

YORK THEATRE ROYAL SERVICE AGREEMENT: 2009/10 HALF YEAR PERFORMANCE UPDATE

1 INTRODUCTION

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.

2 THE PROGRAMME

- 2.1 Once again York Theatre Royal has had another successful year, with many highlights, which further add to the Theatre's reputation for being one of the best repertory producing Theatres in the region.
- 2.2 The Railway Children 2009 was a huge success and the production continues to be put forward for national awards, having won both the Visit York Visitor Experience of the Year 2008 and the Welcome to Yorkshire White Rose Award for Best Tourism Experience 2009.
 - 2.3.1 Having secured £50,000 from the Arts Council, the premier award for their A Night Less Ordinary scheme, we have been working hard to promote our work to under 26s. To date 4,369 young people have signed up for their Free Theatre pass, which gives them access to free tickets for all our productions.
 - 2.3.2 In addition York Theatre Royal produced the first TakeOver Festival in September, when we handed over the programming and running of our building to young people for three weeks. It was a truly amazing experience and we are very proud of this unique initiative. We recruited a Board of Directors aged between 11 and 26 years and a senior management team who worked with our staff on the planning and programming of the Festival. A larger team of young people then joined them in the summer to run the Festival. The Arts Council were hugely impressed with the idea of involving young people more deeply in our work and we have been used as an example of good practice at numerous national conferences and events. We are currently undertaking an extensive evaluation of TakeOver09 and plan to offer a similar opportunity to young people next year.
- 2.4 York Theatre Royal main house productions in 2009 have included Twelfth Night and The Homecoming. Although very different in tone and content both were strong productions and well received by all who saw them. We did however suffer a slight fall in audience attendance, which effected income, but we took immediate steps to manage any potential shortfall (see paragraph 8 - Finance).

- 2.5 We have continued our strong relationship with resident Pilot Theatre, co-producing *The Fever Chart* in the Studio, and with Tutti Frutti, co-producing *If Only The Lonely* and *Visiting Grandad*, again in the Studio for younger audiences.
- 2.6 Our annual programme of work is supported by our Christmas production. Last year's pantomime, *DICK TURPIN*, was Berwick's 30th anniversary production and was a great artistic and commercial success. The V&A filmed a performance for their national archive. Bookings for *Humpty Dumpty*, this year's offering, are strong to date and we are looking forward to starting rehearsals.
- 2.7 Another important aspect of the Theatre's programming has been to stage the very best in dance, touring theatre, music and one-night events into the Main House, including *Desperate To Be Doris* (with its community choir) and regular visits from Hull Truck, ETT, Birmingham Royal Ballet and Phoenix Dance Theatre.
- 2.8 We continue to work very closely with the Amateur Societies in the City offering space in the Main House and Studio by developing good working relationships with as many non professional companies as possible.

3 LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

PARTNERSHIP IN EDUCATION & THEATRE - PET

- 3.1 As you will know, the PET project is a three way partnership between York Theatre Royal, City of York Council, Arts and Culture and individual schools.
- 3.2 York Theatre Royal employs two Education Associates who carry out the main body of the project work both in the school and at the theatre as appropriate. This year we have employed an Education Associate on a 10 month internship from Central School of Speech and Drama to further support this work.
- 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 schools to exploit the role of the Arts in the school improvement agenda, to provide quality and sustained professional development opportunities for teachers in the partnership schools (both specialists and non-specialists) in Arts delivery.
- 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 This year we are working with seven schools (one more than last year) -
- Park Grove primary
 - Knavesmire primary
 - St.Oswald's primary
 - Federation of Hob Moor primary and Hob Moor Oaks special school
 - Acomb primary
 - Carr juniors
 - Joseph Rowntree school (secondary)
- 3.7 CYC contributes £15,000 a year, and each school pays £3,000 to participate in the scheme. Recruitment begins in the Spring for the PET schools, and the choices are made in conjunction with Arts and Culture and YTR.
- 3.8 Our Youth Theatre continues to thrive and currently has a membership of 350 young people aged between 5 and 25 years who meet every week and are interested in and committed to making, seeing and performing pieces of theatre.
- 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.
- 3.11 The Youth Theatre rehearses in the Ballroom at the De Grey Rooms. There are opportunities for public performances in the Studio each term, and every two years in the Main House.
- 3.12 The Youth Theatre has a Young People's Forum which meets regularly and represents the views of the members - two of the Forum also sit on the Board of Trustees.
- 3.13 The Young Actors Company, a Youth Theatre group for over 18s continues to go from strength to strength. Their production of Equus, produced as part of the TakeOver09 Festival, was very well received.

4 PERFORMANCE RELATED

- 4.1 We continue to organise Theatre open days and participate in Residents First weekend, when our tours of the building are always very popular.
- 4.2 For all Main House productions we provide a sign language interpreted performance, an audio described performance and a captioned performance. We are currently a partner, with Harrogate Theatre and West Yorkshire Playhouse in the See A Voice Yorkshire hub. This has given us valuable training opportunities and funds to buy vital equipment, which the three theatres now share.

- 4.3 We also continued to engage with other organisations in the City and are currently part of the Four York cultural leadership programme with Pilot Theatre, York Museums Trust and City Libraries and Archives.

5 MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY

- 5.1 Daniel Bates left the organisation in September to take up the post of CEO at Sheffield Theatre. Liz Wilson, our new CEO, who is currently Executive Director of Oldham Coliseum joins us in December.
- 5.2 As an Investors in People, we have continued the professional development of our staff team by formulating an annual organisational wide training programme. We are currently working toward re-accreditation in September 2010.
- 5.3 Our Board of Trustees continue to strengthen and challenge the organisation.
- 5.4 We continue to develop links with the City of York and the Arts Industry and all the Management team are involved with networks, Board memberships and outside bodies including locally with York St John University, Women Without Walls, regionally with 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 As previously reported, much of York Theatre Royal's audience lives within the City of York itself:
43% of YTR's bookers live within 15 minutes' drive of the theatre
75% live within 45 minutes' drive
82% live within an hour of the theatre.
- 6.2 Last financial year we sold 171,000 tickets (against 163,000 in 2007/8), 27,000 of which were to people under 26. 47% of our tickets are sold at a concession/discounted rate.
- 6.3 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 SITE SPECIFIC WORK

- 7.1 YTR has been keen to develop its staff team's experience in working on site specific piece of work and to develop an audience for this work - this is

providing a popular stand of our work, and has led to the development of THE RAILWAY CHILDREN at the NRM.

7.2 The Railway Children key facts:

- In two years 2008 and 2009 there were 119 performances, which played to 84% capacity.
- In 2008 23,648 people saw the show. In 2009 that increased to 26,236 people
- The production had 5 star reviews from local and national press and generated £1.7 million worth of press coverage.
- 41% tickets were sold on line. The greatest percentage were family tickets.
- The production was accessible and enjoyed by all.

7.3 We are exploring the possibility of another site specific production in York in summer 2010.

8 FINANCE

8.1 In 2008/9, for the second year in a row we created a small surplus of funds of £21,192.

8.2 The surplus arose primarily from a fantastic result from our Trading Income, but particularly Café and Bar.

8.3 As previous reported we identified a short fall in income early on in the financial year 2009/10 and have took immediate steps to manage what could be a potential short fall for the year. We applied to the Arts Council Sustain fund and have received a grant of £110,000 to help us plug any gap resulting in any effect of economic downturn. We are will continue to monitor the situation carefully.

9 THE FUTURE

9.1 We look forward to the arrival of our new CEO.

9.2 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.

9.3 We are still exploring the possibility of taking over the lease of the ground floor of the De Grey Rooms when the VIC moves out in March 2009 although this is a further financial cost.

9.4 We continue to contribute to the idea of a CULTURAL QUARTER for the city.

10 SUMMARY

10.1 We remain a very open and accessible organisation, offering opportunities for audiences to see high quality work that will enthral, challenge and excite.

10.2 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.

10.3 We continue to develop links with the City of York and the Arts Industry and all the Management team are involved with networks, Board memberships and outside bodies.

10.4 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.

Vicky Biles
General Manager
November 2009