

**YORK THEATRE ROYAL
REPORT TO LEARNING, CULTURE AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY
July 2009**

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 December 2009 – and give some headline responses to the financial year completed in March 2009.

2 THE PROGRAMME

- 2.1 Following on from previous reports, the year from April 2008 to March 2009 was another 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 **NEW WRITING, CLASSIC THEATRE AND CO-PRODUCTIONS** were strongly represented by Mike Kenny's stage adaptation of **The Railway Children**, **Lord of the Flies** (Pilot Theatre in association with York Theatre Royal), **Beyond Measure** (a co-production with Back and Forth), **Lough/Rain** (Real Circumstance Theatre Company with York Theatre Royal), **Welcome to Ramallah** (Iceandfire with York Theatre Royal) Jane Thornton's **I Want That Hair**, Arthur Miller's **Death of a Salesman**, **Rupert Brooke** (a co-production with Useful Donkey Theatre Company), and by touring productions of Hull Truck's **Ladies Down Under** and **Lucky Sods**, Lifeblood Theatre Company and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre's **Liberty**, Fresh Glory's **Frozen**, Theatre Absolute and Warwick Arts Centre's **Zero**, Pilot Theatre, Company of Angels and the Junction's **This Child**, LipService's **Tony and Twizzle**, English Touring Theatre's **Where There's A Will**, Scott Davison Production's **Future Me**, The Comedy Theatre Company's **dinnerladies** and the national tour of **Boeing, Boeing**.

- 2.3 We were honoured and delighted to win along with the NRM, the Visit York Visitor Experience of the Year award for The Railway Children.

Berwick Kaler and the York Theatre Royal pantomime also won the Visit York Ambassador of the Year award.

- 2.4 We have continued our strong relationship with resident Pilot Theatre Company, co-producing LORD OF THE FLIES – which toured the UK until Easter 2009. We also continue to work with Tutti Frutti producing work for 3 to 5 year olds that again tours the UK after opening in York.
- 2.6 Our annual programme of work is supported by our Christmas production. Last year, DICK TURPIN attracted over 54,000 people and we celebrated Berwick's 30th anniversary. Despite the credit crunch, to date we have sold 16,500 tickets for Christmas 2009 – HUMPTY DUMPTY. Over the years we have reduced our reliance on the pantomime income and this now stands at 29% of our box office income.
- 2.8 We continue to work very closely with the Amateur Societies in the city. By offering space in the Main House and Studio we develop good working relationships with as many non-professional companies (including companies from our Universities) as possible.
- 2.9 We have continued our work and collaborations out of the theatre this year with York Museums Trust presenting Much Ado in Museum Gardens in August 2008, and this year we will be working in the gardens adjacent to the City Library in July with an outdoor production of THE TEMPEST.
- 2.10 In June this year we are hosting two training days for the sector on using technology in conjunction with the Arts Council, Pilot Theatre and Creative York.
- 2.11 We continue to contribute to the cultural life of the city including major events, 2012, the cultural quarter etc.

3 **LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT**

PARTNERSHIP IN EDUCATION & THEATRE - PET

- 3.1 The PET project is a three-way partnership between York Theatre Royal, City of York Council (Arts and Culture) and individual schools.
- For the academic year 2009/10 we will be working with 7 schools, 6 primaries which are Acomb, Carr Junior, Federation of Hob Moor Oaks and Hob Moor Community primary, Knavesmire, Park Grove (second year) and St. Oswald's. We are working with secondary Joseph Rowntree for a second year.
- 3.2 York Theatre Royal employs two Education Associates who carry out the main body of the project work and for this September we hope to support this with an internship.
- 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 CYC on understanding the new 14-19 Creative diplomas and the city's priority of the 10-hour cultural entitlement for all young people.
- 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 ARTS AWARD – we now have several Youth Theatre assistants and volunteers participating in scheme at Bronze, Silver or Gold level, and the TAKEOVER steering group members are at Bronze level. Also 9 members of YTR staff are now trained as Arts Award Advisers.
- 3.7 Our Youth Theatre currently has a membership of 300 young people aged between 5 and 25 years who are interested in and committed to making, seeing and performing pieces of theatre.
- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 The Youth Theatre has a Young People's Forum that meets regularly and represents the views of the members – two of the Forum also sit on the Board of Trustees.
- 3.11 The Young Actors Company is a Youth Theatre group for over 18s was piloted last summer as part of the York Youth Mysteries '08, and has now expanded and will be staging EQUUS in the autumn season.
- 3.12 Free Theatre Initiative – in December we were awarded £50,000 by the Arts Council to promote free theatre tickets to young people. So far 2,500 young people have signed up for a pass and we have offered over 1,100 free tickets to Young People.

Following on from this development, this has led into a new scheme called TAKEOVER – where we hand over the theatres' programming to a specially recruited team of young people. This is a clear demonstration on putting Young people at the centre of your organisation and empowering them. They have formed a steering group (Board) and more details can be viewed on www.takeoverfestival.co.uk

4 PERFORMANCE RELATED

- 4.1 For the last four years we have hosted an Open Day – when over 800 people have come along for a back stage tour, to try on costumes and find out more about the work we do. In January 2009 we participated in Residents First weekend for the second time and all the tours were booked up very quickly.

- 4.2 For all Main House productions we provide a sign language interpreted performance, an audio described performance and a captioned performance. We are working with an organisation called SEE A VOICE and are developing a new group of volunteers to support audio description.

5 MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY

- 5.1 The financial management and overall understanding of the organisation has significantly improved over the course of the last three years.
- 5.2 As an Investor 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 We have secured some additional funding under the title of **Meeting the Challenge** through the Cultural Leadership programme involving ourselves, Pilot, York Museum's Trust and City Libraries and Archives.

Meetings and planning are well underway and we hope to launch the scheme to staff in the summer and commence the programme in the autumn.

- 5.4 Our Board of Trustees continue to strengthen and challenge the organisation, and we are re-establishing the Development Group to help drive through the challenges of upgrading and improving our buildings, services and profile.
- 5.5 The City Council nominations are now Cllr Carol Runciman, Cllr Sonja Crisp and Cllr Ann Reid, and we welcome their contribution to our organisation.
- 5.4 We continue to develop links with the City of York and the Arts sector and all the Management team are involved with networks, Board memberships and outside bodies including 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:
46% of YTR's bookers live within 15 minutes' drive of the theatre
74% live within 45 minutes' drive
83% live within an hour of the theatre.
- 6.2 For the year from April 2008 to March 2009, we sold 171,000 tickets (against the previous year of 163,000), 27,000 of which were to people under 26. This has grown from 15,000 in 2003 – a growth of 57%.
- 6.3 We sell 47% of our tickets at a concession/discounted rate.

- 6.4 The Membership Scheme of York Theatre Royal (launched in Dec 2007) has 850 Members.
- 6.5 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 FINANCE

- 7.1 We have significantly reduced deficits over the last four years, and ended the financial year 2008/09 with a small operating surplus of £21,940 (not yet audited). This represents less than 0.007% of our total income.
- 7.2 The surplus arose from improved sales across all areas of the business and we have increased our sales on our own 'made in York' productions from £806,957 in 2003 to £1,514,628 in 2009.
- 7.3 We have undertaken 574 performances this year.
- 7.4 We have increased our over all turnover from £2M in 2003 to £3.2M in 2009.
- 7.5 Our Box office facilities are used by other groups and cultural organisations across the city and last year an additional 20, 827 tickets were sold on their behalf.
- 7.6 We are in difficult trading periods in the uncertain financial climate and are regularly reviewing our future plans to respond to market conditions.

8 THE FUTURE

- 8.1 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. However we also remain concerned with the vast amount of variables on the project from the availability of buildings, other projects and the necessary finance.
- 8.2 We plan to take over the lease of the ground floor of the De Grey Rooms when the Visitor Information Centre moves out this autumn.
- 8.3 We continue to contribute to the CULTURAL QUARTER for the city.

9 SUMMARY

- 9.1 We remain a very open and accessible building, offering opportunities for audiences to see high quality work that will enthral, challenge and excite.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 We continue our role as a cultural ambassador for the city through stronger links with organisations in the City of York and regionally and nationally throughout the cultural sector. The Management team are involved with cultural leadership forums, business networks, Board memberships and national representative bodies.
- 9.4 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.
- 9.5 We remain extremely grateful for the support of our funders that help us deliver so much more for the city.

Daniel Bates
Chief Executive
June 2009