



FESTIVAL REPORT 2024

Compiled by Paul Williams – Festival Chair

INTRODUCTION

In this report I cover every aspect of the Festival, from production selection through to Festival close, so Members may understand the journey the Everyman Board and the Festival Committee have been on throughout the 2024 Festival period.

The Programme

This year's programme we felt as a Board to be a strong offering, with a greater variety which we hoped would attract new audience visitors.

Starting with **The Tempest**, although one of Shakespeare's lesser performed plays, we were confident that under Richard Tunley's creative direction that he would provide a very different interpretation of the play – which of course he delivered.

Following his success with **Calendar Girls** last year, we invited Simon West to direct the 'light entertainment' show and decided on the award-winning comedy **One Man 2 Guvnors** – a challenge for any Director, but one that Simon was happy to accept.

Our musical theatre choice this year, given the fact it was so successful when we first performed it at Sophia Gardens 13 years ago, and hopefully on the back of the success of the Bridge Theatre production currently going great guns in the West End, that **Guys & Dolls** would be a perfect choice. Gregory Ashton Jones accepted the Direction - one of his all-time favourite musicals.

Turning to the other musical theatre offering Go Theatre chose **Shrek the Musical Jnr**, again a popular title which both parties agreed would sell during the school holidays.

The ever-successful Everyman Youth Theatre selected another Shakespeare classic, **Romeo & Juliet** which were performed over two nights.

Turning to the one night/daytime specials we went along the tribute act route for two of the nights with **Frankie's Guys** and **Abba – Revival** providing the entertainment. These acts were chosen following some research of the most popular tribute acts at Glastonbury and the sell-out success of the Abba tribute at the Cardiff Winter Festival.

Stand Up in the Park in association with Amnesty International was again added as now a permanent fixture in the festival line up.

Finally, we decided to try an afternoon event appealing to the gardening fraternity, with **Gardeners Question Time** with BBC Radio 2s Terry Walton. This was very much a punt at trying something new with a view to attracting a new audience.

Auditions

Auditions took place in early February where we introduced a new online booking system (Calendly) allowing individuals to book their own time slot and audition date. This resulted in a higher number of people auditioning and less admin for those people managing the process. As with any new system there were problems which will be addressed going forward, but overall, the system proved successful.

To enhance things going forward, we will add Microsoft Forms in which auditionees can provide more detail about themselves including adding the capacity to download a headshot photo. This will provide the Directors with all they need in a digital format. More work will also need to be done on the database and to iron out glitches with certain email domains.

Audition packs were once again available to download via the Everyman/Festival website.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals took place at various venues, including the Chapter Clubroom, Dance Studio and the Swash Room, Capel Salem and a new addition to the rehearsal portfolio, The Dance Studio at WMC. Hire of rehearsal space has become particularly expensive and has added significantly to the overall Festival spend. The new Board must therefore try to seek out cheaper rehearsal space alternatives, perhaps with the likes of Cardiff and Vale College with whom we have forged a new sponsorship arrangement and business partnership.

Rehearsal attendance was again problematic, with all Directors complaining of missing cast members at any given time, making scheduling difficult. Perhaps Everyman should introduce a stricter regime going forward to avoid this happening, but this may prove difficult to enforce.

Three Year Contracts

To try and fix prices for the 'big-ticket' items such as the stand (GL Events) and festival production/site management (Stage Sound /Lighting Services) we have negotiated a three-year fixed price deal. This guarantees the stand availability and helps us manage costs. This deal will be in place for the next two years.

Ticket Prices

Given the ever-increasing costs of staging a Festival of this magnitude, it was agreed by the Board that ticket prices would need to be increased.

Consequently, tickets for the main shows were increased to £25 each, the same for the two-tribute specials (Abba & Frankie's Boys). Go Theatre's prices increased to £15 from £12.50 but family ticket prices remained the same.

Stand Up in the Park remained at £15 with the usual profit share with Amnesty International, and Everyman Youth was pitched at the same price. Gardeners Question Time as a new venture, was £7 per head. This was based on the price Hay Festival charge for their afternoon sessions.

There were of course Early Bird Discounts and various other discounts offered to cast members and the public throughout the booking period to boost sales. The average price of a ticket throughout the festival was £17.93.

Festival Bar

We continued our relationship with Glamorgan Brewery who provided us with various beers, cider, wine and soft drinks – all in cans. We reduced the beer/lager choice and added a low alcohol beer. There were supply issues on occasions, and we did choose to purchase some lines such as G&T's, Pimm's and premium lager from other outlets which gave us greater profitability. Prices were increased across the board, and any cast crew discount was reduced from 50% to 20%.

The biggest change was the introduction of a cashless bar which made for easier bar management. This was accepted by audience members with very few complaints.

The bar performed extremely well despite audience numbers being down. A big thank you to Tyler Curle and her team of volunteers for making the bar such a success.

Set Design

The creative team of Tegan Reg James (Set Design) Gareth Jones (Set Construction) and Ren (Scenic Painter) continued to deliver with all sets not only looking great but designed as such that the wood could be recycled and used on the following show. As a bonus we were able to sell the wood from the sets to Cardiff Halloween Festival for £600.

Set Build Space

Unfortunately, the build space we had used in previous years – the Cardiff Gang Show Unit in Bessemer Road – hired at a ‘peppercorn rent’, became unavailable. We were then forced to look at alternative accommodation.

Gareth Rodgers and I looked at a several units and eventually found a perfect option at Avanti Media in Cardiff Bay. It provided ample build space, 24-hour access, onsite security and great proximity to the city centre for any volunteers choosing to work with us. This however did come at a price of £200 per week, adding to the overall production costs.

Costume Design

Erica Groves and her team performed well again on all three main shows, her job made easier by the employment of a Wardrobe Manager. This allowed Erica more time to start preparation work on the incoming production while Tierney Dore (Wardrobe Manager) was able to manage, repair, clean any costumes on the incumbent show.

All agreed that this was a positive move and should be an ongoing position within the team.

Erica was able to save money on the costume budget from costumes she had stored from productions the previous year and will again save what she can from this year’s costume collection.

Stage Sound & Lighting Services

Gareth Rodgers and the team at Stage Sound & Lighting, continue, year on year to provide an excellent service covering all aspects of site management and the overall production of each show – Gareth practically living onsite for the duration of the festival.

There were however occasional issues with sound cues on all three shows, mainly attributed to not having one dedicated sound engineer on duty for the run of each show, leading to an inconsistency of service delivery.

Stage Sound & Lighting Services continue to provide excellent value for money, having been with the festival from day one – 41 years ago.

Marketing

Marketing has proved a challenge this year. Due to the the lack of Marketing experience on the Board or the Festival Committee we were faced with the dilemma of having no one to carry out this essential role. We were therefore forced looked externally for a professional Marketeer to fill this position.

Following interview, Angharad Davies was appointed to the role, with the expectation that her professional expertise would reap rewards given her strong background in theatre and the arts having worked for WMC, Disney, RWCMD, Torch Theatre and Hijinx.

Festival Rebrand

We decided to give the festival a fresh new look and working with Tim Haughton our new designer, we developed the new branding that we rolled out on all our marketing assets both digitally and in print.

Tim also worked successfully with us on designing the artwork for all the shows – all of which were extremely eye-catching.

Leafleting Campaign

We leafleted 16,000 houses in specifically targeted Cardiff suburbs as part of the marketing strategy. How successful this proved to be is difficult to quantify, and possibly needs revising as a marketing tool going forward. Dropping the leaflet campaign would save on distribution costs and from an environmental viewpoint save on paper.

AO Boards – Cardiff Parks

The striking new design did give the boards a greater visibility in the key locations in all Cardiff parks. Perhaps other prominent locations should be considered for the future e.g. Mermaid Quay, Cardiff Bus Station, Cardiff Central Station. We should also look at the cost of digital signage on the prominent sites leading into Cardiff city centre.

AA signs

These continue to give the festival a presence on all routes leading into the city centre.

E-newsletters

This was by far one of our most effective marketing tools. The newsletter provided regular updates on festival shows, news stories, ticket offers and general information about the festival. In retrospect more of these should have been sent out, each mail creating a spike in ticket sales.

Social Media Marketing

Our campaign this year focused on Facebook and Instagram and despite a relatively slow start, things did gain momentum with the decision to pay for advertising (sponsored posts) which opened the festival up to a wider audience. Video content also resulted in higher engagement.

A budget allocated to a paid social media campaign would be far more effective and less expensive than the leafleting campaign we have traditionally chosen.

Press Coverage

Press coverage included -two editorials and one-page adverts in Buzz Magazine (over two editions), coverage in Primary Times, It's On Cardiff, and Penarth Times.

Wales online did a Facebook 'live' piece from the set of The Tempest in which we were able to talk in some length about the festival programme, and ITV

Wales News also broadcast the weather forecast, live from site towards the end of the festival run.

We continued to get press coverage from several very favourable theatre reviews on all 4 main productions from the likes of Arts Scene Wales, and various bloggers.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship is something the festival has always found difficult to secure, but this year we did strike a deal and an alliance with Cardiff and Vale College. The sponsorship albeit small, also opened opportunities for theatre students at the college to volunteer as part of their personal development.

Sarah Day also ran some taster evenings in which she targeted potential sponsors/business partners, laying foundations for further sponsorships/business alliances. A big thank you to Sarah for creating this initiative.

Artistic Reception

The Tempest

Richard Tunley's modern telling of the play, based loosely on the TV series 'LOST' was a great start to the festival. Featuring a plane crash rather than a shipwreck the play unfolded as the crash survivors acclimatise themselves to their new tropical island surroundings to discover the magic and mystery of the spirit world, led by Prospero & Co. Audiences loved it and so did the critics, awarding the production 5 stars. Unfortunately let down by poor audience numbers. They deserved more.

One Man 2 Guvnors

Another successful production from Director Simon West. Hilarious from start to finish- a real belly laugh of a show. Brilliant performances from the whole cast – a real ensemble piece. Deserved the standing ovations. Again, didn't do quite as well at the box office despite the great reviews.

Abba Revival/Frankie's Guys

Both Award Winning tribute acts really left audiences wanting more. It was a pleasure to see people leaving the auditorium buzzing after having been treated to a brilliant night out. A mystery why both didn't sell as well as expected.

Guys & Dolls

As one of the all-time classic musicals this did not disappoint. The show received standing ovations at the end of every performance. With Gregory Ashton's joyous direction, scintillating performances from all lead performers, great choreography from Giacci Crothers (making her Everyman debut) and a stellar chorus, the show really deserved the success it eventually achieved.

Stand Up in the Park

A sell out for the first time since its introduction to the festival, Clint Edwards and his fellow comedic chums again did the festival proud. A great night out for all who attended and a perfect result for Amnesty, who took a share of the profit and £2,000 via the bucket collection. A big bar spend contributed substantially to the final festival bar sales figure.

Romeo & Juliet

Everyman Youth under the brilliant Directorship of Sarah Bawler performed over 2 nights, with an imaginative contemporary telling of the story. Some fine central performances from potential theatre stars of the future, clever costume design and a fab soundtrack made for a memorable evening.

Shrek – The Musical Jnr

Not quite as popular as Matilda last year, Go Theatre didn't disappoint with Shrek. Always a great treat for the kids in the summer holidays, Shrek with its great comedy characters, strong script and music to match was a real crowd pleaser.

Gardeners Question Time

Terry Walton – this time not live from his allotment in the Rhondda – told us his life story and packed the 90 minutes with valuable gardening tips.

Ticket Sales

Sadly, ticket sales were 3,000 down on the previous year which could be attributed to several factors:

- The Cost-of-Living Crisis – people having less money to spend
- Poor weather – the wet and cooler weather during May/June/July didn't help promote the outdoor theatre experience
- Competition from other entertainment – with the Principality Stadium and Cardiff Castle running a busy programme of concerts throughout June/July.
- Parking disruption – the Council introducing parking charges of £20 around the festival site on major event days
- A culture shift away from live theatre

The substantial loss in ticket sales naturally had a big financial impact on the final festival result. Should sales had been comparable then we would be looking at a totally different scenario.

From the table overleaf you will note however that the difference in ticket revenue is marginal attributed to the ticket price increase.

Week 21: Final report, End of Festival

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2023		2024	
Musical-Addams Family	2,466	Guys & Dolls	2,717
Play – Calendar Girls	2,277	One Man Two Guvnors	1,849
Shakespeare – Midsummer Dream	2,244	Tempest	1,491
Family Show – Matilda	5,595	Shrek	3,836
Everyman Youth – Macbeth	770	Romeo & Juliet	632
Rocky Horror	203	ABBA	169
Stand Up	324	Stand Up	398
Choirs Night	219	Frankie’s Guys	118
Super Sheep	231	Gardeners’ QT	62
Total & Funds Taken – £205,977	14,309	£203,633	11,243

Bar Revenue

On a more positive note, the bar revenue broke all records by taking £52,000 compared to the £44,000 in 2023, thanks to increased prices, tighter control due to cashless bar, reduced discounts and a great team effort.

Financial Results

Given the fact that ticket sales were down by such a large amount, and our overall costs had increased across the board, the financial results were not positive, as you will observe from the table below.

COAT'24 Result	Result	Budget	Variance
Income			
Membership Fees	-	-	-
Ticket Sales	204,695.37	274,008.50	(69,313.13)
Concessions & Bar	43,369.32	57,582.34	(14,213.02)
Fundraising & Sponsorship	-	-	-
Grants & Other Funding	-	-	-
Direct Costs			
Rights	(27,769.73)	(39,072.96)	11,303.23
Production Costs	(17,070.83)	(10,950.00)	(6,120.83)
Set / Theatre Hire	(8,836.43)	(17,100.00)	8,263.57
Costume	(12,096.65)	(11,500.00)	(596.65)
Director's Fee	(14,860.00)	(13,750.00)	(1,110.00)
Artists fees	(6,546.34)	(3,650.00)	(2,896.34)
Concessions & Bar - Stock	(24,028.59)	(30,370.00)	6,341.41
Marketing	(27,218.20)	(20,000.00)	(7,218.20)
Overheads			
Rent	-	-	-
Utilities	-	-	-
Construction Costs	(89,417.33)	(80,535.78)	(8,881.55)
Hires	(32,912.50)	(37,521.00)	4,608.50
Infrastructure	(4,326.52)	(4,250.00)	(76.52)
Security	(16,776.27)	(25,000.00)	8,223.73
Consumables	-	(910.00)	910.00
Misc - Admin	(6,381.94)	(8,995.00)	2,613.06
	(40,176.65)	27,986.10	(68,162.74)

Summary

In summary, despite one of our strongest artistic programmes, the positive audience response to all our productions, the record bar sales and the Herculean effort from all the Festival Team who worked tirelessly throughout, the Festival made a £40,000 loss – the largest in Festival history. Obviously, this brings into question the long-term sustainability of the Festival and something that as a company, Everyman should seriously consider.

To conclude, thank you to the Board and the Festival team for their support and extremely hard work. Despite the result I think we should be extremely proud at what we have creatively achieved together, and I look forward to working on more theatrical adventures with you in the future.

Paul Williams

Festival Chair

