

Grove Theatre - Customer Forum Minutes
Thursday 09th January 2020



SLL Staff Present;

Rhea Yeung – Theatre Manager
Ellie Garrett – Head of Operations
Helen Rudderham – Theatre Administrator
Fiona Smout – Sales & Marketing Manager (Mat Cover)
Samantha Garside – Sales & Marketing Manager
Alicia Muscella – Sales & Marketing Assistant

(NB staff comments noted by initials)

RY – Apologies for cancelling last customer forum, flooding incident explained.

Really busy time since last July, lots of work in education and outreach programmes. Whistle down the wind saw 60 young people, 10 bursary places create an amazing performance in all areas

Tech/cast/orchestra. Whistle quite a challenging score, children dealt with it really well. Very impressed. Lovely success stories – Jesus was Josh who started with us in 2012, playing ensemble parts and few lead roles - Came back and progressed massively. More success stories – Alicia and Helen – lovely to shout about the team.

Arts mark partner now, link up with schools and help with education journey and arts. Working with Royal Opera House Bridge. Partnership programme, twinned with 3 local schools so will take outreach offer to them – be our critical friends so they can feedback what is relevant, help with terminology so can take into other schools.

Stepping stones project – having some funding provided. RY can attend some young people festivals over next 2 years to see all work and bring in house, try to utilise alternative spaces.

Joining up with full house theatre – first production based on children's book. Part of development and characterisation work, try to use puppetry. Will be launched in 2021 and is a completely new venture for us, great learning curve – great for company to go from small scale to mid-scale.

EG – *Film update*: Autumn season big success was Downton Abbey. Others were Blinded by the Light, Judy, Mrs Lowry and Son – very popular.

January – March season – Frozen 2, Last Christmas, Le Mans 66, Cats – mixture of favourites.

Finalising April – July season – Jojo Rabbit, A Beautiful day in Neighbourhood (looking to get rescheduled as release was delayed), James bond.

Live screenings: autumn – One man, Two Guvnors and Fleabag both NT productions, went down very well. Nice to see different genres at forefront.

Jan – Mar season - popular choice is Andre Rieu 70th birthday, Sleeping Beauty ballet from ROH and 42nd street, very lucky to have this screening and is proving really popular.

Other titles – TBC – definitely another musical we are having is Kinky Boots – really excited, just finalising date.

As into 2020, looking to do more relaxed screenings as very passionate about it and want to make sure accessible to everyone – working with CBC on this.

Customer commented that Present Laughter earlier this week had good turn out and was a super show.

Any suggestions please let us know – box office can pass on suggestions or email us and we can look into anything we may miss. Towards the end of the year going to be some really good film titles coming out so they should be in our January season next year.

RY – staffing wise couple of new duty managers - Kirsten and Gabby, who are getting trained up and hitting ground running.

Tricky October but fantastic November and amazing December.

Pantomime (Peter Pan) was record breaking – 32,705 tickets – increased by 5K tickets. 93% occupancy.

Customer commented on the visual effects (projection etc.). Came to St Albans and here, script very similar as same company but visual effects here far in excess of St Albans. First time here for a few years but thoroughly enjoyed it. RY - very technical show but does have the wow factor. Very lucky that the comedy

also balanced well. *Customer commented that there were no credits for the female roles and cannot find the information anywhere unless buy a programme.* RY can look into it but possible producers don't like to do this as encourages customers to purchase the programme.

Customer commented would like to see some general items in brochure/displayed – looking to see finish times. RY - Sadly too far in advance for brochure and can only give approx. running times, but can look at getting included on website. Can't for shows as we find on the day but panto, films etc. can.

Customer asked re CBC car park issue – EG spoke to CBC on phone, alerted to the problem. Customer stated only one machine working all the time – RY encouraged customer to keep flagging with them so they are aware it is an issue. App on phone suggested but customer stated often come to afternoon film with elderly customers who won't have access to an app. *Customer commented how had to delay start times from people coming in so affecting theatre too.*

Charity collections over pantomime, raised over £11K for NICU ward. Final figure not in yet but roughly. Quite a few local young people took part in the pantomime, lots from Grove Academy so was wonderful to see.

Coming up – Grove Theatre Orchestra, Gala event run by our pantomime MD who is putting scores together etc. on in May 2020. Jimmy Carr, Rhod Gilbert, Milkshake Live, Swan Lake, Peppa Pig, Buddy Holly, Waiting for Godot, and finally Cinderella Pantomime next year.

We have introduced recently online donations, customers have the chance to donate and put towards education programmes, bits and pieces around the building. Will keep updated on what these funds are used for in customer forums.

Comments:

Customer commented on the hearing loop – nightmare still, couldn't hear CATS, doesn't work for films, suggested to set up a chat with techy – can come and test it. Find out if works on certain rows. Lost lots of dialogue as can't hear. Box office/FOH staff don't know how it works, thinks it has only worked once in all the years. RY - Need to improve so happy to set that up. Panto we did have additional cabling for group that came in and didn't have problems so obviously something we can do, will ensure to take staff through training so everyone can know how it works.

Customer asked for running times if can be put on website. RY - Can ask on the day but anything longer than one evening we can put it on.

Customer enquired as to how Encore screenings are booked/chosen – Does the Grove pick that or is that issued by company and dates chosen? EG - They give us live date screening but can't always show it then, don't give us much notice. We then chose an alternate date as have to show it within a certain period. RY Programmes 18 months ahead so EG has to fit in with that. ROH give whole season in one go so have more time to programme them in. aim is to do as live screening but sometimes just not possible so have to fit in where can. For encore have to wait for DCP once filming has happened and then only have window of dates to screen it between. Sometimes too late to book in a second date if sold well.

Customer asked how the screenings work out financially. Customer commented one of the most disappointing was Manon but hardly anyone in. RY – try to programme surrounded by strong commercial product to balance out. ROH/NT tend to lead marketing campaign as they want consistency in brand so can be difficult. FS - Started including LS in Friday film newsletter – unfortunately don't have the space for the posters that are sent over as they are too big for our frames. EG - Sometimes can't put all the info in the advert as not all space for full description.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 7th April 2020 at 10am