

Annex 1

York Theatre Royal: Service Level Agreement report February 2015

This report will give an update of delivery against the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the City of York Council and York Citizens' Theatre Trust Ltd.

The report covers the period from February to August 2015.

PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY 2012/2018

SLA conditions are noted in bold with the details of how the theatre has been working to achieve them underneath.

- 1. Provide a year round programme of work which shall include in-house productions, including a pantomime, youth theatre productions, touring drama productions, and hires to local amateur companies**

York Theatre Royal closed for a major re-furbishment from mid-March 2015. The Theatre Royal is not due to re-open until Spring 2016.

Over the period from February to August 2015 York Theatre Royal has presented performances in the York Theatre Royal Main Theatre and De Grey Ballroom, at the Signal Box Theatre at the National Railway Museum, at the Imphal Barracks and at 16 other venues across the city of York as part of the York International Shakespeare Festival.

Attendances at these performances and events for this period was 52,000 despite York Theatre Royal being closed from March 2015.

York Theatre Royal closed with two community-based productions. York Light Opera Company presented **South Pacific** for the final two weeks of the closing season followed by the final performance in the theatre from 7 York Schools, which was the culmination of our 3 year project with the Royal Shakespeare Company. This final performance filled the theatre with the families and friends of over 300 young performers who presented scenes from Shakespeare's Henry IV and Henry V.

In March 2015 after the closure of York Theatre Royal we began a residency at the National Railway Museum. The aim of the partnership between these two York organisations is to enhance the programme of both institutions and develop audiences for culture in York. This partnership has been awarded funds from the Arts Council Exceptional Award scheme to recognise the innovative approach of both organisations to improving experiences for both theatre and museum audiences.

York Citizens Theatre Trust produced 2 major productions during this period, **In Fog and Falling Snow** and **The Railway Children** both presented at a temporary theatre, The Signal Box Theatre, erected in the South Yard of the National Railway Museum.

In Fog and Falling Snow was a large-scale community play with over 500 community participants, including a community cast of 250, a community choir and many volunteers who supported the production backstage and as hosts for the audiences. The production had a community costume-making team who were based in the former leather goods shop, Robson & Cooper, and worked with groups of students from York College to make elements of the set and props. The production told the story of York's Railway King, George Hudson, and began as a promenade performance around the National Railway Museum collection before going into the Signal Box Theatre.

The Railway Children was a re-mount of the internationally acclaimed production that originated in York in 2008 through a collaboration between York Theatre Royal and the National Railway Museum. It has played to audiences in excess of 31,000 across the summer in York.

The first **York International Shakespeare Festival** was presented in May at 17 different venues across the city. This was a collaboration with the University of York and the European Shakespeare Festivals Network. This new city Festival aims to present work from around the world that is inspired by Shakespeare and within the unique setting of our city. Companies in the Festival came from Japan, Spain, Denmark, Poland as well as the UK. The programme featured theatre, puppetry, dance, silent film, talks and exhibitions. The 2nd International Festival will take place in 2017.

The season also featured work from one of our European collaborators, Landesbuehen Sachsen, the return of our co-production with tutti frutti of **Rapunzel** for 3 – 5 year olds and two performances in the Imphal Barracks of the award-winning dance work, **5 Soldiers**.

2. Provide sign language interpreted and audio described performances and touch tours

All of the York Citizens Theatre Trust productions in the Signal Box Theatre have had sign interpreted, audio-described and captioned performances. In addition a touring production of King Lear, presented at the University of York as part of the York International Shakespeare Festival had sign interpreted, audio-described and captioned performances and many of the European language performances during the Festival were captioned. All audio-described performances are preceded by a touch tour of the stage. The theatre has a pool of dog sitters for guide dogs.

3. Provide a regular Youth Theatre for at least 250 young people annually

Across the Spring and Summer terms over 340 young people took part in the Youth Theatre in 14 different youth theatre groups from the ages of 5 to 18. They attended weekly classes, extra rehearsals, theatre performances and Youth Forum sessions.

Due to the closure of York Theatre Royal and the residency relationship with the National Railway Museum many of the youth theatre weekly sessions have been held at the National Railway Museum.

Much of the performance work of the Youth Theatre across this period has been railway themed with performances taking place in the Museum amongst the collection. This included a theatre piece devised by the 11-14 year olds called **Here One Minute**, that took as its inspiration the people who go missing at train stations.

Youth Theatre productions have also taken place in collaboration with other partners in the city. Fairfax House was the venue for a production of **In My Father's House**, the story of Anne Fairfax who inherited the

house from her father in 1722. This site specific performance was commissioned by York Theatre Royal and was a promenade throughout the house. Other Youth Theatre shows in this period included **Shedspeare**, 10 minute interactive pieces of theatre with characters from Shakespeare's plays, written by the 16 – 19 year olds and presented in sheds on King's Manor Green during the International Festival.

Outreach and Community Youth Theatres

In addition to the regular Youth Theatre sessions run in the De Grey Rooms we have also introduced new sessions aimed at specific groups both in community settings and at the theatre.

A new Access All Areas Group has been developed over this period and has been oversubscribed with diverse young people, many of whom have been specifically targeted as 'hard to reach'.

Project Q is a now a weekly youth theatre session for young people aged 8-13 with learning difficulties and additional needs.

4. Provide educational activities related to each main house production, including special matinees, talks, teachers' packs, workshops and visits to schools

Early Years

Early Years work continues to be as popular as ever with regular weekly activities with **Storymakers** for 3-5 years olds, and **Sing and Sign** for babies from 6 months old.

Schools

As always we are working with schools on many different projects.

We have continued to work with our seven long-term, cross-curricula relationships with York schools including, Knavesmire, Joseph Rowntree and St Olave's.

Additionally as part of the Learning and Performance Network run in conjunction with the Royal Shakespeare Company and York High

School as the Hub school we are working with seven cluster schools: Acomb primary, St.Barnabas CE primary, Poppleton Road primary, Woodthorpe primary, Westfield primary, Applefields School (specialist school for cognition and learning) and Joseph Rowntree school. This relationship finished with a performance in the Main Theatre with all of the schools performing extracts from Henry IV and V. It was a very high quality event with the young people from the age of 6 speaking Shakespeare with perfect understanding and clarity to a full theatre of families and friends. It proved to be the perfect final performance in the theatre before the £6 million refurbishment project began.

The International Centre for Arts & Narrative, a partnership project with York St. John University has delivered another term of free arts workshops to schools and community groups using a range of artistic disciplines including theatre, music, dance, storytelling, poetry, visual art and film. These are held regularly in the De Grey Rooms and support teachers in using the arts to encourage the creative imaginations of young people. New techniques and approaches to learning are explored in these workshops. This has been made possible through new funding through the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC). Schools who have regularly taken advantage of these stimulating sessions include Badger Hill, Hambleton, St George's, Cawood, Applefields, Knavesmire, Pocklington and Kirkbymoorside. This service for schools will continue for the next academic year and beyond.

Additionally through the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award fund we have jointly appointed a storyteller who will be working in the city with students for the next 3 years. During the Spring and Summer terms she has run storytelling lunch times clubs with teenagers, and has done teacher training at York High.

5. Provide a range of activities to engage older people in activities connected with the Theatre

The Friends of York Theatre Royal continue to offer opportunities for older people to volunteer to support the work of the theatre. During this period the Friends have been fundraising for the York Theatre Royal Capital project and they have supported the productions being held at the National Railway Museum. The number of active older volunteers

has increased over this period with many opportunities to take part in supporting the theatre to deliver a programme of work at the National Railway Museum and for the York International Shakespeare Festival.

We continue to offer two Adult Acting classes on a termly basis that are consistently over-subscribed. In this period the Adult Acting Workshop company performed 30 new short plays especially commissioned for the company of adult actors called Thirty Plays about Love and Death.

6. Develop The Studio programme promoting new and culturally diverse work: using the space to provide opportunities for local voluntary arts organisations and to develop the creative infrastructure of the city.

Please see above for the artistic programme details during the closure of York Theatre Royal.

7. Provide student placements and careers advice to support the development of a strong local creative sector

We have had a range of placements across this period. This has included 4 assistant directors to support the community play **In Fog and Falling Snow**. We have also had a number of placements attached to our participatory activity with young people.

Our major placement opportunity is participation in the TakeOver project for 12 – 25 year olds. The latest Board of 13 young people for this project was appointed in February 2015. They then recruited the Senior Management placements for the project in June. For the first time this included a number of appointments to the NRM's Public Programmes team as the TakeOver Festival in 2015 will be held at the NRM in October. Since June the Board and Senior managers, supported by the York Theatre Royal and NRM staff, have programmed a 10 day Festival of artistic activity at the NRM which will enhance the experiences of museum visitors. The programme will coincide with Illuminating York.

8. Develop the De Grey Complex, along with the Theatre, as a creative production hub for the city

The De Grey Complex has been very busy during this period with the closure of York Theatre Royal.

The York Theatre Royal box office and reception has moved into the De Grey Rooms and the Rooms became the hub for International Shakespeare Festivalgoers in May. We opened a “pop-up” café in the Rooms giving regular theatre café visitors continuity with the theatre and a venue for regular groups to meet. The Friends of York Theatre Royal started a weekly craft session in the Rooms as part of its fundraising activity for the theatre.

Holiday activities for young people has included 4 play in a week creative sessions during Easter and Summer holidays, Storytelling Workshops and one-off drama activity days to develop performance skills and have fun.

York College performing arts students continue to be based in the De Grey Rooms for dance and drama sessions.

There is a full programme of public dance events including masked balls and tea dances.

Costume Hire and the theatre’s Costume makers are based in the De Grey Rooms.

Permanent residents in De Grey House include Pilot Theatre Company and The Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers, a national agency.

The De Grey Rooms and House continue to offer creative production facilities for both the professional and voluntary arts. Companies using the spaces included tutti frutti, Flying Cloud Theatre, The Flanagan Collective, Telling Tales Theatre Company, Pilot Theatre, TongueTied, Mud Pie Arts, Ensemble Theatre Company and Bad Apple Theatre Company.

9. Work with key stakeholders on the Cultural Quarter developments as well as other developments as appropriate

The York Theatre Royal re-furbishment project began at the beginning of April. The programme for the project was April to the beginning of October however due to exceptional archaeological finds and issues with the structure of the theatre the completion date is now likely to be

early Spring 2016. This initially forced a re-location of the annual pantomime from the York Theatre Royal to the Signal Box Theatre at the NRM. 15,000 tickets, already booked for the newly re-furbished theatre were transferred in May to the Signal Box Theatre. The delay in completing the re-furbishment is putting significant financial pressure on the Capital budget and on the theatre operation.

With the transfer of ownership of York Theatre Royal to York Conservation Trust in January 2015 has come the commitment to replace the roof structures of the theatre. This £1 million project commenced in July and should be completed in December.

Liz Wilson Chief Executive
York Citizens Theatre Trust
5 September 2015.