

YORK THEATRE ROYAL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT TO EMAP December 2008

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 On behalf of the Trustees of York Citizens' Theatre Trust Ltd we are delighted to be able to update Members on the progress that York Theatre Royal has made since the last EMAP Report in January 2008 - and give some headline responses to the last financial year and the work over the Summer on THE RAILWAY CHILDREN and in Museum Gardens.

2 THE PROGRAMME

2.1 The year from April 2007 to March 2008 was an exceptional year for the organisation - from acclaimed new plays to work for young audiences, the Theatre has gained a reputation on a national and regional scale for being one of the best repertory producing Theatres in the region.

2.2 This has been proven with the Theatre being nominated for three national theatre awards from the TMA including winning the Theatre Managers Award for Achievement in Marketing, and also very recently Best Show for Children and Young People for our co production with Pilot Theatre Company (also based at YTR) and The Unicorn for LOOKING FOR JJ.

2.3 A major key to the Theatre's success over the last year has been a strong run of classics and co-productions (A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS, THREE MEN IN A BOAT and currently DEATH OF A SALESMAN), as well as working in partnership with several of the country's leading playwrights and Theatre companies including the first visit to York by the Globe Theatre, and working with John Godber who is currently in rehearsals with I WANT THAT HAIR.

2.4 We have continued our strong relationship with resident Pilot Theatre Company, co-producing Anne Cassidy's book LOOKING FOR JJ, which toured nationally and received much acclaim from the national and regional press, and more recently co-producing LORD OF THE FLIES - which tours the UK until Easter 2009.

2.5 The development of the Theatre's programming policy in the Studio has seen some of the most critically acclaimed pieces of work being showcased in the region. We have also nurtured a new strand of work

- with students from York St John University and York University both performing in the Studio.
- 2.6 Our annual programme of work is supported by our Christmas production and the staging of the legendary pantomime. Last year, SINBAD THE SAILOR, attracted over 52,000 people. At the time of writing, this year's pantomime, DICK TURPIN, which is Berwick's 30th anniversary production, looks to be an even greater artistic and commercial success.
 - 2.7 Another important aspect of the Theatre's programming has been to stage the very best in dance, touring theatre, music and one-night events into the Main House, including THE 39 STEPS, Peter Hall's UNCLE VANYA, regular visits from Hull Truck, Birmingham Royal Ballet and Phoenix Dance Theatre. The Spring 2008 touring season brought in record breaking numbers of audiences.
 - 2.8 We work very closely with the Amateur Societies in the City offering space in the Main House and Studio by developing good working relationships with as many non professional companies as possible.
 - 2.9 We have continued our work and collaborations out of the theatre this year with the York Youth Mysteries, work in Museum Gardens with MUCH A DO ABOUT NOTHING, and recently on Illuminating York with SECRET SOLSTICE at Piccadilly car park. Obviously the culmination of this development for us has been the work on THE RAILWAY CHILDREN at the National Railway Museum which will be covered later in this report.

3 LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

PARTNERSHIP IN EDUCATION & THEATRE - PET

- 3.1 As you will know, the PET project is a three way partnership between York Theatre Royal, City of York Council, Arts and Culture and individual schools.
- 3.2 York Theatre Royal employs two Education Associates who carry out the main body of the project work both in the school and at the theatre as appropriate.
- 3.3 The PET Project combines a broad range of the Council's, Theatre's and the Schools' aims and objectives which in summary are to provide creative teaching and learning opportunities across the whole curriculum in both the theatre and school settings.
- 3.4 We work with schools to exploit the role of the Arts in the school improvement agenda, to provide quality and sustained professional

- development opportunities for teachers in the partnership schools (both specialists and non-specialists) in Arts delivery.
- 3.5 We encourage young people, their parents and school staff to attend the theatre as a recreational activity, by offering discounts and regular updates.
 - 3.6 This year we are working with six schools -
 - Clifton with the Rawcliffe Federation (2nd Year)
 - St. Wilfred's Primary School (2nd Year)
 - Park Grove Primary School
 - Fishergate Primary School
 - Joseph Rowntree School
 - All Saints
 - 3.7 CYC contributes £15,000 a year, and each school pays £3,000 to participate in the scheme. Recruitment begins in the Spring for the PET schools, and the choices are made in conjunction with Arts and Culture and YTR.
 - 3.8 Our Youth Theatre currently has a membership of 350 young people aged between 5 and 25 years (against a target of 250) who are interested in and committed to making, seeing and performing pieces of theatre.
 - 3.9 There are 12 weekly workshop groups which meet for a twelve week term, three times per year between September and July. There are waiting lists for most of the groups, currently outnumbering the existing Membership which is at full capacity.
 - 3.10 There is a three tier fee paying system in operation, with discounts for families in receipt of Working Families Tax Credit and Means Tested Benefits.
 - 3.11 The Youth Theatre rehearses in the Ballroom at the De Grey Rooms. There are opportunities for public performances in the Studio each term, and every two years in the Main House. In February 2008 the Youth Theatre production in the Main House of Orwell's 1984 attracted 1,977 audience members and as a result we are planning a Main House Youth Theatre show every year - the next being Easter 2009.
 - 3.12 The Youth Theatre has a Young People's Forum which meets regularly and represents the views of the members - two of the Forum also sit on the Board of Trustees.
 - 3.13 Youth Theatre Trainee
The first Youth Theatre trainee has been selected - Hannah Draper. Hannah is a former member of York Theatre Royal Youth Theatre and

since graduating from university has been working for us as a Youth Theatre Assistant. Hannah is currently Education Officer at Harrogate Theatre. The scheme aims to develop one young person each year towards becoming a Youth Theatre Practitioner. She will shadow each of our existing practitioners for 6 weeks and will have the opportunity to be assistant director on one or more Youth Theatre productions.

3.14 Swamp Circus

We are continuing to pilot a new youth circus group on Friday evenings. The project is a co-production between CYC York Arts Academy, Swamp Circus and York Theatre Royal. This project started in the summer term with limited success due to a low take-up. We are keen to continue with this programme, as this is the only youth circus provision in the City, and hope that take-up will improve over coming months.

3.15 Young Actors Company

The Young Actors Company, a Youth Theatre group for over 18s was piloted last summer as part of the York Youth Mysteries '08, and the recruitment for the new intake happens in November.

4 PERFORMANCE RELATED

4.1 For the last three years we have hosted an Open Day - when over 700 people have come along for a back stage tour, to try on costumes and find out more about the work we do. In January 2008 we participated in Residents First weekend for the first time and were besieged, with over 800 people through our doors on the Sunday afternoon. We plan to do this again in the Spring.

4.2 For all Main House productions we provide a sign language interpreted performance, an audio described performance and a captioned performance.

5 MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY

5.1 The financial management and overall understanding of the organisation has significantly improved over the course of the year.

5.2 As an Investors in People, we have continued the professional development of our staff team by formulating an annual organisational wide training programme. Two staff are currently on part time day releases to local colleges and we offer a host of in house training opportunities, some linked with the Grand Opera House.

- 5.3 Our Board of Trustees continue to strengthen and challenge the organisation, and we have established a Development Group to help drive through the challenges of upgrading and improving the building as detailed in the Cultural Quarter Documents.
- 5.4 We continue to develop links with the City of York and the Arts Industry and all the Management team are involved with networks, Board memberships and outside bodies including locally with PLAY (Performing and Live Arts York), York and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, York St John University, York at Large, Women Without Walls, regionally with Audiences Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Producing Theatres, and nationally with the Theatre Management Association, National Association of Youth Theatres, Arts Marketing Association and the Arts Council.

6 MARKETING AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 Much of York Theatre Royal's audience lives within the City of York itself:
43% of YTR's bookers live within 15 minutes' drive of the theatre
75% live within 45 minutes' drive
82% live within an hour of the theatre.
- 6.2 Last financial year we sold 163,000 tickets (against the prediction of 131,000), 26,000 of which were to people under 26. We are on target to reach 168,000 tickets sold by 2012.
- 6.3 We sell 45% of our tickets at a concession/discounted rate and for the first six months of the year, we are operating at 71% audience capacity
- 6.4 The new Membership Scheme of York Theatre Royal, launched on Mon 3 Dec 2007 has 485 Members who have purchased 6,000 tickets over the course of the year, with some members coming an average of 12 times a year. We are starting the renewal process in December.
- 6.5 We are participating in a National Benchmarking Scheme run by ADUK (the National Audience Development Organisation). The purpose of this project is to :
- measure performance on a national scale
 - evaluate campaigns
 - discuss issues with similar types of organisations
 - gather evidence for both internal and external advocacy/pr work
 - use the knowledge to inform future marketing and business planning
 - networking with peer organisations

The results of this study will hopefully be tabled at the meeting in December.

We also participate in the Audiences Yorkshire BIG Picture Benchmarking and the report on the 2007/08 year is due out in August 2009.

- 6.6 We continue to develop our local audience through Stage Partners - a corporate sponsorship programme which enables local businesses to bring large numbers of their staff and clients, who might otherwise not consider themselves theatre-goers, to a variety of productions every year.

7 SITE SPECIFIC WORK

YTR has been keen to develop its staff team's experience in working on site specific piece of work and to develop an audience for this work - this is providing a popular stand of our work, and has led to the development of THE RAILWAY CHILDREN this summer at the NRM.

7.1 Museum Gardens

For the last two years YTR have hosted two Shakespeare productions in Museum Gardens with the Lord Chamberlains Men. In 2007 ROMEO AND JULIET and in 2008 MUCH A DO ABOUT NOTHING.

In 2008, there was an increase of 47% selling 959 tickets for the three performances.

7.2 Illuminating York

In 2007 YTR (as part of the Illuminate team) co produced KEYS TO THE KINGDOM in Museum Gardens performing to 715 people

This year we presented SECRET SOLSTICE at Piccadilly multi-storey car park (the venue had to change from the Minster) and gave 7 performances to 461 people.

7.3 The Railway Children

An informal partnership with YTR and the National Railway Museum created the show, starring a real train, at the National Railway Museum from 18th July to 23rd August 2008.

This was the first time YTR had undertaken a site specific piece of work to this scale, and we are currently undertaking a full evaluation of the project. The production was a huge success in terms of tickets sold, the spread across the UK and the profile for YTR, the NRM and for the City. However the set up costs were significant, and did not fully recoup the costs.

A Key facts document is included in Annex 2.

8 FINANCE

- 8.1 We have significantly reduced deficits over the last three years, and ended the financial year 2007/08 with a planned and much needed small operating surplus of £81,834. It was confirmed by the Theatre's auditors that this was the best results since 1996.
- 8.2 The surplus arose from improved sales across all areas of the business including the box office, Café, Bar and conferences and also by reducing expenditure in some areas.
- 8.3 We are entering difficult trading periods in the uncertain financial climate and are adapting our plans for the Spring/Summer Season and beyond to respond to market conditions.
- 8.4 However we have currently sold 110,000 tickets out of our planned target of 150,000 for this financial year.

9 THE FUTURE

- 9.1 We remain committed to the development of our buildings and spaces - allowing money in our budgets for repairs and maintenance of the current building, and to pursue our plans to develop the Colonnade and the De Grey Rooms linkage.
- 9.2 We are exploring the possibility of taking over the lease of the ground floor of the De Grey Rooms when the VIC moves out in March 2009 although this is a further financial cost.
- 9.3 We continue to contribute to the idea of a CULTURAL QUARTER for the city, and have deliberately programmed events now in Museum Gardens, working closely with York Museum Trust and with the NRM.

10 SUMMARY

- 10.1 We remain a very open and accessible organisation, offering opportunities for audiences to see high quality work that will enthral, challenge and excite.
- 10.2 We are naturally cautious in the current financial climate on what the future holds for us, in terms of audience numbers, availability of cash to spend etc.

- 10.3 We continue to develop links with the City of York and the Arts Industry and all the Management team are involved with networks, Board memberships and outside bodies.
- 10.4 We want to ensure that York Theatre Royal continues to grow and develop, and remains an open, accessible and fit for purpose building and organisation, feeding the life of the City and our community.

Daniel Bates
Chief Executive
November 2008