

## YORK THEATRE ROYAL

### City of York Council Report - September 2012

#### 1 CORE PARTNERS

##### **City of York Council and Arts Council England**

We now have a six year service level agreement with the City of York Council. The grant from the City of York Council has been maintained for the first year of the Agreement and then reduced by 10% in the second year and then maintained at this level for the remaining years.

Alongside this the theatre has a three year agreement with the Arts Council with a 2% increase year on year until 2015.

#### 2 ARTISTIC PROGRAMME AND DEVELOPMENTS

**York Family Robinson**, the annual pantomime and Berwick Kaler's 33<sup>rd</sup> as dame in the city was heralded as one the best in years. Despite challenging economic circumstances for many of our customers just over 50,000 people saw the production which is 88% of seating capacity. This year's pantomime was announced as **Robin Hood and his Merry Mam** and went on sale on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

##### **The Diary of Anne Frank**

This York Theatre Royal production was a great success both critically and with audiences. It attracted a large audience of families and school pupils and starred Christopher Timothy of **All Creatures Great and Small** fame in the role of Anne Frank's father, Otto Frank. 7,500 people saw the production in York. We then toured the show to 10 venues in the UK and it was seen by a further 22,000 people from Bradford to Bath to Blackpool.

##### **Blue/Orange**

This production followed in a long line of excellent work that we produce in the Studio Theatre of good contemporary drama that gives audiences a chance to see substantial work in an intimate and intense environment. Alongside this production and because of its subject matter around mental

health we produced a production of **Henry IV** with Out of Character, the York St John based theatre group of mental health users which was performed in the Studio Theatre.

### **TakeOver Festival**

Over 100 young people from the age of 13 “took over” York Theatre Royal for three weeks in May and June and produced a programme of over 25 productions and events including producing two new pieces of theatre for the city. The young people commissioned a new play about young people living in Scarborough England and Scarborough, Toronto. The play came from a residency in York and was produced with input from young people in York, Scarborough and Toronto. In addition the Artistic Director of this year’s Festival produced a new production of **As You Like It** with a cast from the York Community on the main stage of the theatre. The TakeOver Festival has been funded this year through a generous grant from The Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

### **Little Feet Children’s Theatre Festival**

The theatre produced its second Little Feet Festival of the best of UK and International theatre and participatory activity. 35 events were held in the week and over 3,000 people either watched a performance or took part in other activity during the week. This week really shows the strength of the family audience at York Theatre Royal. Activity during the week was for audiences from only 4 months up to 14 years old.

In addition to the York Theatre Royal produced programme and Festivals we also had an exceptional period of high quality touring companies from around the country. In the main theatre this included **Phoenix Dance**, **Science Museum Live**, the first visit for many years of **English Touring Opera** and five week long touring theatre shows that drew huge audiences and included **Yes, Prime Minister**, **Love’s Labour’s Lost** (with a cameo appearance by Lenny Henry) and **Close the Coalhouse Door**, which brought Sam West back into York for the first time since he was filming here with the York-based television drama, **Eternal Law**. Other notable productions during the last six months also included the UK premiere of the Reduced Shakespeare Company production of **The Complete World of Sports** which was a York Theatre Royal co-production that we toured around the UK and then into London during the Olympic Games.

This was also a great six months for showcasing the high quality work being produced by the Community and Amateur theatre groups in the city. At York Theatre you could have seen an extravagant production of **The Sound of Music**, two studio productions of plays by two of the UK's most outstanding contemporary playwrights, Jim Cartwright and Alan Ayckbourn and three gala productions including **The Lord Mayor's Charity Concert**.

## **York Mystery Plays 2012**

What has undoubtedly dominated this period however is the large scale community production of York Mystery Plays in the Museum Gardens.

It will be hard to encapsulate the full scale of this project in this report but as part of the legacy of this extraordinary community participation project we will be producing a full evaluation that will aim to be a useful and practical guide for the next Mystery Plays project team should the city decide to produce them again. As part of this legacy we are also working with some of the community who were part of the project this year to organise themselves into a group that will ensure a future for the Plays in the city.

Having said that I would like to record in this report what a life-changing experience this has been for York Theatre Royal. We feel it has been a privilege to serve the city and its citizens in being part of a huge team of committed individuals who worked hard to produce such an outstanding production in a beautiful setting that clearly holds such meaning and importance to the citizens of this city.

Some the raw facts of the project include the following:

### **Volunteers involved in the project**

500 adult cast members

100 children in the cast

80 choir members

20 brass band musicians

80 people who worked from January on making over 1,200 pieces of costume and then worked each night and day through the performances to wash and mend costumes

80 people who welcomed the audience to the site each performance

55 people who worked as stage crew throughout the performances

50 who acted as chaperones for the children during rehearsal and at each performance

20 people who ran the Green Room tea and coffee station for the community cast

100s of people who helped to find and make props and the set

100s who worked on the administration and marketing teams

And many more who have given time to fetch and carry, drive vans, clear up and tidy and to enthuse other people to get involved.

33,000 people attended the Plays, which is the largest audience yet for the Mystery Plays in York.

The production was also live-streamed to over 3,500 people on August 11<sup>th</sup> and the whole production is available to download from The BBC Space website from five different camera angles so that viewers can edit the production and their own bespoke view. The email address for this is [www.thespace.org](http://www.thespace.org)

### **Coming up in the Autumn Season**

We are producing a new adaptation of Alan Sillitoe's book **The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner** with Pilot Theatre Company, this will tour nationally after a two week run. **The Guinea Pig Club**, by Susan Watkins is our following production; this new play is set during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War and charts the development of plastic surgery undertaken in response to the high casualty rate of air crew from the Battle of Britain onwards. The realisation that through surgery alone these men could not be cured made Archibald McIndoe's approach to his patients innovative and challenging for both the medical world and the armed forces. We hope to have a range of supporting activities and events around this production and will be working with the Yorkshire Air Museum at Elvington, The Royal College of Surgeons, Rolls Royce and many other organisations during the project. During the autumn half term the Youth Theatre will present an adaptation of Philip Pullman's **His Dark Materials**, this exciting production will appeal to the young people performing in it, to their peers and a family audience during the holiday week. Phoenix Dance return in late November with **Crossing Points** and we have Royal Shakespeare Company education department working in the city, with York High School as the hub of a schools project based on **King Lear**. They will also be performing their version of **King Lear** at the theatre in a stripped down version which will be 75 minutes long. Prior to the Pantomime season Northern Broadsides will bring their production of **The Government**

**Inspector** in a new adaptation by Deborah McAndrew. **Robin Hood and His Merry Mam** turn up for Christmas this year. Two regular cast members David Leonard and Martin Barrass have been performing in the West End for the last few months. Martin will return from his role in **One Man Two Guvnors** to star in the pantomime alongside Berwick Kaler, however David Leonard will remain in a frock playing Trunchbull in **Matilda** in the West End. So we have a new villain this year!

The Studio has a wonderful mix of our own productions and the best of national touring. **Rapunzel** is our co-production with Tutti Frutti, it is being adapted by Mike Kenny and will tour the UK after the York run. **End of Desire** by David Ireland and **Escaping Alice** by Matthew Pegg a double bill, is in association with Pilot Theatre. York Shakespeare Project will present **Othello**, this will be their first production with us and we are delighted to host. We will be continuing our talks in partnership with York St John concerning Narrative as part of the iCAN initiative on the 15<sup>th</sup> October and 19<sup>th</sup> of November. Other notable titles include; **Stick Granny on the Roof-Rack**, **The Meaning of Rif** and **Les Miserables** (in the Studio Theatre!).

### 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.

#### **Schools**

We worked with Millthorpe, Applefields and Joseph Rowntree, on a Storytelling project using the production of **The Diary of Anne Frank** as our stimulus to produce personal connected stories. This project is being evaluated by YSJ. The production proved to be very rich vein of stimulus for work with many other Primary and Secondary schools in the city.

We created a new partnership proposal to Primary schools entitled iCAN schools partnership, this is a structured model for involvement with schools and concentrates on the theatre, our building and stories as its primary focus. At this stage Joseph Rowntree, Knavesmire and St Oswald's have come into partnership with the Theatre.

York High School are going to be our "hub" school for the Royal Shakespeare Company project and we are looking forward to working with them over the

next three years, and hosting the RSC's Young People's Shakespeare version of **King Lear** in November.

Our National Playhouse project of new plays for schools to perform culminated in its annual Festival of performance at York Theatre Royal in July. Schools taking part this year were Archbishop of York's Junior School, Park Grove, Clifton Green, Sand Hutton and Knavesmire School.

We are looking to launch a new performance project for Secondary schools that would culminate in a festival of new pieces of work in our main house in spring 2013. The theme would be exploring narrative and would encourage students to experiment with how they take an existing text and work a new personal, contemporary narrative through it.

## **Youth Theatre**

As always the Youth Theatre has been busy with classes and productions.

During the last six months the 5 to 7 year olds produced two shows in the York Theatre Royal Studio Theatre: **Moon Dog** and **The Land of Counterpane**.

Not only did the 8 to 10 year olds produce four shows during the last six months but they also recorded audio **Missing Mysteries**, to coincide with the Mystery Plays and which also played on hospital radio and they also recorded an interactive display for the new Chocolate Experience Museum in York. Our group of 11 to 13 year olds produced a top secret performance with Mind The Gap, in front of the Minster as part of the Olympic imove project but they also worked with our 14 to 16 year old groups to produce 6 plays under the banner of **Missing Mysteries**. These plays were performed in the Parish Churches in York and were stories from the York Mystery Plays cycle that were not being performed as part of the main Mystery Plays. Our 16 to 18 years old groups have been working on their performance skills and had an intensive week on **His Dark Materials** working towards the main theatre production with 60 young people in the autumn. Our graduate theatre company, **Snickelways**, performed at the Regional Youth Theatre Festival in York and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and Galtres.

Many young people involved with York Theatre Royal are doing Arts Award and several ran sections of the Regional Youth Theatre Festival. This festival brought 200 young people to our building from across Yorkshire as well as Nottingham, Manchester and County Durham, who performed work and took

part in workshops. It was staffed by 20 young York buddies aged 10-21 and was a huge success. In the last year we have had over 80 passes at all 5 levels of the Arts Award. We have awarded two Golds in the last few months.

We hosted a youth exchange at Easter of young people from 5 different countries who produced theatre together in the city which was also inspired by the York Mystery Plays.

### **Young Actors Company**

Our company of young actors over the age of 19 have produced two plays in the last six months including a work commissioned by York Museums Trust to animate the 1212: Making of the City exhibition.

### **Early Years Storymakers**

We are now running two creative play sessions each week with parents, carers and the under 5s. The popularity of these sessions has been tremendous and new funding that we raised to support this work has enabled the theatre to do new outreach work with Children's Centres in the city.

## **4 OTHER NEWS**

### **Fundraising**

We were successful with our application to the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation for a three year project to support a new post at the theatre for managing new and existing volunteer and intern opportunities with young people. The value of the fund is £75,000 over three years.

This will match the successful application that we made to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for £100,000 to support the TakeOver initiative at the theatre that supports young people to programme, produce and manage the theatre for 3 weeks each year.

We have been successful with our application for capacity building and match funding for a 3 year Fundraising Strategy. The funding will cover up to £75,000 of expenditure on time-limited administration tasks that will improve the overall efficiency of the theatre, skill up staff and board in fundraising and contribute towards material costs for marketing materials. We proposed that we would raise £187,500 over the next three years which would be matched by a further £150,000 through the fund. The 3 year Fundraising Strategy

includes six separate programmes to include the launch of a Founding Patrons scheme for individuals and the corporate sector, an Investment in Ideas fund to encourage investment in the creation of new work and community fundraising activity.

## **De Grey Creative Complex**

In April three cultural organisations moved into the new Creative Hub in the De Grey Complex. They are **Aesthetica**, who produce a high quality national cultural magazine and are responsible for the York Short Film Festival, **Creative Arts Promotion** who head up J-Night, a Jazz promotion agency and the National Rural Arts Forum, a national agency for the development of arts in rural areas, and finally **Pilot Theatre Company**, one of York Theatre Royal's closest artistic partners. York Mystery Plays staff and volunteers also took up residency in the De Grey Complex as the volume of people involved in the project grew.

The De Grey Complex also houses all of York Theatre Royal's Youth Theatre activity and our theatre rehearsal rooms which are used by many theatre companies as part of our support of young and emerging talent in the city. Our costume-making team is also based in the De Grey Complex and the famous York Theatre Royal Costume Hire where we hire costume stock to individuals to dress up and theatre companies from across the country.

We have held our first weddings in the last six months in the magnificent Ballroom and adjoining Cocktail Bar and this has now become a new party and event venue in the city.

York Theatre Royal is continuing to look at ways in which we are able to support established and emerging creative businesses with affordable accommodation, shared services and access to expertise and a creative community in York.

## **Capital Development at the Main Theatre**

York Theatre Royal is working up a design scheme to improve the theatre for its audiences and artists and ensure that York has one of the finest theatre buildings in the UK to accompany the UK reputation that the theatre has for producing outstanding theatre. An application for £2.5 million has been made to the Arts Council for work to enclose the colonnade at the front of the theatre and open up the foyer area to improve the welcome for our audience



and improve the turnover of the theatre's café and bar. Plans are also in place to create a new heritage destination in the city at the theatre that highlights the architectural and archaeological history of York Theatre Royal and site and the history of theatre in the city. City of York Council has pledged support of £500,000 towards this significant upgrade and development of the theatre.

Liz Wilson  
Chief Executive  
September 2012