

7th November 2018

**Children, Education and Communities Policy
& Scrutiny Committee**

Report of the Corporate Director Children, Education & Communities

York Theatre Royal: Bi-annual Update

1. This paper provides the members of the policy and scrutiny committee with an update on York Theatre Royal.

Update

2. In July 2018 the theatre opened a revival of *The Secret Garden*, originally produced by Theatre by the Lake in Cumbria. The production played to over 9000 people over four and a half weeks, and proved one of the hits of York's summer. We were able to collaborate with Bloom! festival and Make It York in order to create a small secret garden on the theatre patio, and our Creative Engagement team ran a number of activities for children in our Secret Studio Garden.
3. In September 2018 the theatre opened a new production of Alan Bennett's *The Habit of Art*, co-produced with The Original Theatre Company. The play concerns the relationship between the poet W. H. Auden and the composer Benjamin Britten, and was of particular interest to us because Auden was born around the corner on Bootham. The production received a number of favourable notices in the local and national press, including a rare 5 star review in *The Observer*.
4. The legendary York Theatre Royal pantomime has a special anniversary in 2018, as Berwick Kaler opens his 40th pantomime at the theatre. Sales for the pantomime are excellent.

Looking to next year

5. In March 2019 the theatre's work will include an adaptation of Angela Carter's *Wise Children*, co-produced with the Old Vic, Oxford Playhouse and Belgrade Theatre Coventry, and February half-term will see a visit from *Madagascar the Musical*.
6. As always, the theatre continues to engage with the community in every way possible. Alongside the passionate work done in schools, in the Access All Areas programme and in the Youth Theatre, we will soon start a new dance session for under 5s, to further enhance the theatre's offering for pre-school age children. The extraordinary Takeover Festival, run by young people, ran again in October 2018 in partnership with York Mediale.
7. We continue to explore ways to develop the site, alongside our landlords, York Conservation Trust. 2019 will see the theatre patio reinvented, a remodelling of our office space and rehearsal room in De Grey House, and it is hoped that 2020 will see Tate Wilkinson House repurposed as artists' accommodation following structural work by the Conservation Trust.

New Website and 275th birthday celebrations

8. The theatre will launch a new visual identity in April 2019, and a new website.
9. Finally, 2019 is a very special year for the theatre and the city, as the theatre celebrates its 275th birthday. We are planning a number of wonderful community-focussed events to celebrate this wonderful milestone.

Recommendations

29. The members of the Children, Education and Communities Policy & Scrutiny Committee are recommended to note the content of this report as there are no recommendations in the report.

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