

York Theatre Royal: Chief Executive's Report – 2012/13

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 to June 2013 with final figures against the quantitative measures for the financial year 2012/13.

Full financial year figures

Total audience for April 2012 to March 2013 was 165,074. Total participant attendances were 24,243. The theatre presented 545 performances during the year of 113 different productions.

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 February 2013 to June 2013 York Theatre Royal has presented 250 performances in its Main Theatre and Studio of 56 different productions.

York Theatre Royal produced 6 new productions over this period including **ishandy, Angels & Insects, Moon & Genie** and **Bin Men**.

This season also included two TakeOver Festival weeks which were programmed and managed by a team of under 25 years olds. **The TakeOver Vision and Mission** is to programme top quality national touring work and showcase talent from young aspiring professionals, giving young people a chance to develop their skills and discover their talents by having a variety of opportunities to take part in the organisation and running of the festival.

The programme included visiting companies who presented theatre, performance poetry, comedy and children's theatre and a home produced studio production of **The Mercy Seat**. This work is funded by two national Foundations: Paul Hamlyn and Esmee Fairbairn who provide the theatre with the financial support to give young people the opportunity to manage a substantial programme of performance and participatory work and a budget of £50,000. The 3rd TakeOver week in this year will be in October 2013.

National visiting companies added to the theatre programme giving high quality variety to the performance programme in York. This included **The 39 Steps**, English Touring Theatre with **The Misanthrope** and Northern Broadsides with **Rutherford & Son**. The end of this period was marked by the opening of The Globe Theatre's productions of **Harry the Sixth**, **The Houses of York and Lancaster** and **The True Tragedy of the Duke of York**. These three plays that make up the first part of The Wars of the Roses will also be performed on the battlefield at Towton, the site of the bloodiest battle in the Wars of the Roses and the one that ensured the ascendance of the House of York and Richard III. York Theatre Royal will complete the story with a new production of **Richard III** in the Autumn 2013.

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

All of the York Theatre Royal productions in the main theatre have both sign interpreted and audio-described performances. In addition the theatre also offers captioned performances. All theatre productions that tour to the theatre for a week in the main theatre offer audio-described performances. 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 305 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 and Youth Forum sessions.

5-8 year olds

Two new plays, especially written for the theatre were performed by the youngest members of the youth theatre in February.

8-10 year olds

The 8-10's have spent this term working on building their performance skills and all took part in performing 4 new plays at the end of June. All the young people in this age range were moderated for their Arts Award Explore and all successfully passed. York Theatre Royal was awarded **Yorkshire and Humberside Arts Award Centre of Excellence**.

11-14 year olds and 14-16 year olds

York Theatre Royal commissioned two new plays as part of the theatre's Yorkshire season. They were set during The Baedeker raids carried out by the Luftwaffe that targeted York in April 1942. York was subjected to more than 84 tonnes of high explosives and incendiary bombs in a single night. In all, there were 92 fatalities, with hundreds seriously injured. **Where Shadow's Go at Night** was in two parts **Like A Thief** (11-14's) and **Chocolate Girls** (14-16's). Each story was a play in its own right but the action took place across two spaces: The Ballroom in the De Grey Rooms and the Studio Theatre.

16+

During this period we were asked to contribute to two important cultural events in the city. We worked alongside Riding Lights Youth Theatre to create a piece for the Holocaust Memorial Day civic event at York St John University on January 24th. The group devised a very beautiful and thought provoking piece of theatre inspired by the logs on the 1938-1940, York refugee minute book. The other event was the York Art Gallery Open Day. The youth theatre devised a series of contemporary performance pieces inspired by works of art that have previously been displayed at the gallery.

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 also goes from strength to strength, and we are delighted that Mud Pie Arts has been successful with their Arts Council funding bid, so will be able to continue our weekly **Storymakers**. We have two additional early years activities running in the building, **Singamajigs** and **Parent & Baby Bookclub**.

Schools

We are working with schools on many different projects.

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

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. We will work alongside these schools for the next two years, running training, which will culminate in a schools festival at York Theatre Royal in 2015.

We have recruited four schools to take part in our inaugural secondary schools festival which we have named *ReAct festival*. The festival will use the production of **Richard III** as its starting point and we will be working alongside the schools to help them create a piece inspired by the story for the festival on November 25th. The four schools are Manor Academy, Huntington, Joseph Rowntree and York High School.

Our Playhouse Festival of new theatre especially written for 8 -10 year olds to perform will be part of the programme at the theatre in July. We have worked with teachers at Park Grove, Archbishop of York Junior School, Sand Hutton, Clifton Green and Knavesmire Primary to develop the plays with nationally-renowned playwrights which we support teachers to direct in the classroom.

We have held a series of workshops with young people in Manor Academy and York High School with a theatre company who have been commissioned to write a new play for production at York Theatre Royal. The subject of the play is what is it like to be a teenager in York in 2013. The play has been commissioned by the young people who manage the TakeOver Festival and will be performed in The Studio Theatre in October and then it will tour to Newcastle and London. This project has been funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Higher Education partnership with schools

The Associate Director at York Theatre Royal continues to teach the York St John performance students on their Acting to Performance module. We have been successful with York St John University in securing an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award fund for a PhD studentship on Storytelling and Adolescence: narrative, empowerment and writing one's own place in the world.

This practice-based studentship will explore storytelling with and for adolescent participants. It sets out to develop and evaluate practice that utilises storytelling as an empowering medium through which young people can take control of actively constructing their sense of self and their place in the world and their community. This is a prestigious award and the first time YSJ have been successful in a bid, the PhD student will start in October and be resident at YTR. This will form a new area of work with York schools and will be a programme of work that will attract national attention and profile.

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 six months 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.

Other work with older adults includes a project with Out of Character Theatre Company for adults who access mental health services. We have just started work on directing a piece of theatre which will perform at York St John in November.

We have also set up a new programme of adult education classes which will run here as part of the CYC's Inspire programme.

In addition, we have been working with Creative Personalities, who are a visual art group, for people diagnosed with Personality Disorders. The group was based at York Art Gallery, but we have been housing them since the closure of the Art Gallery. Through their residency with YTR and with support from our Creative Engagement team they have made a multi-disciplinary installation for the York St John Arts Festival, CREATE13.

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 January and June included 23 different productions.

This included productions from local voluntary arts group, Settlement Players, and a series of co-productions with York-based professional arts organisations, including Pilot Theatre, TongueTied and The Flanagan Collective.

We produced two children's theatre productions with new artistic partners, we had 3 storytelling shows including **Baba Yaga** and a week of young and emerging theatre companies during the TakeOver Festival in March.

York Theatre Royal produced work during this period including a new adaptation of A.S Byatt's **Angels & Insects**, Neil LaBute's **The Mercy**

Seat and a Young Actors Company production of the Yorkshire playwright, Tom Wells, performed by an ensemble of young people from the city. The Young Actors Company is a good breeding ground for young talent in the city.

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.

Many of the placements across this period have been in artistic roles and attached to the producing work of the theatre. They include Assistant Directing roles on **ishandy**, **Angels & Insects**, **The Mercy Seat**, **Morgana Le Fey** and **The Legend of King Arthur**. Also assistant stage management roles on **ishandy** and **The Legend of King Arthur**.

We have offered a new opportunity to young people to work within the Youth Theatre alongside our practitioners, assistants and volunteer team. We have also developed our relationship with York High School through offering a placement to one of their students, outside of the usual NYBEP (North Yorkshire Business Education Partnership) arrangements. The feedback from this student was excellent. He commented “It was engaging and interactive and I loved getting involved in everything... The best thing about this experience is what everyone has made me realise, be yourself and anything is possible”.

We have recruited lots of new young volunteers in the Production and Welcome teams to deliver the whole Summer show experience.

We continue to offer the normal carousel placements.

Finally the TakeOver initiative continues to offer extended placement and volunteer opportunities for young people from the ages of 13 to 25. Some of the young people involved will give over 300 hours to the project over the year and some will be on a placement for only a week. The target in the year is to work with at least 100 young people in roles that are all supported by members of staff at the theatre and with each role working within a written job description.

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

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, ajtc theatre company, Half Moon Theatre, The Flanagan Collective, Telling Tales Theatre Company, The Globe, Pilot Theatre, Slung Low, TongueTied, Mud Pie Arts, The Eboracum Quartet and Ensemble Theatre Company.

University of York and York St John University have both used the Rooms for rehearsal and project-based work and we have very recently agreed with York College that A Level Performing Arts students will be based in the De Grey complex from the Autumn term.

The De Grey Complex continues to host events and functions and houses 4 creative organisations alongside York Theatre Royal.

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

York Theatre Royal has been successful with a bid for £2.8 million with the Arts Council capital fund to support a £4 million re-furbishment project. The theatre has been awarded an initial £200,000 from the Fund to support the procurement of an Architectural Design team and progress the design to RIBA stage D and planning permission. It will also support the theatre on building the business plan for a re-furbished theatre. It is likely that the theatre will submit Full Designs and technical drawings as well as a credible Fundraising Strategy and Business Plan in March 2014 to draw down the remaining funding. The theatre has set itself a fundraising target of £1 million to match these funds.

Work to improve the Theatre Royal café patio should begin in mid-July through a partnership with Bishop Burton College. This has been funded from a number of sources including The Friends of York Theatre Royal, York Civic Trust and The Noel Terry Charitable Trust.

Liz Wilson Chief Executive
York Theatre Royal 1 July 2013