



It's been an extraordinarily busy year at Oxford Playhouse

BUSY
BUSY
BUSY

It is a huge privilege to have become the Chair of Oxford Playhouse, quite simply one of the city's great cultural institutions. Under the inspiring and energetic leadership of Michelle Dickson and her team, the last year has been outstanding.

As Chair, I have had the pleasure of going to a vast range of high quality shows at the Playhouse. The innovative and exciting programme has attracted record audiences that represent an increasingly wide cross section of the community. The artistic excellence on stage extends to the Playhouse's own productions, which have toured with great success, and to the imaginative and wide-reaching participatory activities run across the county by the theatre's Learning team.

All this is made possible by the thriving, well run organisation behind it, which gives the region a flagship theatre that we can all enjoy.



Danby Bloch, Chair, Oxford Playhouse Trust

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We have presented an incredible **170** different shows for **724** performances on the Playhouse stage and in our Burton Taylor Studio. I hope you will have enjoyed many of them. The audience and critical feedback for this year's programme has been better than ever.

We created **2** new shows ourselves, and were co-producers of **3** more, meaning that thousands of people across the UK and the world have seen an Oxford Playhouse Production. Closer to home, we've made a greater impact on the community of Oxfordshire than ever before, increasing attendance and participation, particularly amongst older people, the young and those who haven't previously experienced theatre.

I hope you will agree that the Playhouse is looking better than ever. This year we've raised funds to replace the old carpet in the foyer with a wooden floor, improve the signage and introduce a clean, strong look in our printed materials and in the building, which we hope helps to achieve our aim of making the theatre as welcoming and comfortable as possible.

We've also been working for the future. The team here is committed to supporting and investing in artistic development, making shows for national and international touring, maintaining and improving the fabric of our building, and above all, ensuring that Oxford Playhouse remains one of the best regional theatres in the country, offering the highest quality, widest ranging programme to the broadest possible audience.

So take a look at what Oxford Playhouse achieved in 2009/10 and see what there is to look forward to in the next year.



Michelle Dickson, Director, Oxford Playhouse
michelle.dickson@oxfordplayhouse.com

OXFORD PLAYHOUSE ON THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STAGE

**THE ETHICS
OF PROGRESS**
UNLIMITED THEATRE
§ OXFORD PLAYHOUSE
Oxford, Singapore, Stockton,
Leicester

**THE PLAYBOY
OF THE
WESTERN WORLD**
DRUID
§ OXFORD PLAYHOUSE
Oxford, Brighton, Richmond,
Salford, Liverpool, Cardiff

ONE SMALL STEP
OXFORD PLAYHOUSE PRODUCTIONS
Oxford, Canterbury, Bracknell, Didcot,
Caerphilly, Swansea, Porthcawl,
Pontardawe, Newcastle, Scarborough,
Newbury, Maidenhead, Clonmel,
Edinburgh, Sydney, Singapore, Cairo,
Casablanca, Tunis, Ramallah, Beirut,
Jaffna, Colombo, Dubai and more!

**THE MINISTRY
OF FEAR**
THEATRE ALIBI
§ OXFORD PLAYHOUSE
Oxford, Guildford, Ipswich,
Glasgow, Winchester, Newcastle,
Northampton



66

Out of this world!
Engaging and amusing
Audience member
on *One Small Step*

99

The incredible success story of our *One Small Step* continues! This show was written by one of the Playhouse team, **David Hastings**, who was working part-time whilst studying for an MA in Creative Writing at Ruskin College. We read it and loved it, and decided to mount a professional **Oxford Playhouse Production**. After a successful run at the **Edinburgh Fringe Festival** and an extensive UK tour, it was chosen by the **British Council** to feature in a showcase of the best theatre shows in 2009. It proved very popular with promoters and British Council officers from around the world, and so far in 2010, it has played **9** countries including the **Palestinian Territories**, **Australia** and **Sri Lanka**.

Memorable moments from the tour have included a live digital broadcast of the show from **Ramallah** to a theatre in the **Gaza Strip**. The audience comprised of theatre practitioners and students, who were able to talk to the actors afterwards about the techniques and styles used in the show. This has never previously happened in the region, so a proud first for the Playhouse.

Another ground-breaking achievement was that *One Small Step* was the first theatre show to take place in **Jaffna, Sri Lanka**, since the civil war. After an exhausting **16** hour road journey, the company arrived at a swelteringly hot tin roofed hall, and prepared to perform to an unknown number of people. Over **1,000** people came together for the first time in **30** years, and their response was incredible.



The rest of 2010 is filling up with dates in **Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Turkey, Jordan, Syria, China, USA** and the **UK** in the pipeline. We're having a homecoming for the show; you can see it at our **Burton Taylor Studio** from **Monday 5 to Friday 9 July 2010**.

We've also commissioned **David Hastings** to write a new play based on the Wright brothers, which we've started to work on with a director and actors, so fingers crossed for another success!

66

I thought it was a unique and creative artwork.
HE **Siham Barghouthy**,
Minister for Culture
Palestine on
One Small Step

Stories don't come much bigger and better than the one told in this 20th-century history lesson from **Oxford Playhouse of Britain**.
Sydney Morning Herald
on *One Small Step*

99

ONE SMALL STEP... DEFINITELY A GIANT LEAP FOR OXFORD PLAYHOUSE

Image:
One Small Step





Provocative and inspiring. Guardian on The Playboy of the Western World

World class – it's hard to imagine a better production. Variety Magazine on The Playboy of the Western World



Oxford Playhouse has collaborated and continued building relationships with a number of theatre companies and creative teams.

Working in partnership means that we can make shows happen which might otherwise never get off the ground, and ensure that far more people are able to see the show. We create shows with local, national and international artists.

We are working with the world-renowned **Druid Theatre** from Galway, Ireland. This tiny theatre company makes unforgettable drama, which deserves to be shared with audiences in Oxford and across the UK.

The Playhouse arranged and managed a tour of **J M Synge's The Playboy of the Western World**, and secured additional funding from **Arts Council England** to support the tour. In Oxford, the production was accompanied by an international symposium on Irish cultural identity, curated by our Learning team in partnership with the **University of Oxford**. Speakers came from Ireland, the UK and the USA, and participants included theatre practitioners, academics, students and theatre-goers.

The Playboy of the Western World toured to **6** UK venues for **38** performances to a total audience of **12,219**.

Oxford Playhouse co-produced an adaptation of **Graham Greene's The Ministry of Fear** with **Theatre Alibi** and **The Northcott Theatre, Exeter**, which has toured successfully in the UK, and **The Ethics of Progress** with **Unlimited Theatre**. This lecture performance about quantum physics, created with **Professor Vlatko Vedral** from the **University of Oxford** played twice at the theatre, and visited many schools in Oxfordshire, as well as further afield.

Oxford Playhouse values its working partnerships and relationships which help us to connect with the widest possible range of people. This year we collaborated with **Alice Day, Oxfringe, Dancin' Oxford, Dance Touring Partnership, Oxford Literary Festival, Light Nights, Ruskin College, Oxford Youth Arts Partnership, Oxford Open Doors, Oxfordshire Science Festival** and **Oxford Inspires**.

Image:
The Playboy of the Western World



The Ministry of Fear and **The Ethics of Progress** both continue touring into 2010, and we are in conversations with a number of theatre companies about creating shows together in 2011.

CREATING TOGETHER



Oxford Playhouse and Druid's relationship has allowed Druid to reach a wider audience on tour within the UK. Whether the Playhouse team are working on a presentation in Oxford or co-producing a national tour with Druid, there is no doubting the passion, commitment and support we receive. During 2010 we will continue to build the relationship through a staff exchange to aid the development of theatre and education in Ireland. Oxford Playhouse is helping Druid to reach school groups in Galway city and county in a way we have never done before. In return, Druid's Literary Manager will be spending a week at the Playhouse working on text and performance with young people.

Tim Smith,
General Manager, Druid

The Ethics of Progress is proof positive that the art of the intellectual talk can be brought to the mainstream to enthuse and entertain, and can even sneak some education in through the back door.
Daily Information

Really good. Worth coming all the way from Bristol for.
Audience member on The Ministry of Fear

Just a quick note, now the tour of The Ministry of Fear is done and dusted, to say a huge thank you for all your support and advice. As ever, it was a real pleasure to work alongside you all at the Playhouse.

Nikki Sved,
Artistic Director
Theatre Alibi



Druid return to the **Playhouse** in September 2010 with a brand new production of **Sean O'Casey's** neglected classic, **The Silver Tassie**. The show will feature a chorus of young people from the Oxford community whilst at the **Playhouse**.

66

We had a FANTASTIC time.
Loved ALL the panto.

Feedback from the
children of Tetsworth
Primary School

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I LOVED the Giant's
costume. I hope we can
come again next year.

VERY funny.

Feedback from the
children of Tetsworth
Primary School

99

Image:
Creation of costumes for Jack and the Beanstalk



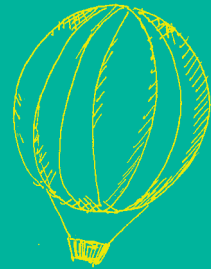
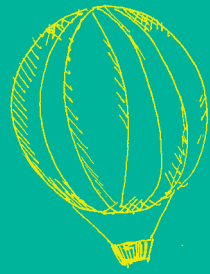
Our pantomime this year is **Cinderella**, and we're already busy working on the script, set and costumes. We start auditioning actors in May, and will be recruiting 20 local children at the end of the summer term.

Our annual pantomime is probably the most important show of the year at the Playhouse. We make it ourselves, so carry all the artistic and financial risk, and it's the show that is seen by the biggest audience. A massive **35,500** people saw **Jack and the Beanstalk** this year, and helped the theatre to enjoy one of our most successful ever Christmas season's. We lost a few performances because the snow prevented schools making it in, but still delivered a whopping **71** performances.

We gave **1,123** people free tickets for the panto this year. Groups who benefited included schools in hard to reach areas, young people and their families who wouldn't otherwise have been able to come, community groups, police and fire services and their families. This is one of the ways we make the Playhouse a theatre for everyone.

Image:
Jack and the Beanstalk





Our off-site strand of programming, Playhouse Plays Out, has flourished this year.

PLAYHOUSE PLAYS OUT

Playhouse Plays Out introduces new people to live performance, challenging assumptions of what theatre is all about, and working in partnership to open up some of the county's fantastic locations to residents and visitors. Tickets are as cheap as we can make them, and nearly all of the shows include some kind of participatory element. It's a very important new area of our activity, and one which we hope to develop and expand in the future.

The **Globe Theatre's *The Comedy of Errors*** played to an audience of **4,300** in the quad of the **Bodleian Library**, and the rather more intimate ***Caravan*** – a play about the UK floods in 2007 – performed to 8 people at a time on a green in **Witney**.

We worked with the **University of Oxford's Botanic Garden** to present ***Susurrus***, a new audio play. Audience members collected a map and an mp3 player, and listened to the play and musical interludes as they explored the garden. This very personal and moving experience was enjoyed by over **800** people.



Plenty! 2010 will see a host of shows off-site under the Playhouse banner, including ***Henry and Elizabeth***, which takes place in your own home, **Mark Bruce Dance Company** performing in the round at the **O2 Academy** on the Cowley Road, ***A Western*** in the **Angel and Greyhound** pub on St Clements, ***Decky Does a Bronco*** in Oxford's **Florence Park** and more in the pipeline for 2011.



Image:
To & Fro

Our resident **young people's company 16|22** (so called because all the members are aged between 16 and 22), goes from strength to strength. This year's project **Played Out** at **The Rookery** in **Old Headington**. **To and Fro** was the group's most ambitious project to date; a show in a disused building, where the audience moved from room to room and through the gardens, seeing different scenes in different locations, and being treated to tea and cakes along the way. Inspired by **TS Eliot's** poem *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*, the young people worked with professional directors and designers to create a brilliantly immersive experience.

“

This performance will stay with me until I die.

Audience member on *To and Fro*

*Immersive theatre came to Oxford last week in the shape of **To and Fro**... the latest instalment of the **Playhouse Plays Out** project...devised and staged by a local company of youngsters aged 16 to 22, and proved the most ambitious yet...moments of inspiration...sent shivers down the spine.*

Oxford Times on *To and Fro*

”

“

It's a fabulous way to have fun and get creative with new friends. Full of energy, laughter and teamwork, I look forward to 16|22 every week.

Anna Whiteley
Brookes University student

”

TO & FRO



Plans are already under way for 16|22's next projects including a Summer Showcase in St Mary's Magdalen Church and then rehearsals for **The Canterbury Tales**. We continue to raise funds to support these performances and pay for course fees for members who may need financial assistance.

A GREAT NIGHT OUT

Oxford Playhouse thrives on the success of a high quality programme, which through its variety, appeals to a wide ranging audience. 2009/10 saw many highlights on the stages, including new plays, classic drama, contemporary dance and music, poetry, lectures, family shows, experimental theatre, amateur and student performance.

DRAMA



Propeller
A Midsummer Night's Dream
and **The Merchant of Venice**

Still reeling! Just in awe of it! I'll struggle to see a better show.
Audience member
Brilliant performances and love the staging.
Audience member



Royal Shakespeare Company
Days of Significance

Thank you for putting on something challenging. Really enjoyed it! Fantastic piece of theatre and will definitely be looking out for the RSC at the Playhouse in future.
Audience member



Stephen Joseph Theatre
My Wonderful Day

It was brilliant! I haven't laughed so much in ages.
Audience member



Kneehigh Theatre
Brief Encounter

Just to say saw the show last night and would go again and again if I could.
Audience member

DANCE



Jasmin Vardimon
Justitia

The theatre had a buzz from a really mixed aged audience. A great first experience of dance.
Audience member



Random Dance
Entity

It's great to see dance of this calibre in Oxford. The dancers and choreography were stunning!
Audience member

NEW WORK



Forced Entertainment
Spectacular

This piece really pushed the boundaries of what theatre and performance is.
Audience member



Chickenshed
"as the mother of a brown boy"

One of the most moving pieces of theatre I have seen in a long time. A truly talented company of young people. Bring them back soon.
Audience member

AMATEUR



Oxford Theatre Guild
Antigone

The Guild are delighted to contribute to the Playhouse's programme each year. It's the theatrical heart of Oxford.
Colin Macnee, Chair

BT STUDIO

Our studio theatre, the **Burton Taylor Studio**, continues to attract the very best of small scale touring companies.



The Future Is Unwritten
Meeting Jo Strummer

With two actors, one spotlight and no props we were transported back in time! What an incredible show in an intimate and diverse space.
Audience member



Magnetic North
Walden

I loved it! It's one of those shows that stays with you for a long time after you've left the theatre.
Audience member



Untried Untested

We launched our scratch nights, designed to give local artists a chance to try out material in front of a supportive audience. **Idle Motion** performed, and as a result, have been made Artists in Residence at **Oxford Playhouse**.

BEHIND THE SCENES

“

Adjusting to life in the community after an over long stay in hospital was a daunting task for me ten years ago when I was taken on as a volunteer in the administration team of Oxford Playhouse. The work, the association with the Playhouse and the friendship of the team has been of immeasurable help in enabling me to build a full and interesting life here in Oxford.

Richard Benwell, Volunteer

”

“

What a fantastic week. Thank you for being so generous. Best week of our tour. Much love.

Ferdy, Company Manager, Three Sisters

”

“

To be artist in residence at Oxford Playhouse means the happiest of creative collaboration and stimulus. I draw from live theatre, which is what I love to do. Drawing from rehearsal and performance requires intense, precise observation and great speed. It means sharing a moment on stage with the actor, conveying that dramatic moment, creating an historic archive, sharing the work by regular exhibitions, and working with the amazing and dedicated group of people who keep the Playhouse so alive and well.

Michael Gabriel,
Oxford Playhouse Artist in Residence

”

“

Having the opportunity to work in New York and Vancouver was amazing! I learned so much about festival programming, deepened my knowledge of international theatre and observed different country's work ethics and environments. By supporting me through The Rupert Rhymes Bursary, OP have played a vital role in my career development and allowed me to undertake an opportunity I ordinarily wouldn't have had.

Stuart Allen, Director's Assistant

”

“

Lovely place, lovely people, great activities – don't want to leave!

Bryony Neilson, Work Experience student

”

“

I can't stress enough just how much this connection has meant to Richard. It has restored his confidence and given him a sense of being useful.

Margaret Benwell, Volunteer

”

“


As a keen theatre goer I am delighted to be able to make donations to the OP. The programme offers a good variety of live shows with something to appeal to most tastes both young and not so young. They also do a lot of excellent work with people from the local community to encourage them to get involved with theatre and live performances of all kinds. I believe the OP is a valuable asset to the people of Oxford and the surrounding area and deserves all the support it can get.

Richard Gladstone, Oxford Playhouse donor

”


A PLAYHOUSE FOR EVERYONE

Our Learning team work hard to make sure Oxford Playhouse is of benefit to the whole community. We create opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to get closer to the action, helping them to develop a meaningful and ongoing relationship with the theatre.



760+

Over **760** people have attended pre show talks on a variety of topics over the past year including talks from University lecturers, directors and actors.




365

365 children of all ages came face to face with actors at our Meet and Greets last year. The casts of *The BFG*, *The Gruffalo* and *The Enchanted Pig* tackled questions and revealed show secrets to children as young as two years old.

I had an amazing time on work experience at the Playhouse. I only wish it could have lasted longer. It taught me such a lot about the theatre and I was so grateful for the opportunity to work in such a lovely place with such wonderful people.

Work Experience student



57

57 students from schools including **Carterton Community College**, **Fitzharry's School** and **Leckford Place School** spent a week at **Oxford Playhouse**, working in all departments of the organisation.




150

150 children at **Hatherop Castle School** took part in a fun filled day of drama games and activities led by our Learning team as part of their literary and culture week.

Encouraging and entertaining, the workshop leaders had a real flare for engaging the children.
Miss Evans, Teacher



Where are we going on our next adventure?
Johnny, aged 4
School Workshop participant



400


400 primary school students took part in *Jack and the Beanstalk* workshops over the Christmas period, before coming along to watch the panto.



395

395 pre-school children and their parents clapped, sang and giggled their way through last year's weekly interactive music and storytelling sessions.

I've told everyone I know just how wonderful (Hey Diddle Diddle) is! Sold out? I'm not in the least surprised!
Parent of Hey Diddle Diddle participant



1,329

1,329 secondary school students from schools and colleges all over Oxfordshire, including **OCVC**, **Cherwell School**, **Larkmead** and **King Alfred's School**, got closer to **Oxford Playhouse** by taking part in workshops, careers talks, presentations and other creative activities both in their own classrooms and in the theatre itself.

A PLAYHOUSE FOR EVERYONE

57,000

This year our audiences for family friendly work have increased by 30%, which means over 57,000 people enjoying amazing performances for the whole family.

400

We launched **OP Connect**, a scheme to encourage and enable groups of all shapes and sizes to connect with us, come and see shows, and participate in other learning opportunities. We have extended our programme of participatory work into a range of new sessions for the over 60s, which 75 people have signed up to.

191,180

In total over the year – across all our activity, in the theatre, studio, playing out, and on tour, 191,180 people have attended over 839 performances.

Through the use of the ANLO scheme I've been able to see plays I never would have been able to afford to spend money on normally and actually really enjoyed them.
ANLO Audience member

A very enjoyable afternoon – I learnt a lot of new things.
60+ member

There was a buzzing and electric atmosphere in the theatre full of young people, it was absolutely great!
Three Sisters' ANLO Audience member

3,509

Through **A Night Less Ordinary** we've succeeded in introducing many young first-timers to theatre and to the Playhouse, giving away 3,509 free tickets. There was even a whole free performance of Filter's *Three Sisters* for under 26s – the auditorium was completely full.

Jack and the Beanstalk was the most amazing experience of my life. I loved every minute of it and never wanted it to stop. The cast were just so incredibly amazing and talented and were just amazing to work with!!
Amy, Member of the Jack and the Beanstalk Young Company

5%

This year 5% of all tickets issued were given free to groups or individuals who wouldn't otherwise be able to experience a great night out. A further 90,000 people benefited from our range of discounted ticket schemes.

22

22 local young performers joined our professional cast for *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

29

29 shows were either audio described, captioned or BSL interpreted. A highlight for the programme was attendance at the *Jack and the Beanstalk* audio description and touch tour, of 61 blind and partially sighted children.

A NIGHT less ordinary
Supported by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Captioning is a marvellous invention, and makes it possible for us to enjoy being at the theatre again, after many years.
Audience member

A full copy of the Financial Statements for Oxford Playhouse Trust for 09/10 can be downloaded from www.oxfordplayhouse.com or obtained from The Finance Department, Oxford Playhouse, Beaumont Street, Oxford, OX1 2LW.

In these challenging times, it is no mean feat that the Playhouse is approaching the coming year in sound financial and organisational health. **64%** our income comes from the ticket office, which means if we're not curating an attractive programme which brings in over 150,000 audience members each year, we will fail. The investment of core funders – **Arts Council England, University of Oxford, Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council**, and increased support from loyal donors, trusts and foundations has helped the organisation to balance the books.

We also run our own bars, catering and a ticket agency, which all helps plough valuable income back into the theatre. This careful financial management enables us to maintain the quality of the artistic programme, take risks, extend our work in the community, support local amateur and student artists, and keep ticket prices as low as possible.

CHALLENGING

INCOME	2009/10	2008/9
Programme Income	1,781,847	1,521,038
Own Productions	760,630	598,246
Learning	35,604	19,739
Grants	493,909	486,202
Sponsorship/Donations	179,128	180,374
Other Earned Income	576,722	492,084
Total Income	3,827,840	3,297,683

EXPENDITURE	2009/10	2008/9
Presented Programme	2,351,105	2,148,051
Productions	785,102	570,758
Learning	99,454	73,988
Governance Costs	40,686	46,038
Fundraising Costs	51,925	113,174
Other Costs	428,910	366,794
Total Expenditure	3,757,182	3,318,803

Surplus / Deficit for the Year **70,658** **(21,120)**



We have worked hard this year to generate a small surplus – **1.8%** of our turnover. This money will help us to mount more of our own productions in 2010/11, including a world première on the main stage, a new play for under 5s in the Studio, the continuation of *One Small Step* and a commission of a new play.



We will use our hard earned cash to transform our basement toilets in the coming months, installing more cubicles and creating more space, as well as replacing the sinks, toilets and furnishings. We continue to invest in the sound and lighting equipment in the auditorium and studio, ensuring we're delivering the finest quality performance possible.



We recently took part in the Ark organised by the CIAO! As part of the Children's Climate Challenge we will be working with the pupils of **St Michael's Primary School** over the coming months to try and better the **24%** reduction in electricity consumption we have made since 2005.

WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO EVERYONE WHO HAS SUPPORTED THE PLAYHOUSE IN 2009 AND 2010

THANK YOU



A **BIG** thank you to everyone who has made a contribution to support the work of Oxford Playhouse during 2009/2010 be that in time, commitment or money.

Crucial to our success in 2009/2010, our core funders provided 13% of our annual income.



Supported by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND



Over **100** volunteers gave up their time to help out at Oxford Playhouse.

Nearly **570** people have given regular financial donations each month or once a year, which totalled **£42,161** in 2009/10.

Major supporters:

All Souls College
The Banquets Group
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2009/10 was a truly exciting year here at Oxford Playhouse, which would not have been possible without the brilliant combination of the artists, audiences, volunteers, funders, donors and staff.
Here's to 2010/11...

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