

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
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<b>Subject:</b> Theatre: Annual Presentation	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Arts <b>Report Author:</b> Toni Racklin, Barbican Centre	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Summary</b>	
<p>This report provides an overview of the Theatre department's strategy and planning, in the context of the Barbican's vision and mission. It examines current developments across the UK theatre landscape and the challenges and opportunities that are facing our own work. The report is divided into the following sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Background - UK theatre landscape</li> <li>2. Current position - Strategy and internal context</li> <li>3. Corporate and Strategic Implications - how our mission statement reflects our activity across 15/16</li> <li>4. Implications - risks in the sector</li> <li>5. Conclusion</li> <li>6. Questions</li> </ol> <p><b>Recommendation</b> Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the report</li> </ul>	

## Main Report

### 1. **Background**

Looking at our national theatre landscape, the president of UK Theatre reports that:

*“The good news from the report is that theatres throughout the UK continue to thrive despite the challenging financial climate. As the UK Theatre Awards demonstrated, regional theatres continue to produce some of the country’s most exciting theatre despite unprecedented cuts to national and local funding. But if we are to maintain our position as world leader in the performing arts we must continue to invest in the companies producing innovative drama, dance and opera. Theatre plays a more crucial role in our communities than ever before and the small investment from national and local government is repaid many times over by the economic, cultural, social and educational benefits it returns.”*

The Barbican's vision of 'arts without boundaries' and our mission to be a 'world-class centre for arts and learning' are the drivers for all our endeavours. Across the departments we are working together to fulfil the new Barbican Organisational Review and 5 year Strategic Plan and to ensure our theatre

programming contributes to the plan's objectives and to actively strike a balance between our own core promotions and commercial rentals. This report considers how we have delivered against these objectives throughout 15/16 and how they will extend for our future plans.

## 2. Current Position

Since last year's Board report, funding for the arts has become even more challenging not only for London and the regions but also across Europe and beyond and correspondingly terrorism and displacement in all parts of the world impact and overlap with artistic endeavour in ways we cannot ignore.

Dominic Cavendish, Daily Telegraph, on Henry V:

*"In some strange, sad, serendipitous way the Bard speaks to our lives now. Henry V kept acquiring new resonances. In September, it heralded the 600th anniversary of Agincourt. By November, the Paris attacks had given the play's Anglo-French relations a new poignancy. By December, with warplanes heading off to Syria, the Act I deliberations over the rightness of military action sharpened its edges again."*

- a) 15/16 has been both a successful and unusual year due to the balance of rentals over our own promotions, and dominated by one production in particular.

On 18 December, the Evening Standard reported: *"Benedict Cumberbatch has led the Barbican to a record-breaking year thanks to his star turn in Hamlet. The venue took £37.7 million in the past 12 months, beating the £37.4 million taken in 2012/13 when there was an Olympics tourism boost. The arts centre saw a record 1.2 million visitors - up by 200,000 on last year."*

Sonia Friedman Productions' Hamlet, starring Benedict Cumberbatch, was one of the fastest-selling shows in British theatre history. It played to 128,000 people over its run. The production was a truly international phenomenon, with tickets booked from 74 different countries and large numbers of audience members travelling from overseas including Canada, France, Germany, Japan and the US.

- b) Also a contributor to this successful year was the Barbican's own co-production of Antigone, starring Juliette Binoche and directed by Ivo van Hove. It played to sold-out audiences at the Barbican and was seen in Luxembourg, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Edinburgh, New York, Washington DC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina and Ann Arbor, Michigan in the US, Paris and Recklinghausen playing to a total audience of 98,702. It was the Barbican's largest ever international theatre tour. The production was also filmed by BBC Arts and broadcast on BBC Four.
- c) There were two other one off rental seasons in this year:
- ENO came with the premiere of a new opera, *Between Worlds*, composed by Tansy Davies and directed by Deborah Warner. The short season played to an audience of 7,000. Regent's Park Open Air Theatre revived their award-winning *To Kill A Mocking Bird* and played for five weeks to full houses, aided by it being the same year in which Harper Lee's long lost sequel was published.

The production played in the Barbican Theatre for four and a half weeks, received excellent notices and brought a total audience of 39,000 into the building.

- d) To round off this bumper year, and in the third calendar year of our new relationship, the RSC presented their highly acclaimed Great Cycle of Kings - Richard II, Henry IV pts 1 & 2 and Henry V.
- e) Early research indicates that Hamlet first time bookers, from August 2014 when the production first went on sale, have also gone on to buy tickets for the following top 7 events: To Kill A Mockingbird, Richard II, Henry V, Antigone, Magnificent Obsessions (Gallery), Waiting for Godot, Constructing Worlds (Gallery).

This audience will be monitored through further research and we will examine how we can continue to build them into a returning Barbican audience taking into account their interest in a variety of art forms.

- f) As a consequence of this year's programme Barbican membership, Barbican Young Membership, and first time audiences have grown exponentially and we are working hard to capitalise on this new core growth. Our spaces have become much sought after and submissions from artists across art forms have increased. The projects we attract benefit from the Barbican being the home of different art forms under one roof, that can provide a rich context for ambitious new work and a well cared-for, loyal core audience.
- g) Theatre is fully integrated into the life of the centre and intersects on a daily basis with colleagues in development, marketing, media relations, customer experience, creative learning and the arts teams.
- h) The Theatre department benefits from a stable, passionate and committed staff team. We try to integrate developmental opportunities within our structure; our technical team took Antigone on tour; one of our apprentices has been appointed flyman; we have received enthusiastic short term placements covered in full by City University and the admin team also offer a six monthly placement plus two annual technical apprenticeships.
- i) Box office figures were positive for the commercial rental producers whilst attendance for our own promotions in 15/16 was 60,714 seats sold with net sales of £1.4m.

### **3. Corporate & Strategic Implications**

**The 2015/16 programme is reflected in the Barbican's Theatre messaging in the following ways and actively responds to the 5 Strategic goals.**

1. *We present an ambitious, international programme that crosses art forms, with outstanding artists and performers. We excel at projects that hover on the edge of classification. We showcase international theatre, dance and*

*performance by leading companies, auteurs and emerging artists that challenge the idea of what theatre can be.*

- The Ninagawa 80th Anniversary season brought Hamlet and Kafka on the Shore to our stages in a fitting tribute to the great director.
- Our International Beckett Season included work from the celebrated Sydney Theatre Company, iconic theatremaker Robert Wilson from the USA and four important small scale companies from Ireland.
- A triple bill of contemporary dance from India as part of Dance Umbrella.
- A double bill of political theatre from Mexico as part of Casa Latin American Festival.
- There were cutting edge American performance artists as part of SPILL Festival.
- Comedy and a strong message on disability rights from Touretteshero.
- 5 breathtaking works by leading circus and visual artists as part of the London International Mime Festival from Australia, France and Germany.
- We have just completed a sold out season of the eagerly anticipated The Encounter from Complicite.
- And reversing the journey of bringing world class theatre to our doorstep, we took our own production of Antigone, starring Juliette Binoche with a British and Irish cast, directed by Ivo van Hove on an extensive European and US tour from April to October.

This work reflects our strategic goals of Connecting Arts and Learning (empowering artists, participants and audiences to be ambitious and creative) combined with Customer Experience (creating relevant and memorable experiences) and our role in the Cultural Hub (being a lead partner in establishing the City of London's cultural hub at the heart of the world's creative capital).

2. *We invest in the artists of today and tomorrow through the commissioning of new work showcasing emerging talent and collaborating with our Artistic Associates - Boy Blue Entertainment, Cheek by Jowl, Michael Clark Company and Deborah Warner.*

- We support the Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust R&D showcase and the prize winner's Pit season.
- We offer sharings of new work in development as bespoke events for Barbican Members. To date we will have presented behind the scenes access to a new interpretation of Macbeth, a working rehearsal from Ballet Black, a contemporary opera about Ruth Ellis, choreography combined with spoken word from Julie Cunningham, and a hip hop musical from Ayinde Productions.
- We work closely with Creative Learning on Open Labs and are looking at new ways to support the development of the emerging artists who come through this innovative programme.
- Our commissioning investment results in exciting, large-scale work that tours the world by artists including Complicite, Toneelgroep Amsterdam, Odeon-Paris and Robert Lepage.

- Our ongoing commissioning commitment offers opportunities for growth to each of our Artistic Associates: Last year, Deborah Warner directed the highly acclaimed opera *Between Worlds* produced by ENO and created for our main stage. We have co-commissioned a double bill from Michael Clark Company that will be presented with us in autumn 2016; a triple bill of new choreography from Boy Blue Entertainment that will be shown in January 2017 and *A Winter's Tale* by Cheek by Jowl that will reach Silk Street Theatre in April 2017.

This work reflects our strategic goals of Connecting Arts and Learning combined with Customer Experience and the work on the Cultural Hub.

3. *Through our activities we hope to inspire more people to discover and love the arts. We Programme free off-site events in east London, offer reduced price tickets to 16-26 year-olds for our shows through Young Barbican, present regular post-show talks with Directors, commission new work especially for children and create online content for our special themed seasons.*

- All of the above initiatives have been consolidated this year including reviving our original commission of *Told by an Idiot's Get Happy*, a joyful production for everyone over 4 years-old which included some very successful relaxed performances designed for children with autism and other learning difficulties.
- Our Shakespeare Weekender, taking place on 5th & 6th March, is a further example of Creative Learning and Theatre working very closely and creatively together. This weekend will add to our year long Shakespeare400 season and will provide two days of interactive events, puzzles, workshops, performances and food that will provide a good introduction to the work of the great man suitable for all ages. The weekend will feature work by leading literary figures Howard Jacobson and James Runcie, musical and dance highlights from Harvey Brough, Clara Sanabras, Britten Sinfonia and MoveMe and theatre companies *Told By An Idiot*, *Forced Entertainment*, *Hydrocracker* and the RSC.
- Digital and streaming work have come to the fore in the past year and Complicite's *The Encounter* has been successful on the BBC Arts Council's Space platform and shortlisted on that and on the British Council's Shakespeare digital platform are *The Forbidden Zone*, *Kings of War* and *The Shadow King*.
- The BBC captured *Antigone* for broadcast twice on BBC4 and a season on iplayer.
- The South Bank Show will film *Ballet Black* during their debut season here.
- We participated in our first NT Live with the filming of *Hamlet* which was seen on the night in over 2000 cinemas in more than 50 countries including all 3 at the Barbican.

This reflects the work we are doing on our strategic goal of Audience development (growing and developing deeper relationships with our audiences and communities reflecting London's diversity).

- 4. We have built a structure of annual programming that now includes part rental and shared risks, part own subsidy and support from trusts and foundations, in order to deliver a carefully curated ecology of distinctive theatre and gives a diverse range of artists a platform to offer insight into a range of different viewpoints and perspectives.*

As mentioned, this was a unique and strong year as mentioned for collaborative rentals which featured ENO's *Between Worlds*, *To Kill A Mockingbird* from the Open Air Theatre in Regent's Park; the phenomenon of *Hamlet* starring Benedict Cumberbatch produced by Sonia Friedman Productions and finally the *Great Cycle of Kings* from the RSC in our third year working together.

The Daily Telegraph, Jane Shilling described the impact of the RSC's *King and Country: Shakespeare's Great Cycle of Kings* in her 4\* review;

*"Their staging as a single event at the Barbican, to mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, in fact proves a remarkable experiment in theatrical alchemy."*

In feedback from our recent season the RSC praised our box office procedures, marketing and media relations collaboration and look forward to strengthening their strategic education work with our Creative Learning team across schools in east London. We have together registered where we need to improve processes and look forward to taking this forward into the strong mix of productions taking place here throughout 2016.

The work of this objective reflects our strategic goal of Mixed Income Generation (creating sustainable growth through innovation).

- 5. Integrated into the artistic programme, an inspiring Creative Learning programme engages young people and families and supports the development of emerging artists in the Barbican Theatre, the Pit and through our Beyond Barbican off-site initiatives*

The latter included our debut in the town square of Barking and Dagenham last summer, followed by our second year of participating in the Walthamstow Garden Party. Weekend Labs were much appreciated by students and young professionals including one with *Hamlet* director Lyndsey Turner. We are starting connections with the Young Arts Academy. For schools, Theatre working very closely with Creative Learning were able to draw on the range of exciting, international theatre makers we have strong relationships with to create the ground breaking *Shakespeare Barbican Box*: Benedict Cumberbatch, Yukio Ninagawa, Netia Jones, Thomas Ostermeier, Gregory Doran, Lyndsey Turner, Robert Wilson and 6 others all contributed personal objects that for them represented the genius of Shakespeare.

The work carried out collaboratively between Theatre and Creative Learning departments highlights our imperatives of Connecting Arts and Learning & Audience Development.

#### 4. Implications

- a) Within the challenges of a new funding model, we work very hard to ensure our programme is ambitious and adventurous and that we are continuing to help nurture future talent through our endeavours and provide the best resources and context for all the work we present on the large scale.
- b) New artistic directors in key **peer institutions**, NT, the Globe and the Old Vic; the east London development of Olympicopolis which will incorporate several arts institutions that will draw on many of the artists we already work with; the London Theatre Company, led by Sir Nicholas Hytner and Nick Starr, which will open near Tower Bridge in 2018, providing a brand new destination for theatre goers; other London peers, the Almeida, Young Vic, Royal Court, and Kenneth Branagh's Company in the West End who like us, continue to surprise and excite audiences with their contemporary interpretations of the classics, all require us to continually assess our position and respect each other's place in the ecology of London theatre.
- c) **Small vibrant venues** - the Print Room, The Park, The Yard, Arcola, the Bush, Southwark Playhouse have made us examine our ambitions for the Pit theatre and how we want it to reflect our vision, in the light of our own strategic objectives, into the future.
- d) **Diversity and equality** are high on the agenda. Reminders in the press about the Bechdel test and active initiatives such as Act for Change, 50/50 and Waking the Feminists ensure we check our own position and try our best to reflect our society on our stages. Between 2015-17 we have presented the work of many women as lead decision makers across our programme as we aim to redress the balance between male and female artists and introduced the work of several new companies on to both of our stages. Maintaining our high quality, international programme is of primary strategic focus and ensuring that it is representative of the diverse range of artistic voices in the cultural sector is an important way to achieve this whilst also reflecting our strategic goal work. BAME artists are present across the theatre and dance programme. There is new work currently coming to the fore which is focussing on gender issues and we will be presenting a collaboration with transgender artists in the Pit this autumn. We also present the work of disabled artists and ensure that our work is inclusive and accessible to disabled patrons. Across the seasons there are 'relaxed' performances, as well as those that are captioned, sign language interpreted and audio described. We have received positive feedback from audience members about how we have structured these especially from carers of children on the autistic spectrum. All members of the Theatre team are participating in a series of in-house diversity and equality workshops.
- e) We work closely with our **Development** department to try and raise funds from cultural institutions and Embassies for the programme and in 15/16 we raised the sum of £40,850 in total from the following:
  - Sasakawa and Daiwa Foundations for Ninagawa Company.
  - Australian High Commission for Waiting for Godot.

- Lincoln Center and Esplanada Singapore for shared surtitle commissioning.
- BBC for Antigone.
- NT Live for Hamlet.
- Culture Ireland supported in kind for three companies in our International Beckett Season, paying for their freight and international travel.

It should be noted that this is approximately 50% less than in 14/15 due to funding cuts which are also now beginning to affect our international partners.

- g) **Ticket pricing** is tested and reviewed against the marketplace and there are comprehensive art form templates based on knowledge of the work, audience spending and the companies' profile and track records. We set responsible targets but our box office team are skilled in the mechanics of yielding from which show income can benefit.
- h) **Cultural Hub** - As strategic plans develop across the partners, over the past year we have forged more integrated and active relationships with the Guildhall School, providing tickets to see innovative shows throughout the year and participating in professional development sessions and tours with students. Our relationship with The Museum of London has deepened considerably and they will have a prominent place in our Shakespeare Weekender. They will run a unique workshop on handling Elizabethan everyday objects and they have also commissioned a company to create an exciting trail across the highwalks between our two venues, which will give our combined audiences a further perspective on Shakespeare's stories.

## 5. Conclusion

We have learned a great deal this year. Hamlet's announcement, its pending arrival, and then presence in the building, tested every team on every level. That extraordinary experience has given us new skills and knowledge to take into the future.

The economics of the arts continues to be challenging and it's important that we maintain a flexible business model, remaining alert to opportunities for sharing risks, offering attractive rental seasons to commercial companies, and being fleet of foot in order to respond to late planning. This year theatre has maintained a balanced, high profile programme against a landscape of reduced subsidy levels worldwide, reflecting the goals of the Service Based Review and the new Strategic Plan.

### Questions:

- Is our programme an appropriate mix of the innovative and the more traditional?
- Is the balance right between own promotions and rentals, and does it feel seamless or does it jar?
- How do we build and capitalise on the audiences Hamlet brought to us and the profile it raised?
- How does the Barbican maintain its position as leader in the field in the face of enormous challenges and competition around us?



## **Appendix 1 - Details of the Theatre programme outline for 2016**

All our future activities combine organically and pro-actively to respond to our **Strategic Goals** (highlighted in bold below) and at the heart of all our work are our audiences. We aim to engage and entertain them and involve them through theatre's ability to challenge and move us emotionally, and create pathways for them to see themselves and their lives reflected on stage and through the participatory work that we do. The Strategic Goals relating to **Customer Experience** and **Audience Development** underpin every aspect of the theatre programme.

- a) This year the Barbican's programme focuses on international auteurs - renowned directors who push the boundaries of their artforms to create highly impactful theatrical experiences. The season includes work by Simon McBurney (UK), Netia Jones (UK), Yoann Bourgeois (France) Katie Mitchell (UK), Krzysztof Warlikowski (Poland) Yaron Lifschitz (Australia) and Robert Lepage (Canada). Each artist's approach is distinct yet they share a commitment to either radically interpreting existing texts, combining elements of different artforms to create unique hybrids, or incorporating the latest technology to produce unforgettable visual and aural stagings. **(Connecting Arts and Learning)**
- b) Shakespeare 400 underpins this new year with a wide range of different interpretations of the plays: Kings of War by Ivo van Hove and his Dutch ensemble; Forced Entertainments' Complete Works played out on a table top using everyday objects; indigenous aboriginal actors from Melbourne's Malthouse Company with The Shadow King; and a range of work from the RSC including the ambitious Midsummer Nights Dream: a Play for the Nation, featuring local school children as fairies and amateur actors playing the Rude Mechanicals followed by a winter residency, featuring two major productions of the late plays, shortly to be announced. **(Connecting Arts and Learning)**
- c) With the RSC we are planning for our next five years together. An exciting programme for autumn and winter 2016 is about to be announced and there are programme initiatives set out to the end of 2017. Our Creative Learning teams are working well together and planning for a very collaborative offering across the next stage of our relationship **(Cultural Hub & Mixed Income Generation & Connecting Arts and Learning)**
- d) We have built new relationships with a variety of companies across 2016 which will continue to yield new work over the next few years: Ballet Black, sKaGen, Odeon – Paris, Transpose, Royal Opera, Royal Ballet (these two latter companies have turned to the Barbican for these particularly innovative projects due to the planned closure of the Linbury Studio), Blanca Li Company, Yinka Ayinde and Yemisi Molouki of Ayinde Productions, 14-18 Now, who commission artists' work to commemorate the Great War, and Turned On Its Head, a company who create playful projects for early years. **(Cultural Hub & Mixed Income Generation)**
- e) We are exploring regional connections to develop and share risks on future work with the following ; Ipswich (with SPILL), Chichester Festival Theatre, Bristol Old Vic, Warwick Arts Centre, Liverpool Playhouse, HOME in Manchester, Edinburgh

International Festival. **(Mixed Income Generation & Connecting Arts and Learning)**

- f) We are also continuing to grow our network of European co-commissioning and presenting partners and develop further connections with leading venues and companies following the successful tour of Antigone. This work supports our plans for Dark Mirror, our next own production, which includes a season in Taiwan and a tour to the US, building on these new relationships **(Connecting Arts and Learning & Mixed Income Generation & Cultural Hub)**
- g) Several new productions are in development with colleagues in Music, Visual Arts and Cinema and we are focussing on the launch of a series of exciting participatory and digital projects for the Barbican foyers. **(Cultural Hub & Connecting Arts and Learning)**
- h) Following on from the work in 2015 we are pro-actively in discussions with our commercial rental partners to foster new projects. **(Mixed Income Generation)**
- i) We are working with partner companies to jointly apply for the diversity funds, newly created by Arts Council England, in the areas of theatre makers' development and senior leadership training. **(Mixed Income Generation & Connecting Arts & Learning)**

**Non-Public Appendices:**

- **Appendix 2:** Detailed Theatre Programme 2016 onwards
- **Appendix 3:** Financial Summary

**Background Papers to be tabled:**

- Media quotes
- Awards and nominations 15/16

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