultural 'ecosystem' by providing a regional centre for the development of skills and employability, and the nurturing of creative talent through the provision of artistic and business support
- Improve our business sustainability, helping us to increase the pace of our growth, and deliver ever greater operational efficiencies
- Expand the range of touring companies we can attract
- Open up routes for digital presentation and creation

The Brief

The Mercury Theatre is seeking to recruit a freelance external evaluator for *Mercury Rising*, working with the Executive Director from August 2018 – September 2020 to develop on-going independent evaluation.

The evaluation will look at the project's original aims; outcome and output achievements; challenges faced; what could have been done differently and the impact that the new building and its facilities will have on the Mercury's work and audiences.

Evidence will be collated from the following:

- Quantitative data will include number of audiences and attendees at events, workshops and shows, audience satisfaction surveys and questionnaires and on-line forums.
- Qualitative Data gathered through focus groups with audiences and main beneficiaries including older local people; people from BME communities; schools; children, young people and their parents and carers. Information recorded will be both observational, through transcripts, case studies and question/answer style interactions.
- Minutes from meetings with stakeholders.
- One on one interviews with key Mercury and Colchester Borough Council and Colchester Borough Homes staff and other stakeholders and contractors.

Importantly, the evaluation will consider the changes that have occurred over the lifetime of the project in terms of how people think and feel about the theatre and its programme. This could include their sense of ownership and how they think and feel about the Mercury's building 'before' and 'after' and whether it meets their requirements. We would also like to review the processes used to design and build the new facilities. The methodology could involve staged interventions at key moments over the next few years.

We will share the findings of this research with other theatres, arts and cultural organisations seeking to embark on a capital investment programme to improve facilities. In addition, we will seek to share our findings with other key stakeholders such as Arts Council England, Borough and County Councils and other strategic bodies such as UK Theatre.

Building on our current *Mercury Voices* Archive Project in partnership with Essex Records Office and Essex County Council we will also seek to capture our community engagement methods and how these skills and experiences can be transferred to other projects in the future.

Role

- To design evaluation methodologies for the project in line with best practise and other guidelines recommended by our key stakeholders Arts Council England, Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council.
- To prepare evaluation materials and projects timeline in line with the project outcomes.
- To produce two interim reports at 12 months and 18 months, ensuring the project is on target.
- At the end of the project when the Mercury returns to the new building, to analyse and write the final evaluation report for project partners and stakeholders and Mercury staff and the Board of Trustees.
- Through the evaluation, to capture our methodologies / good practice / learning of how these experiences can be transferred to other projects in the future.
- To develop a legacy for the project including lessons learnt, documentation, project methodology to share with staff, other theatres and arts organisations seeking to embark on a similar capital project in the arts, cultural and heritage sectors.

Timescales and fee

The evaluation of *Mercury Rising* will commence in August 2018 and continue until project completion in Summer 2020.

The evaluator will be paid a fee of up to **£4,500**

Recruitment Details

The Mercury is undertaking this recruitment on behalf of Colchester Borough Council who are the project managers for the *Mercury Rising* Project.

The Evaluator will be engaged by Colchester Borough Council as a supplier.

Application Details

To apply for this position, please complete our employment application form, attaching a cover letter outlining the approach you would take to evaluating this project, to valentina.borja@mercurytheatre.co.uk by **27th July 2018**, 9am. You may also attach your CV. Please note we cannot accept CVs in isolation.

July 2018