

Welcome!

to the annual review of Oxford Playhouse

2005|2006 financial year

Nothing stands still at the Playhouse. 2005/2006 was another busy and productive year in which alongside our full programme of fine touring shows, we focussed on three developing strands: international work, own productions and the new writing and children's theatre in the Burton Taylor Studio. • This annual report provides a welcome opportunity to see how much was achieved both on the main stage and elsewhere. As Oxford's Playhouse, we aim to be a 'house' which has its doors open to its community and its windows – its sights – to the world. As our programme continues to entertain, enlighten and engage, the Playhouse makes a valuable contribution to the cultural and creative life of the city and the surrounding region. • Whilst we make the several and measurable economic and social arguments for support of theatre, a fundamental part of our impact is immeasurable yet immeasurably valuable. At the heart of this business is a passion that fuels and is generated by theatre: the art that connects. The sight of children sitting entranced by a performance, the sensation someone has experiencing live drama for the first time, the new dimension opened up by participating in a workshop. When you sit in this auditorium full of strangers and a performance makes you share that sharp intake of breath, tears or laughter – that shared experience is a moment of enchantment, of connection. • Here we present you with the many tangible achievements of the Playhouse over the past year – I hope too it will recall those intangible ones! • I thank all the Playhouse team, its Board, our valued supporters and audiences and most of all the theatremakers.



T. Harris

Highlights of the year



*Figures calculated using Formulae 2 from Economic impact study of UK theatre, Dominic Shellard, University of Sheffield April 2004, Arts Council, England

Oxford's Playhouse

Playing our part

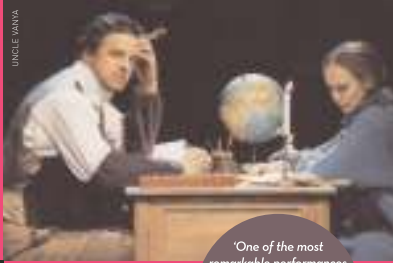
Look beyond Oxford's inspiring historic facades and you soon recognise that the City's longevity lies also with its internal dynamism, invention and self-renewal. So too the Oxford Playhouse! • At the City's heart, physically and metaphorically, the Playhouse peppers its regular programme of top national touring productions with distinctive local flavours. Non-professional groups such as **Oxford Theatre Guild** and **Oxford Operatic Society** have featured for many years, more recently companies such as **Tac-au-Tac Theatre** and the **Musical Youth Company** represent the County's burgeoning youth talent. The impressive repertoire staged by **University of Oxford** students - on the main stage and throughout term time in the **Burton Taylor Studio** - continues the long and proud relationship between our two institutions. Meanwhile links with other higher education bodies include **Oxford Brookes**, **Oxford Drama School** and **Oxford and Cherwell Valley College**. • In 2005/2006 the Playhouse contributed an estimated £9.6 million to the local economy. Part of a rich cultural offer - supported by City and County Councils - we played a crucial part in attracting visitors - notably, in conjunction with **Oxford Inspires** - for the Autumn 2005 **Evolving City Festival**. • We welcomed 36,000 attenders from beyond Oxfordshire; a figure which swells to more than half a million over the past decade. Our international programme reinforces the Playhouse and Oxford as the major regional platform for visiting arts. Underpinning this 'outward' profile our role in the community remains at the heart of our work. We encourage participation and play our part with other local arts organisations in developing a stronger sense of community through broader access and engagement. With major developments such as the **Oxford Castle** complete and more - the **Westgate** and **West End** - on the horizon we look forward to ensuring that dynamism and growth is as much a feature of the arts scene as it is of the broader commercial sector - and that we in the arts play a central creative role in Oxford's 21st Century renaissance.



International

One of the South East region's leading international stages

The **Maly Drama Theatre of St Petersburg**'s production of **Uncle Vanya** was undoubtedly one of the highlights of the year. We were thrilled to have been able to bring the company to Oxford on its short UK tour, to enjoy the exceptional quality of the performance, acting, direction and staging for which the company is world renowned. Audience and critical responses suggest it is an experience that will live long in the memory.



UNCLE VANYA

'One of the most remarkable performances that I have seen at the Playhouse during the many years I've been coming. Exquisite and excellent.'
Audience member on Uncle Vanya



MASQUERADE

Lithuania's **Small State Theatre of Vilnius**' production of **Lermontov's Masquerade** was another major event for Oxford, and again the response was extremely strong. The hallmarks of ensemble working in the finest Eastern European tradition were all present, and the performances were a high profile element of **Evolving City** - a six month Oxford-wide festival coordinated by our colleagues at cultural development agency **Oxford Inspires**.



PAPERWORLD

Equally successful were the shorter runs of **Aurelia's Oratorio** and the Ukrainian clowns **Paperworld**, which both appealed to large family audiences, and proved once again that great theatre can cross all boundaries.

'I absolutely loved Paperworld - it was so imaginative and surprisingly moving. Brilliant! More like this please.'
Audience member

Produced

Creating distinctive productions in-house - for Oxford

We followed up the great success of *Peter Pan* with a brand new *Cinderella* written by Oxfordshire based **Tony Bicât** and his composer brother **Nick Bicât** (*OOMF!* - Oxford's Millenium Symphony and *The Dumb Waiter and Other Pieces*). This new adaptation, directed by **Ian Talbot** from **Regent's Park Open Air Theatre**, charmed audiences, achieving attendances of 75% across the 75 performances.



CINDERELLA



IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

'A fine production of a classic work. The cast hit just the right note of sophistication and brio... a pleasure from start to finish... Make sure you see it before it closes.'
BBC Oxford



EARNEST



CINDERELLA



CINDERELLA



CINDERELLA

In the summer months there tends to be a dearth of high quality touring shows; hence our decision to meet our artistic and audience ambitions by staging our own new production of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. This attained a 70% capacity over its three and a half week run and reunited Oxford alumni **Erica Whyman**, **Bruno Poet** and **Sally Philips** alongside a great cast. Celebrating the talent nurtured in Oxford has always been one of our core aims.



EARNEST



EARNEST

'The acting was great and the show was well worth a visit. Thank you again for providing such good family entertainment'
Audience member

Presented programme

The best of UK theatre

The year saw a wealth of activity at Oxford Playhouse on the main stage including quality drama, work for children, dance, music, comedy, lectures and special events, peppered with regular visits by **University of Oxford** student companies and local amateur groups.

We continued to seek out and programme the very best drama and this year this included **Propeller** and the **Watermill Theatre's *The Winter's Tale*** and **Mammals** from the **Bush Theatre**. Audiences also filled the theatre for many other visiting productions including **Otherwise Engaged**, **An Inspector Calls**, the **Stephen Joseph Theatre's *Improbable Fiction*** and **RIFCO's *Deranged Marriage***.



IMPROBABLE FICTION



THE LION AND THE JEWEL



OTHERWISE ENGAGED



THE CROWSTOWER

We were delighted to welcome companies new to the Playhouse, particularly those bringing the very best of culturally diverse work, including **Yellowman** from **Liverpool Playhouse** and **Collective Artists' *The Lion and the Jewel***.

We presented **Oily Cart's *Hippity Hop***, an innovative piece for babies, toddlers and parents which used participation and engagement through sound, visual images, touch and movement. This wonderful show succeeded in introducing a whole new generation to the magic of theatre.



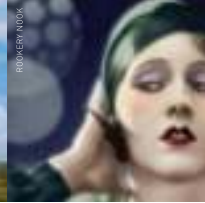
PARULET



MAMMALS



DERANGED MARRIAGE



ROBERT NOODS

Dance and Music

Breadth and Diversity

Our dance programme continued to attract high profile artists and high levels of attendance; **Michael Clark**, **Jasmin Vardimon**, **Shobana Jeyasingh** and **CandoCo** all visited in this year, as well as a youth dance platform involving 160 local children. We were particularly pleased to present local aerialist **Matilda Leyser**, whose production **Line, Point, Plane** was previously developed at Pegasus Theatre.



SHOBANA JEYASINGH



CANDOCO



NATIONAL YOUTH JAZZ ORCHESTRA



LINE, POINT, PLANE

Music covered much of the spectrum, with packed houses for **Supergrass**, **Fairport Convention**, and flamenco artist **Rafael** celebrating Oxfordshire's prime talent, alongside popular visits from **The Opera Group**, **National Youth Jazz Orchestra**, **The Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain** and **Michael Nyman**.



UKULELE ORCHESTRA

'An extraordinary achievement both theatrically and athletically.'
Oxford Times on *Line, Point, Plane*



Burton Taylor Studio

The Playhouse's intimate Studio theatre

In December we piloted a subsidised programme in the newly rebranded Burton Taylor Studio, bringing small-scale new writing, children's theatre and local productions to this 50 seat, black box space. This was a great opportunity to programme high quality small-scale work we cannot mount on the Playhouse stage. Used by University of Oxford students during term-time, the Studio is now open in the holidays, providing a platform for exciting and experimental work, as well as giving children an intimate experience of theatre. Additional to the work on stage, families can enjoy free art activities, healthy refreshments and other family facilities, all designed to make the space as comfortable as possible for our younger audiences.

Highlights from the Christmas and Easter seasons included two productions exploring issues of exile from a refugee perspective, **Breaking the Silence** and **The Uninvited**, **Pip Utton's** masterful one man show **Bacon**, **Volcano Theatre's** **Hitting Funny** and **Fair** from **Floodtide Productions**. Productions especially for families included **The Three Billy Goats Gruff**, **How to Build a Time Machine**, **My Tree** and **The Gardener**.



HITTING FUNNY



THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF

'Energetic, informative and engaging for the kids and us! Great introduction to theatre for our daughter.'
Audience member on *The Gardener*



The Burton Taylor Studio is managed by Oxford Playhouse on behalf of the University of Oxford.



BACON

Education and Community

At the heart of our creative work

Year round our Education team runs a series of workshops and events designed to bring artists closer to audiences and encourage participation.

During 2005/06 the Playhouse education and community projects included **300 events, 12 different projects**, reaching more than **9,500 people**. We gave people from a variety of communities the chance to come and experience theatre for the first time; found ways of making theatre more 'family friendly'; gave schools practical ways of meeting the curriculum; gave the experienced theatre-goer a chance to discuss with directors, performers and academics what they had seen; and provided children and young people with fun and challenging arts activities...and much, much more.

Our 2005 pilot residential summer scheme was led by Polish physical theatre company **Teatr Piesn Kozla** (Song of the Goat Theatre), extending the theme of international work. 23 young people joined the company at Hill End Camp. It was a great success, with participants describing it as life changing. It has set a precedent for subsequent summer schemes.

Throughout the year there was an ongoing programme built around visiting work as well as our own productions. We continued to run a comprehensive range of work experience schemes, and our regular Poetry Slams.

Some interesting facts:

- Over 6,640 young people took part in 294 sessions
- 717 artists, teachers & workshop leaders got involved
- We hosted 43 free pre- and post-show talks
- There were 7 audio described, 3 signed and 3 StageText captioned performances
- 11 Art Trolley sessions for family audiences took place
- We hosted 31 Page-to-Stage or In-School workshops



SUBSCRIPTIONS IN THE PLAYHOUSE CIRCLE BAR

'I never imagined I could work together in a group that connected so quickly and worked so well together.'
Workshop participant



WORKSHOP



'I was called upon to improvise, I didn't think I would be brave enough, but I did it!'
Workshop participant



SUMMER WORKSHOP WITH TEATR PIESN KOZLA

Alma Maters

As Oxford Playhouse's turnover now tips £3 million a year and with a programme fuller than ever, we should remember those who facilitated the theatre's re-birth and who nurture us still.

From its foundation in 1923, its move to Beaumont Street in 1938, through closure and to the creation of the Oxford Playhouse Trust in 1989, the Playhouse has long had strong links with the University of Oxford - indeed it was

'The University Theatre' from 1961 to 1987. Also with St John's College - our benevolent landlord with whose support The University of Oxford, handed over its leases on the theatre (a Grade 2 listed building) to the new Trust in 1991, the year the theatre re-opened its doors to the public. The University



ST JOHN'S COLLEGE

then led - with Oxford City and Oxfordshire County Councils - the trio of core funders, who were instrumental in giving the theatre a firm financial foundation on which to build its new future. Today this triumvirate accounts for 40% of core funding, augmented by the 60% subsidy from Arts Council England which it helped lever in 2000.

The University and St John's College have also facilitated development of our education and access programme. The Playhouse manages the Burton Taylor Studio, the busy black box space in which hundreds of students cut their theatrical teeth staging shows throughout the term time.

The five mainstage student slots in the year are highly prized by the undergraduates as they are by us: some of these are the theatremakers of the future who we hope will return to their theatrical alma mater in the full range of professional capacities. 170 students from diverse faculties (43% studying science or mathematics) worked on mainstage Playhouse productions during 2005/06; these included *The Oxford Revue*, *Orestes* (performed in Greek), *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Fuente Ovejuna* and *Into the Woods*. Working with our team on the mounting of these shows gives students a professional induction to a range of theatre skills; as valuable for those not pursuing a theatre career as for those who are.



THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE



Arts Council England and others

It often surprises people to learn just how much theatre costs and how successful it has to be in order to remain viable - to learn that a packed Playhouse doesn't equate to a profit, particularly with international work. Funding enables us to budget for a loss on certain strands of the programme, providing the opportunity to bring the best quality work to Oxford Playhouse. Without sufficient funds visits by the **Maly Theatre** would be a thing of the past, and tickets would be too expensive for the majority of our audience. Without the investment and support of **Arts Council of England South East**, the **University of Oxford**, **Oxford City Council** and **Oxfordshire County Council** in the artistic aims of the theatre we wouldn't be where we are today - or have a future to enable us to look at where we can be tomorrow.



Our Corporate Supporters and Major Donors also play a vital role in supporting the work of Oxford Playhouse.

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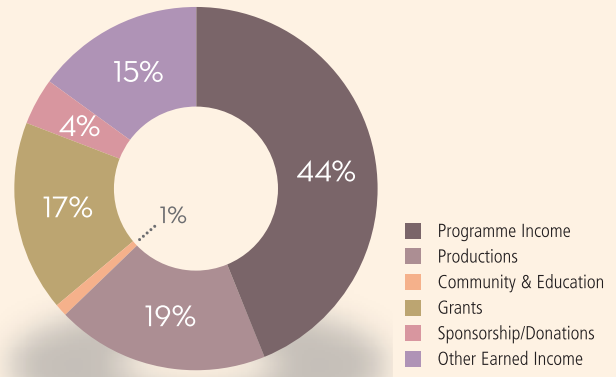
In addition to those above, we are grateful also to the many people who donate every year, and to our wonderful volunteers, all of whom play a part in supporting the work of the theatre.

Financial information

2005 | 06

Income

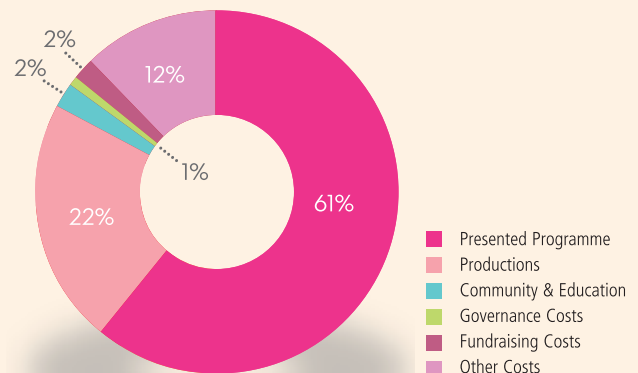
Programme Income	£1,326,819
Productions	584,631
Community & Education	17,862
Grants	523,706
Sponsorship/donations	115,671
Other earned income	459,329
Total income	£3,028,018



Expenditure

Presented Programme	£1,936,575
Productions	714,827
Community & Education	649,919
Governance Costs	44,850
Fundraising Costs	62,175
Other costs	370,590
Total expenditure	£3,193,936

(includes depreciation of £128,460)



Net movement (£165,918)