

The City Arts Trust Limited

1. Background

Since its inauguration in 1962 the City of London Festival has brought the City to life with a world-class artistic programme of events, with many being free to the public. The festival has traditionally had a strong classical music core and recent years have seen this expand considerably to include more diverse musical styles, dance, theatre, circus, cabaret and comedy as the Festival seeks to represent the changing demographic of City workers.

The Festival has developed a reputation for its international collaborations, providing an opportunity for countries with a strong commercial connection to the City such as South Korea, Japan, the Nordic countries and in 2015, Singapore to showcase their cultural assets in The City creating a strong meeting point between commercial, diplomatic and cultural interests.

The Festival's main strength and inspiration is the City itself. The ambition is to create a festival with a unique personality that could only happen in the City of London. This may revolve around the extraordinary buildings such as the Livery Halls, Churches or more recent and unusual spaces such as using the Skygarden or the Walkie Talkie for jazz. The Festival looks to create events that respond to the history and characteristics of the City such as our popular Justice, Money, Power debates series or the Wren Choral Marathon that took 17 choral concerts to 17 different Wren churches in a single day. The Festival has been highly effective in generating a high level of national and international media coverage for activities creating some much needed positive news coverage for the City.

The Festival is very much built on a partnership model working with an extremely diverse range of organisations. We work closely with cultural institutions in the City such as the Barbican, the LSO and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the Festival contributes approximately £100,000 to them in fees and commissions each year. We have also developed strong relationships with the owners of spaces such as Devonshire Square, Paternoster Square, New Street Square and Jubilee Park in Canary Wharf to bring an extensive programme of free lunchtime and early evening events to a large and appreciative audience of City workers.

Over its 52 year history the Festival has made a significant cultural impact. It has worked with hundreds of distinguished performers and is well recognised for the invaluable work undertaken in the wider community through our learning and participation programme – especially with primary and secondary schools in the City and the neighbouring boroughs.

2. Facts and figures

The 2014 Festival

- 266 events in 57 venues over 26 days
- 133 free events across the City and beyond to Canary Wharf, Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest
- Record ticket sales and a total audience that exceeded 600,000
- Corporate fundraising, including sponsorship and memberships, raising £323,600 in total
- Significant uplift in media support and influential media engagement, including strong coverage in The Guardian, Time Out, Evening Standard, two features

on the Today programme plus extensive coverage of 'Seoul in the City' in the Korean media

The 2015 Festival

The 2015 Festival is underway as this report is being prepared but so far we can report

- A record number of sold out events, there were 20 in 2014 and there are already 24 in 2015 including the LSO at St Paul's (2,067 seats)
- Strong media coverage in The Times, Guardian, City AM, Time-Out, Radio 4, BBC World Service and the Evening Standard
- £89,000 in sponsorship and grants from businesses and agencies in Singapore towards 'Singapore Celebrates'
- 115 free events including new venues such as the Skygarden and Royal Exchange

The Economic, Social and Cultural Impact of the City Arts and Culture Cluster research showed that:

'The Festival has a positive impact on the way the City is perceived. Festival events (in particular the free outdoor events) give people an occasion to experience the Square Mile in a very different way (lively and animated) from what they know it to be like. The audience research shows that the Festival is highly valued for the vibrancy it brings to the area throughout its duration: **91%** of those surveyed agree or strongly agree that the Festival provides enrichment to the London area due to the buzz it creates, while **85%** agree or strongly agree that having the Festival is part of what makes the City of London area special. It also demonstrates that the Festival helps to improve perceptions of the area among those audiences who do not live and work locally. **84%** of those who neither live nor work in the City reported that the Festival improved their perception of the City. Moreover, the Festival experience encourages people to come back: **84%** of those who neither live nor work in the City also said that the Festival has made them more likely to return to the City in the future.'

Sponsorship and financial support

Like many arts organisations, the City of London Festival has to find new and additional sources of income to compensate for the decline in public sector support over recent years. Following a cut from £330,000 in 2011, the City of London Corporation core grant has remained steady at £297,000. Other sources of public funding have dropped during that period from £281,000 to £169,000. Box office and fundraising have increased from £540,000 to £606,000 in 2014 but further progress is required as we look to fill the gap in public sector support.

Sustained support from the City of London Corporation has undoubtedly enabled the Festival to leverage considerable additional funding from corporate sponsors, foundations and individual philanthropy.

While the 2014 Festival enjoyed record audiences and a considerably enhanced profile, it did result in a deficit of £168,521 which caused the Festival some cash flow difficulties over the winter period. A restructure, cost cutting and a more focussed programme has seen the Festival progress towards breaking even in 2015 and delivering surpluses in subsequent years to restore financial reserves.

The Bowler Hat

The City of London Festival, with the support of the City of London Corporation, purchased its own 'pop-up' venue for the 2014 Festival, the 200 seat theatre in the shape of a large Bowler Hat. The venue, situated in Paternoster Square, hosted 93 performances, instantly becoming a popular new feature of the Festival and attracting considerable media attention.

After protracted negotiations with the site owners, the Bowler Hat was scheduled to return to Paternoster Square for the 2015 Festival and a programme prepared. Unfortunately we were faced with two costs that were considerably higher than initial estimates. This was for the changes required to make the Bowler Hat run from mains power (we were not permitted to use generators as we had done in 2014) and also for a bespoke internal truss to improve the structural integrity of the venue. These two exceptional costs amounted to approximately £50,000 and with insufficient time to raise the additional funds it was decided by the Board on May 11th that the Bowler Hat would need to be postponed for the 2015 Festival. Due to the kind support of Bishopsgate Institute and Grange Hotels we were still able to promote quite a few shows earmarked for the Bowler Hat. We will be bringing the Bowler Hat back in 2016 and are actively negotiating a new location.

3. 2016 – funding proposal and strategy

The Trust is requesting support from the City of London Corporation in the form of a grant for the 2016 Festival

In a presentation to the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee in September 2013 Paul outlined his vision for the Festival which included the following aspirations:

- To develop a programme with a strong sense of place that reflects the extraordinary nature of the City
- To see the Festival grow in scale over the next few years
- To develop a much stronger physical presence in the City
- To broaden the programme increasing its appeal to City workers and visitors
- To increase opportunities for the Festival to facilitate international exchange and cultural diplomacy

A great deal of progress has been made towards this vision. Events reflecting a strong sense of place such as the Wren Choral Marathon, our Justice, Money, Power debate series and our use of unique venues are proving popular with audiences. While the loss of the Bowler Hat means the 2015 Festival is smaller in scale than 2014, it is still larger than 2013. Through the Bowler Hat and working in new and high profile spaces, the Festival has undoubtedly developed a stronger physical presence in the City. With a record number of sold out performances in 2015, the broader programme certainly seems to be capturing the imagination of City workers and visitors. The collaborations with Seoul in 2014 and Singapore in 2015 have proved popular with audiences, the diplomatic and the business communities.

While the Festival continues to make progress in developing its income base, the support of the City of London Corporation remains vital to maintain a festival of sufficient scale and significance to ensure the Festival remains attractive to new sponsors and audiences. It helps us meet the challenge of maintaining quality in an increasingly expensive environment for the Festival. Venue and technical costs for the Festival have risen steeply in recent years. To hire and equip a livery hall for an average concert costs between £3,000 and £6,000 per occasion before any artists

fees are paid. Church based events are less expensive but can still cost in excess of £2,000 to hire and equip. Major venues in the City can cost up to £20,000 per occasion to hire.

In addition to our core grant, our bid also covers project funding for the Festival, its free outdoor programme of activities and the Free Winter Concerts (organised in partnership with the City Music Society and the City of London Sinfonia).

For 2016, we are requesting support to remain at the previously agreed levels namely:

- A core grant of **£274,725**
- A Free Events grant of **£81,100**
- Total: **£355,825**

Continued support will aid our efforts to maintain a programme likely to attract greater commitment from third parties, especially corporate supporters. It will also help the Festival compete in an increasingly competitive festival environment in London. There has been significant growth throughout the capital in both commercial and public sector driven events in recent years and the Festival needs to work hard in order to maintain the profile and status of the City as a major event location.

Stable funding will support the Festival during what is likely to be a difficult period for cultural organisations. While the medium to long-term prospects for corporate support are improving for the Festival, we have secured six new corporate partners this year, raising sponsorship in the current climate is still highly challenging. The Trust has been able to demonstrate a significant return on investment, with every £1 of support from the Corporation leveraging a further £3 of income.

4. Financial sustainability

The past few years for the Festival have been particularly challenging as the organisation seeks to replace declining public sector support with commercial revenues. The Festival is a remarkably adaptable organisation with low core costs compared to building based organisations and the ability, as evidenced by the Bowler Hat cancellation, to move swiftly when the need arises. The Festival has also established a Finance and Risk Committee to monitor financial performance meeting between board meetings.

The Festival has maintained and even extended its investment in both marketing and the fundraising team as this represents our best opportunity of developing our income base over the coming years. The Festival is also engaging in even more creative partnerships with other arts organisations, which may entail a sharing of financial risk or indeed the other party bearing the full cost of a promotion, allowing the Festival to present a broader programmes without being exposed to their full costs.

5. Addressing the City's strategic priorities

The Trust aims fully and strongly to reflect the strategic direction of the CLC. It is confident that its aims and achievements are totally in step with the recommended priorities of both The City Together and the Corporation's current and developing Cultural Strategy.

6. City Partnerships

The Trust works in close partnership with a wide range of City based institutions and organisations, including: The Guildhall School of Music & Drama, the London Symphony Orchestra, The Barbican, Barbican Box Office, Gresham College, Bishopsgate Institute, Voces8, Bank of England, City Music Foundation and Mansion House. A strong commitment to partnership working is integral to our entire organisation and we are actively seeking further partnership opportunities within the Square Mile and beyond. We have developed a number of innovative projects involving office choirs teaming them up with schools for a project called Musical Meeting Place and turning them into a chorus for a concert performance of the musical 'How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying'. Office choirs represent a unique way for the Festival to engage with city workers and we will be seeking more opportunities to create and develop the skills of office workers in future years.

7. 2016 Festival

Plans for the 2016 festival will develop swiftly following the conclusion of the 2015 Festival but the following elements are currently under consideration.

- The return of the Bowler Hat with a broad programme of comedy, cabaret, music and circus
- A repeat of the highly successful Wren Choral Marathon
- A further major choral concert with the London Symphony Orchestra in St Paul's
- Shakespeare in the City to mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death
- A further cultural diplomacy initiative featuring another country with strong commercial ties to the City
- A major project and concert for office choirs including the creation of several new ones
- A celebration of City Atriums
- A Nordic big band summit