

York Theatre Royal Performance Report: 2011/12 part year

January 2012

1 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE PLANS

Over a very busy nine month period York Theatre Royal has been working on its new Business Plan, clear plans for the future and how it contributes to York. As part of building evidence about the organisation's impact York Theatre Royal conducted a survey of its current customers, of audience and participants, and also commissioned an economic impact survey of the theatre's activity in the local economy. Both pieces of evaluation gave some surprising results. Although the theatre was aware that it has one of the most socially diverse audiences in the country it was able to prove that levels of attendance at the theatre are high from all wards in the city. The top four wards for attendance were Micklegate, Clifton, Haxby and Wigginton and Skelton, Rawcliffe and Clifton Without. A full report on attendance and participation by ward in York is available from the theatre.

The headline information from the economic impact survey for 2010/11 also gave impressive results.

- York Theatre Royal theatre goers were worth at least **£3.4 million** to the local economy.
- During the year York Theatre Royal employed a total of 91.5 full time equivalent staff and over two thirds of those jobs are held by residents of York.
- York Theatre Royal procures a high level of goods and services from York and Yorkshire. The total value of this to the region in this year was just under **£800,000**.
- In addition York Theatre Royal brings visiting performance companies and actors into the city generating a further £226,000 of impact to the local economy.

The estimated economic impact of theatre goes to York Theatre Royal in 2010/11 was at least £3.4 million to the local economy. This was estimated on a total of 172,000 tickets purchased for the theatre. Of these visits over 25% were from day and overnight visitors and the remaining from local visitors. Well over 60% of visitors stated that a visit to York Theatre Royal was the main reason for visiting the city.

During 2010/11 York Theatre Royal spent £1.54 million on goods and services, of this total 44% was spent in the York and Yorkshire economy. The indirect procurement impact added a further £125,000 to the local and regional economy.

This work has helped to inform the theatre's plans for growth over the coming years and has allowed it to assess what contribution it thinks it can continue to make over this period. These are the main areas of concentration: -

- **A World Class international reputation for creative ambition.** This will be achieved through large scale theatre productions that attract large numbers of visitors to the city. This continues with the Mystery Plays in 2012, followed by a new production at the National Railway Museum during summer 2013 and an international festival of theatre from Yorkshire in 2013/14. During the next four years York Theatre Royal will manage three international conferences that will demonstrate that York is at the heart of innovation and new ideas in creative production and education.
- **It will add millions to the economy of the city.** The economic impact study on the theatre in 2010/11 showed that the Theatre Royal visitors were worth at least £3.4 million to the local economy, is responsible for employing over 190 people in York and spends a further £800,000 in the local economy. The medium and long term redevelopment plans for the theatre frontage in St Leonard's Place will create world class facilities for visitors with an improved café and restaurant experience to match the world class activities on stage. This should add to the local economy as Cultural Tourism becomes one of the largest and fastest growing areas of growth in the national economy.
- **It will keep fuelling a new entrepreneurship in the city.** The Creative Industries now represent 16% of the GDP of the country and they are projected to grow by 4% for the next few years despite the recession.

York Theatre Royal will support emerging and established creative producers in the city through the new Creative Hub in the De Grey complex. Affordable accommodation, shared services, access to expertise and audiences will help new creative businesses to stay and produce in the city. The collective turnover of the creative businesses operating from De Grey in 2012 will be in excess of £6 million.

- **It will give thousands of York residents, young and old, experiences that have the potential to have a profound effect on their lives.** York Theatre Royal adds to a sense of community in the city. Every experience helps people to understand the present, reflect on the past and see things differently for the future. York Theatre Royal's "Made in York" brand gives people in the city a sense of pride in their city. Whether that is pride in the theatre work that tours throughout England and the world, is produced by the 300 young people in the Youth Theatre or is produced by the community through projects of the scale of the Mystery Plays. Over 25,000 people per year will take an active role at York Theatre Royal in performing, volunteering and making theatre for their personal development and the benefit of others.

2 ARTISTIC PROGRAMME AND DEVELOPMENTS

The "in the round" season

The season of plays that concluded with **Laurel and Hardy** in November was undoubtedly one of the most ambitious and exciting at the theatre in its history. Over 45,000 people came to see productions at York Theatre Royal across the season, some attending every one of the eight productions in both the main house and studio. Highlights during the summer and autumn included **Peter Pan**, attended by more than 17,000 people and proving once again the popularity that the theatre has with families in the region. This summer family production is now one of the major events in the Yorkshire summer event calendar.

In September the theatre staged one of its most popular shows to date with Alan Bennett's **Forty Years On**, drawing audiences into the city for a rarely performed production of one of his most popular works.

The season concluded with a hilarious and touching production about two comic geniuses; **Laurel and Hardy** in the Main House as well as a harrowing and beautifully performed piece of contemporary theatre starring George Costigan called **Blackbird** in the Studio.

One of the hallmarks of the season has been the involvement of members of the community in most of the productions. From a large community company of young men in **Forty Years On**, to over 50 children and young people in **Peter Pan** that included outstanding performances from young residents of York in the main roles of Wendy, Michael and John.

York Opera staged an excellent production of **The Merry Wives of Opera**, once more proving that the city of York has a wealth of talent not only in acting but also in musicianship and singing.

The Railway Children steamed back into Waterloo Station to the Welcome to Yorkshire Theatre promoting not only the creative prowess of the city but also the great city of York and county of Yorkshire. Reviews were once again outstanding for the show. The production closes at the end of the first week in January. Discussions are still being had about a future for the production in other parts of the world. In the meantime York Theatre Royal and the National Railway Museum continue to discuss new productions for the future.

York Family Robinson, the annual pantomime and Berwick Kaler's 33rd as dame in the city has been heralded as one the best in years. Despite challenging economic circumstances for many of our customers that still prioritise a visit to the York pantomime as one of the highlights of the year.

The Diary of Anne Frank will be the first new production in the New Year. The production will start rehearsal in the De Grey Rooms in January and stars Christopher Timothy of All Creatures Great and Small fame in the role of Anne Frank's father, Otto Frank. Rehearsals will coincide with Holocaust Memorial Day which will be marked by the cast at the theatre. This large scale York Theatre Royal production will tour to ten large venues in the country after its three week run in York.

York Mystery Plays 2012

This major project for the city continues to make good progress as it aims to be a major part of the York 800 celebrations in 2012.

The project was successful with its application to the Arts Council for £100,000. The project has also been successful with both in-kind and financial support from York-based organisations; these include the Feoffees of Spurriergate and York Data Services.

Progress has been made across the project. The final draft of the script has been produced and the design of both set and costumes has been finalised. A casting director has been secured and is now working on casting the two professional cast members. Community auditions for the acting company have begun and drop in sessions have been held across the city to interested residents in taking part in any aspect of the production. The project has had over 800 expressions of interest to get involved in some aspect of the Mystery Plays project.

A Mystery Plays inspired play has been produced to encourage teachers in primary schools in York to work in the classroom on staging a version with their pupils. This will be supported with education sessions that cover the history of York and the Plays as part of an enhancement programme for schools in York.

A programme of exciting “fringe” activities is coming together around the main event and includes a lectures series, a 4 week course that looks at the history of the medieval plays and a script competition for new plays that respond to the York Play Cycle.

York Theatre Royal is also working with City of York Council on a project for York 800 called York Stories to unearth and give voice to all the stories, historical, contemporary and future that have formed this great city.

3 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ACTIVITY

The theatre has been as active as ever over the last six months, involving children and young people in lots of different activity.

Work with Schools

York Theatre Royal continues to work closely with a number of York schools through a long-term relationship that supports schools in teaching across the

curriculum. This is work that was pioneered through the Partnerships between Education and Theatre scheme that we delivered alongside CYC with special funding. This financial year, 2011/12, is the first year for the theatre without this funding from CYC, however several schools in York have continued to purchase this service from the theatre, an acknowledgement how much the service is valued by schools.

The theatre held new 'Theatre Days' for Primary Schools around our children's production of **Hare and Tortoise** in September. These proved very popular with primary schools and all sold out. These days also launched the start of a new relationship with York St John University to conduct rigorous evaluation on how children read and respond to productions and how this enhances teaching in the classroom.

The Playhouse Festival in July for new theatre for young people to perform in schools had record numbers of children and parents attending the performances from Park Grove, Knavesmire, Sand Hutton, Wigginton, Applefields and Archbishop of York's CE Junior School. All the children had the chance to perform on the main stage of the theatre during the "in the round" season. Four schools have already signed up for the 2012 Festival which will include three new plays for young people to perform and gives teachers from the city the opportunity to attend a retreat with the theatre and writers as part of developing the plays and supporting their continuing professional development. This outstanding national scheme managed by York Theatre Royal is a good demonstration of the commitment to children and young people.

New schools work for the future includes a storytelling project with three York Secondary Schools, feeding in to KS3 History and English Literature. This project will use the production of **The Diary of Anne Frank** as a springboard for the work.

The theatre has been successful in bringing the **Royal Shakespeare Company** to work with schools in York over the next three years. This is one of only two relationships of this nature in the north of England. It will include opportunities for teachers in York to take a Postgraduate Certificate in teaching of Shakespeare and will form a cluster of secondary schools working alongside the theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company practitioners to devise and perform work with students.

Youth Theatre

The 300 strong Youth Theatre have started a new term in September and have since been working on lots of different projects within their age groups. 5-7s have been working on the theme of **Stig of the Dump** to link with a production at the theatre. 8-10s have been working on fables to link to **Hare and Tortoise**. 11-13s have been working on different projects, including a story hunt which used different areas of the theatre, another group have been looking at Expressing Citizenship, working with the University of Leeds, and yet another have been focusing on 'keeping it real'- concentrating on making our acting genuine.

14-16s have been working on Playback theatre with counselling and drama students from York St John University, culminating in a performance by the professional company Playback Theatre York. And the 16+ groups performed two new productions in November called **Judgement Day** and **Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat**. Snickleway Theatre Company – our youth theatre graduate company– also performed one of the pieces in **Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat** to an excellent standard, it was great to see the talent that is emerging from our Youth Theatre, and their commitment to now make work themselves.

We are now starting to work towards a **Missing Mysteries** project, which will over 60 young people aged between 11-13s and 14-16s and takes plays from the York Mystery Plays Cycle that are not being performed in Museum Gardens over the summer and will stage them in 6 churches in the city centre next Easter.

The theatre ran a training day for youth theatre leaders across the region called Raising the Game: Yorkshire which is part of our run up to holding the second Regional Youth Theatre Festival. This will be held in the theatre in February, and will be attended by at least 10 local youth theatres.

Arts Award

York Theatre Royal has been delivering Arts Award for nearly 3 years and has one of the largest amounts of delivery in the region. Initially it was offered to just youth theatre assistants and volunteers but over the 3 years has been extended to include work experience placements, play in a week participants, summer production cast members and all youth theatre members of appropriate age. Due to our experience in this area, we were selected from

250 applicant centres to participate in the Junior Arts Award pilot in September which we have just successfully completed with 20 young people aged 8-10. During this pilot project the young people found out about our organisation and that of tutti frutti, our associate company, and then created their own pieces inspired by our production of Hare and Tortoise.

To date York Theatre Royal has achieved 110 passes at Junior Arts Award and Bronze, Silver and Gold level. This is one of the highest levels in the country.

Young Actors Company

The Young Actors Company of young York residents produced the premiere of York writer Hannah Davies' play **Little Angels**. This play has been developed over a number of years at the theatre and the community company included four young actors and two older actresses recruited from the local community.

Early Years

We have been running an under 5s mid week session called Storymakers for over a year, in partnership with Mud Pie Arts. In September we secured a new Arts Council Grants for the Arts award of £7,000 which will allow us to continue running this scheme for the next 18 months, as well as doing outreach sessions in the Children's Centres, and providing transport into the theatre each week.

5 OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

Arts Council

The theatre was pleased to announce earlier in the year that it has become a National Portfolio Organisation for 2012 – 2015. Arts Council England has made a commitment to York Theatre Royal for 3 years from April 2012 to make a core investment of the following in those three years: 2012-2013 £583,300; 2013-2014 £597,299; 2014-2015 £612,829. In addition the Arts Council has launched several strategic funds to support capital investment, to support our capacity to raise new funds from the private sector, to support the production of theatre work in York which will also add to what is available to other theatres in the country and finally to support digital production and

distribution. York Theatre Royal is approaching these new Funds for at least £2 million in the next three years.

Fundraising

In the last six months York Theatre Royal has been successful with attracting £110,000 in new funds to the city through applications to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Arts Council England, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Patricia and Donald Shepherd Trust and the Sylvia and Colin Shepherd Trust.

New activity and new equipment that has been supported through this money includes new funds for young people to manage two further “TakeOver Festivals” in the city, new equipment to improve our service to visually-impaired customers to the theatre and new Early Years participatory work with families both at the theatre and through outreach activity at Children Centres in the city.

Applications for which the theatre is awaiting a response include the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation for a two year application to support a new post at the theatre for recruiting and managing new volunteer opportunities with young people at the theatre. Also an application with York Rotary Club for a schools project that would support every 7 year old in York to experience theatre and a new Apprenticeship scheme for young drama practitioners.

De Grey Creative Complex

The realisation of the full vision for an active Cultural Quarter has moved several stages closer with an active programme of creative activity in the De Grey Rooms and a staged entry into taking over De Grey House by the end of the financial year.

The De Grey Rooms now houses the theatre’s wardrobe department who produce all the costumes for the 16+ productions at the theatre annually. It also houses the Costume Hire, a public facility for people in York to hire costumes. We have everything from period outfits to Pantomime Horses and the new city centre location has attracted lots of new customers.

Also in the Rooms are the weekly sessions for the theatre’s 14 youth theatre groups with children and young people from the ages of 5 to 19 working towards staging productions throughout the year. As well as York Theatre

Royal's main rehearsals for productions taking place in the Rooms and House, 6 other theatre companies have used the De Grey Complex to rehearse work being performed in the city including a version of A Christmas Carol that was performed at The Lamb and Lion pub in the run up to Christmas.

The Mystery Plays office has taken up more rooms in the De Grey complex as the numbers of volunteers working on realising the project has increased. During the last six months dance events in the Ballroom have included a Summer Tea Dance and a 1950's Jive Night.

Other organisations have used the Rooms and House for public events. It was a venue for the first ever York Film Festival, York Professionals used it for a networking event for its members and we have held several Charity balls in the Ballroom.

Finally the first of many creative businesses moved their production offices into the house. Aesthetica Magazine and cultural company have taken on a lease in De Grey House and they will be followed by at least three more creative companies relocating to York city centre. This is part of a new venture at the theatre to support established and emerging creative businesses with affordable accommodation, shared services and access to expertise and a creative community in York.

Further refurbishment work is taking place over the next few months with the aim of the theatre taking on the full lease from landlord's York Conservation Trust in April 2012 for both De Grey Rooms and De Grey House.

This will launch a new creative hub in the city offering access to hot desk and permanent facilities to support young creative businesses to stay in the city and produce and add to the local economy.

Liz Wilson
Chief Executive
January 2012