

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 September 2014 to January 2015 with cumulative quantitative measures from April 2014 to January 2015.

The total audience attendance from April 2014 to January 2015 was 168,323. This means that in 2014/5 the Theatre Royal will exceed its agreed level of attendance in its SLA.

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**

Over the period from September 2014 to January 2015 York Theatre Royal has presented 317 performances across the Main Theatre, Studio Theatre and De Grey Ballroom. Attendances at these performances and events for this period was 80,504. This represents a record-breaking level of attendance in the theatre for an Autumn season.

York Citizens Theatre Trust produced 6 home-produced shows over this period including **Betrayal, Princess & the Pea, Puss in Boots, The Restoration of Nell Gwynne, Helver's Night and Old Mother Goose.**

Two of these productions toured across the UK following performances in York.

This season also included the TakeOver Festival of work programmed and managed by young people under the age of 26 years old. The week-long Festival in October presented 13 different productions across the Main Theatre, Studio Theatre and De Grey Ballroom. Over 2,000 people came to the events during the week. The artistic programme included Edinburgh Fringe First companies and other award-winning companies and productions. This week of events gives over 100 young people the opportunity to work together with the common goal of bringing new artistic voices to the theatre and city.

This period included a very varied, high quality and very popular programme of theatre in the Main Theatre. Productions included the world premiere of Pat Barker's outstanding World War One novel, **Regeneration**, a new adaptation and production of Orwell's **1984**, a world premiere stage adaptation of the best-selling novel, **The Kite Runner**, and hugely entertaining production of **She Stoops to Conquer** from Northern Broadsides. There was also a welcome return for **The Women in Black**.

This season is one of the most successful in terms of variety and attendance.

York Theatre Royal enjoyed the productions of some of the best of community theatre during the season with York Opera's **Pirates of Penzance**.

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

All of the York Citizens Theatre Trust productions in the main theatre have sign interpreted, audio-described and captioned performances. All theatre productions that tour to the theatre for a week in the main theatre offer audio-described performances. 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 Autumn term 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.

Examples of activity in Youth Theatre during the Autumn include a project with our 11 – 14 year olds who have taken Freedom Theatre as their stimulus this term. Freedom Theatre is based in Palestine and it creates art as a form of cultural resistance. At the end of the Autumn term they shared their work with each other and parents, and raised money to buy theatre tickets for the young people of Jenin to go to performances at Freedom Theatre.

The Youth Theatre continues to give an opportunity to support new young and emerging artists in York.

The 16+ Groups had two productions in the Studio season. One was an adaptation of Brecht's **Caucasian Chalk Circle** by an ex member of Youth Theatre and the other was a play from the award-winning Lee Hall, **Mr Puntilla and his man Matti**. Both received very favourable reviews in the York Press.

During the Spring term the 5 – 8 year old groups will be working towards a new production which will take the audience on a backstage tour around the theatre before we close where they meet ghosts from the theatre's past. A time capsule will also be buried as part of the Capital Project. And the 14 – 16 year olds are starting to rehearse for a production called **In my Father's House** which will be performed in Fairfax House while the theatre is closed.

Many Youth Theatre groups are now having their weekly sessions at the National Railway Museum as we start the York Theatre Royal residency at the museum. This national collection will be the stimulus for new youth theatre work across the year.

Youth Theatre groups have become involved in fundraising for the Capital Project at York Theatre Royal. They created a creative and playful "Fete" in the De Grey Ballroom with a variety of events including the chance to dress up in the **Youth Theatre Fun Photo Booth**, the **Big Youth Theatre Auction**, a **Cake Roulette** and a **Human Fruit Machine!**

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'. The group meets on a weekly basis, and took part in the TakeOver Festival. Access All Areas volunteers delivered an exciting, inventive week, jam packed with an eclectic mix of dance, comedy, theatre and music including brand new work by emerging artists. The team also worked in partnership with the York organisation Access To Music, to provide a platform for young musicians to perform to audiences in the café bar. The Access All Areas volunteers will now be working towards next year's community production at the National Railway Museum (NRM).

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, **Singamajigs** for 1 – 4 year olds and **Sing and Sign** for babies from 6 months old.

Schools

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

The new school year confirmed 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 culminates in a schools festival at York Theatre Royal in March 2015.

The International Centre for Arts & Narrative, a partnership project with York St. John University has delivered its first 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 Autumn term 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 new initiatives for older people that we introduced in the last year continue and include Spotlight talks and a Playreading Group. 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. Friends and volunteers continue to part of the welcome team for audiences and participants.

We continue to offer two Adult Acting classes on a termly basis that are consistently over- subscribed.

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.

The Studio Theatre programme between September 2014 and January 2015 included 19 different productions.

This included work for all ages with professional, community and novice companies and players.

In the mix this Autumn was our own production of *The Princess & the Pea* for 3-7 year olds that performed to an audience of over 1,500, this included Primary School groups and families.

Other productions produced by York Citizens Theatre Trust included two new plays, **The Restoration of Nell Gwynne** and **Helver's Night**. The latter a new translation of a Polish play.

The TakeOver Festival team of young people programmed a huge variety of performances from spoken word to offbeat comedy and from physical theatre to classic drama. An opportunity for new artists and companies to showcase their work in York.

The York 50+ Festival also produced a show as part of its activity to encourage people over the age of 50 to be creative and have fun.

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.

We worked with a new intake of young people between the ages of 13 and 25 for the TakeOver Festival. These placements for around 100 young people take many forms. Some are mentoring placements with members of staff over a nine month period, the young people formed their own self-governing Board to manage the initiative and some young people worked with the theatre on a one week intensive placement to support the Festival week. The aim of the initiative is to offer many different points of entry and levels of commitment for young people into the theatre.

A further 6 student placements were offered and taken up during this period. This included a Design Assistant and Assistant Director on **Helver's Night** and an Assistant Director on **Betrayal** and **The Restoration of Nell Gwynne**.

We continue to offer short placements for school-age children throughout the year. These are always over-subscribed. These are offered through the normal carousel placements.

We offer an advice surgery for young people wishing to explore pathways into a career in theatre. We support young people to achieve an Arts Award during any contact with the theatre.

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

The De Grey Complex continues to be a busy hub for different creative companies and activities.

Resident in De Grey House are 3 creative companies in addition to York Citizens Theatre Trust, they include Aesthetica who publish an international culture magazine and manage the York Short Film Festival, 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.

York College continue to hold most of its performing arts teaching sessions in the De Grey Rooms.

The De Grey Complex continues to host events and functions all year round.

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

York Citizens Theatre Trust has continued its work to develop designs and secure the funding to enable the York Theatre Royal capital project to take place from the end of March 2015. York Theatre Royal will be closed for 8 months and will re-open in December 2015.

During this period the Designs have been completed and a contractor appointed. York-based William Birch will be the main contractor for the project.

York Theatre Royal transferred from the ownership of the City of York Council to York Conservation Trust in January 2015. With this transfer came the commitment from York Conservation Trust to immediately invest funds to repair the roof as part of the capital project in 2015. Further commitments have been made by York Conservation Trust for continued investment over the next 3-5 years to support York Citizens Theatre Trust in improving the building's condition and enabling the Theatre Trust to develop new income streams into the future.

York Citizens Theatre Trust has negotiated a residency at The National Railway Museum during the closure period at York Theatre Royal. New funding has successfully been sourced from the Arts Council's Grants for the Arts to support this project. Theatre activity during this residency will include a new Community Play, involving up to 500 York Citizens. It will take the story of the Railways in York as its inspiration.

York Citizens Theatre Trust has also been part of the ReInvigorate York group working to improve the public realm in Exhibition Square and St.Leonard's Place.

Liz Wilson Chief Executive
York Citizens Theatre Trust
13 February 2015.