



## Customer Forum Minutes

**Thursday 16 January 2014 – 10.30am**

### Leisure Connection Staff Present

**Jo Ditch** – General Manager

**Natasha Ingall** – Deputy General Manager

**Adrian Gilmartin** – Sales and Marketing Manager

**Becca Henry** – Sales and Marketing Assistant

### JD Recap

- We are currently interviewing for three positions within our team: Theatre Administrator, Head of Front of House and Assistant Head of Front of House.
- Since the last customer forum in October 2013 we have had a variety of products including drama with Blackeyed Theatre's Dracula and our pantomime, Dick Whittington. We have also had 32 film screenings. The current film season is achieving a strong attendance, with one screening of Philomena playing to full capacity.
- We are focusing on building our drama audience. In the last couple of years we have changed the way we book drama, reducing week-long productions and concentrating on building attendance to one night and weekend productions. This is allowing us to secure high quality product and build a reputation for this at the Grove Theatre.
- Dick Whittington was very successful. It holds the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest grossing Box Office record for Grove Theatre pantomimes after our 2008 production of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. It has made the decision taken two years ago to change production companies worthwhile. The live band was extremely popular, with lots of positive feedback regarding this and the production as a whole was well received. With such a large number of people seeing large productions, we inevitably receive a certain number of complaints regarding one thing or another. However, out of 20,000 audience members for Dick Whittington we only received 2 complaints regarding the pantomime, both about the content of the production being unsuitable for children. The producer is passionate about engaging our audience and personally responded to these.
- We are booking into 2015 now. There are quite a number of products already booked for next year. This year is also looking busy with strong seasons ahead. The diary will be being passed to marketing soon to work on our summer 2014 season literature to be launched in March.
- Our education programme is going from strength to strength. Our performing arts school, Grove Academy is running at 99% capacity and in the last half term, we opened a second Grove Mini Academy class due to demand.
- This year sees our annual Summer Musical Project being slightly adapted. The project will run for two and a half weeks over the summer and will include a one week course for 7-14 year olds culminating in a musical production, as well as a two and half weeks intensive course for 15-21 year olds, ending in a full-scale production of Stephen Sondheim's Into The Woods.

## **Customer Comments**

### **Are there any large productions booked in for 2014?**

Jo Ditch is continually looking for large scale touring productions. We have been approached by a few production companies, however the cost to bring the tour to the Grove Theatre has been unfeasible. Avenues are constantly being explored including, with the success of Magic Beans pantomime production this Christmas, focusing on these as our large scale production. Unfortunately, if our pantomimes are successful, but this profit is paid out on a guarantee to a production company for a large scale production, then large scale productions are unfeasible at this time. Our priority at all times has to be the bottom line and keeping the Grove Theatre open for the community.

### **Will there be more matinees in the coming year?**

It is an aim of the programming to build up mid-week and weekend matinees again. This current season sees the return of a few products of this nature, including wartime nostalgia, Bless 'Em All and Victorian Music Hall revival show, Magnificent Music Hall.

Forum closed: 11.20am

*Date and time of next meeting*

***Wednesday 23 April – 6pm***