

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
CHICHESTER DISTRICT COUNCIL**

CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE – 2019/20 Season

INTRODUCTION

This report reviews the financial year 2019/20 of Chichester Festival Theatre (CFT), a registered charity managed by a Board of voluntary Trustees, including a CDC nominated Trustee, under the Chairmanship of Sir William Castell and joint Executive leadership of Kathy Bourne, Executive Director, and Daniel Evans, Artistic Director.

At the time of writing, it is impossible not to acknowledge the impact that Covid-19 has had on CFT and the theatre industry. As the 2019/20 year drew to a close, CFT was forced to close its doors on 24 March 2020 after only 1 day of rehearsals for the 2020 season. The full 2020 Festival Season was subsequently cancelled. Our dedicated staff were able to remain connected to the local community and our audiences throughout the lockdown period and we are now looking ahead to our doors reopening in October 2020 in a Covid-secure way. We are grateful to CDC for their unwavering support throughout this period. Covid-19 has impacted some areas of reporting, this is detailed below where applicable.

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND FUNDING

2019/20 was the second year of a four-year cycle of National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding from Arts Council England (ACE). Due to Covid-19 the funding cycle has been extended by an additional year through to March 2023 with CFT's level of ACE funding maintained at £1,740,214 per annum. CFT is currently reviewing its business plan for 2021-2023 in light of the implications of Covid-19.

Within the CDC/CFT monitoring framework, we are committed to sharing feedback from ACE annually. ACE feedback on CFT's response to the Creative Case for Diversity in 2019/20 is attached at Appendix 2. CFT maintained a Strong rating. ACE did not provide further feedback on 2019/20 due to Covid-19 delaying the gathering of NPO Annual Survey data.

THEATRE PROGRAMME

The 2019/20 artistic programme maintained CFT's reputation for producing work which is synonymous with excellence and ambition. Eleven productions were delivered in the Festival season which included a diverse range of classic plays and revivals, two musicals, four world premieres and a digital promenade Youth Theatre production, directed by a CFYT alumni and connecting the cultural partners within the city centre. CFT welcomed back many world-class artists from previous years and introduced a new pool of talented professionals to our Chichester stages. Diversity and inclusivity remained at the heart of our programming; 28% of the acting company were artists of colour whilst a cohort of Assistant Directors ensured opportunities for artists from minority communities. There were no all-male creative teams and five of the productions were directed by women.

The introduction of the Chichester Spiegel tent as part of Festival 2019 presented an opportunity to add a third venue where we programmed more adventurous, fresh and contemporary work made by an eclectic range of artists, in order to introduce new theatre experiences to current audiences and to attract a new and more diverse demographic. The Spiegel tent was the perfect venue for a varied Events programme of cabaret, music, circus, comedy and family work, alongside opportunities for

young local artists, as well as transforming into a pub setting for a powerful and immersive production of Roy Williams's *Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads*. It delivered powerfully in terms of its engagement with younger and more diverse audiences and artists and demonstrated a significant appetite for a different kind of theatrical experience at CFT.

Festival 2019 comprised the following productions:

Festival Theatre

Shadowlands by William Nicholson

Plenty by David Hare

Oklahoma! by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II

Macbeth by William Shakespeare

Minerva Theatre

This Is My Family by Tim Firth

The Deep Blue Sea by Terence Rattigan

8 Hotels by Nicholas Wright

Hedda Tesman by Cordelia Lynn

The Butterfly Lion by Michael Morpurgo, adapted by Anna Ledwich

Promenade Performance

Crossing Lines by Anna Ledwich

Chichester Spiegeltent

Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads by Roy Williams

The Minerva Theatre production of *Hedda Tesman* was a co-production with The Lowry in Salford and Headlong Theatre with whom CFT had previously produced *Enron*, *This House* and *The House They Grew Up in*. The production played at The Lowry following its Chichester run. CFT's 2018 production of *The Watsons* transferred to the Menier Chocolate Factory in London in September 2019. *Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads* was due to transfer to the National Theatre in 2020, but unfortunately this was cancelled due to Covid-19.

The focus of the Winter Season was to present a complementary mix of touring productions for all ages with an emphasis on quality over quantity. Having experienced some negative audience feedback in 2018/19 regarding the standard of some of the presented touring dramas, we were keen to only present work that had been reviewed favourably or to work with producers with whom we had had positive experiences in the past. The result was encouraging with no overtly negative reviews and a great deal of praise for some of the riskier titles such as *Six* and *A Monster Calls*. Our Christmas production, *The Wizard of Oz*, proved to be another huge success for our Youth Theatre.

Audiences from within the Chichester district continue to make up 25% of CFT's audience annually. A detailed geographical analysis of where sales came from within the district can be found at Appendix 3.

LEARNING EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION

Throughout 2019/20, our Learning, Education and Participation (LEAP) team delivered an extensive range of activities, workshops and events for people of all ages, abilities and social backgrounds. A year-round participatory programme is delivered both at CFT and in satellite locations across the district. These core activities (totalling 62,500 attendances annually), combined with the rest of the vibrant outreach and community partnerships programme, form the foundation of CFT's community and public benefit strategy.

During the past year, we have succeeded in widening our reach to educational establishments, connected with more communities in socio-economically deprived areas, taken a prominent lead in the strategic framework for a new West Sussex Cultural Education Partnership initiative and hosted our first national conference on effective collaboration and partnership working across the UK. A programme of events aligned to the Festival and Winter season productions engaged over 7,900 people through 65 events.

Partnerships and Collaboration

2019/20 saw a particular focus on developing new partnerships, collaborations and pilot projects to engage with isolated or least engaged residents in the district, some particular highlights were:

- Tapestries – a radio play and photograph exhibition, developed in partnership with **Stonepillow**, led by LEAP Community Trainee and engaging individuals who use the services of the Stonepillow Hostel.
- Bamboo Cutter – a new play, written by a client of **The Chichester Centre**, a low-secure mental health facility, and performed by centre participants, presented in the Minerva Theatre
- A compilation of a music EP, recorded by participants from **The Chichester Centre**
- Us: Untold Stories – a performance project developed during a week-long residency with a group of unaccompanied asylum seekers, working in partnership with **asphaleia & Barely Methodical Troup**, a project led by a LEAP Trainee.
- A premiere performance of short films, devised, performed and directed by CFYT Fridays, the youth theatre group for young people with additional needs.
- Theatre Days – CFT hosts activities for Young Carers, families and unaccompanied asylum seekers, in partnership with **asphaleia & The Sanctuary**.
- 12 Stage to Screen Workshops in partnership with **Chichester Cinema at New Park**
- Pallant Late Takeover – a series of arts, costume and drama workshops led by the LEAP team in partnership with **Pallant House Gallery**
- Myths within the Roman Walls – a joint storytelling project in partnership with **Novium Museum and Chichester Library**
- Play in a Day – a devised performance project in partnership with **The Apeldram Centre**
- Weekly bedside storytelling sessions in the children's ward of **St Richard's Hospital**
- Theatre taster workshops for young people in partnership with the **Swanfield Centre**
- Opportunities for Young Parents to engage in weekly workshops with free tickets for family shows through a partnership with **St James Family Centre**
- Creative response sessions held in local care homes.
- Charitable partnerships developed with local charities **Sage House, Dementia Support and UK Harvest**.

Young People

CFT has built on its work to provide increased opportunities for young people to participate in creative workshops, as well as visit the theatre. This year, increased numbers (87) of work experience placements and shadowing opportunities were offered at CFT; 16 career events were held including at Midhurst Rother College; 21 holiday activities were offered for young people; a higher number (77) of moderated Arts Awards were presented than last year; 88 literacy development playwriting sessions were for held for schools and Festival Fridays was successfully launched – a schools' intervention programme, providing weekly alternative learning provision for primary school children identified as being disengaged with learning in a formal educational setting.

2019 saw a 19% increase in the number of children and young people attending performances at CFT, with schools' tickets increasing by 41%. *Macbeth*, attended by 92 schools, was the highest selling production amongst schools ever. The Prologue membership scheme for 16-25 year olds grew to over

9,600 members, a 17% increase on 2018/19, and 'Prologue Tuesdays', a popular fortnightly hang-out space for young people to work, read and relax was launched.

Chichester Festival Youth Theatre (CFYT)

CFT leads the industry in being the only major theatre in the UK to hand over its main stage to its Youth Theatre every Christmas, supported in the same way as any Festival season show. CFYT is one of the largest and finest youth theatres in the country and the 2019 Christmas production, *The Wizard of Oz*, was a huge achievement, involving 87 members of the youth theatre and supported by technical youth theatre students. It delighted a total audience of 23,000 including attendees at 'Relaxed' and simultaneous Polish translation performances, ensuring that the production was ever-more accessible to our wider community.

The summer promenade production *Crossing Lines* was initiated by ideas generated by CFT apprentices and young members of staff, written by CFT's Writer in Residence, Anna Ledwich, directed by CFYT alumni Dan Hill, and technically led by CFT sound and lighting apprentices and students of the technical youth theatre. The project connected the cultural providers within the city – Pallant House Gallery, Novium Museum and Chichester Cathedral.

Appendix 3 details the share of total sales associated with LEAP's youth and community events from within the district, along with the geographical spread of Chichester Festival Youth Theatre (CFYT) members.

Volunteers

The role and importance of volunteering and free events held with the community remains a focus and CFT proudly supports a year-round volunteering programme including regular weekly volunteers from Aldingbourne Trust, a charity supporting adults with learning disabilities to gain skills and increase employability. Volunteers also support the CFT Buddies Scheme, Archiving, Digitisation and Theatre Tours, delivering 280 sessions and engaging 1,000 participants annually.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

CFT was awarded a 4* (out of 5) rating under the Creative Green Certification scheme assessed by Julie's Bicycle, the recognised benchmark for sustainability achievement within the creative industries. This was the first time that CFT had entered this highly regarded scheme, and had done so with the desire to set a base level and receive recommendations and feedback to support improved sustainability moving forward. It was extremely pleasing to receive a 4* scoring of 76% based on the assessment criteria.

A responsibility to be "environmentally aware and contribute to CFT's green awareness" is now included as a responsibility of all staff within job descriptions, and is messaged to all freelance creatives and artists. CFT's staff Green Committee has been relaunched and will focus on developing new initiatives to continue to improve CFT's sustainability and introduce changes across the organisation.

A new video conferencing system at CFT and the London rehearsal rooms reduces the need for staff to travel for meetings, reducing environmental impact and financial cost, and improving productivity.

CFT hosted an open talk and discussion on the climate crisis in the Spiegeltent attended by staff and local community.

An increased focus on digital working has led to a reduction in consumables. Across the organisation there has been a noticeable move to a more green-thinking culture and a sense of shared responsibility for reducing consumables, energy-saving ideas and recycling of waste including food on site. This has been helped by a relationship established with the charity UK Harvest, a not for profit

perishable food rescue operation who already collect left-over food from CFT catering outlets and distribute it to the homeless via the Chichester-based charity Stonepillow. An education initiative led by UK Harvest with staff was well-received and resulted in a number of further recycling and initiatives in-house for food-waste reduction.

CFT's waste and recycling collection service has recently transfer to be managed by CDC. The move will provide a financial saving and a better quality of service and reliability together with a demonstrable concern for the environment. CDC will provide a waste analysis free of charge and work with the site to reduce waste and improve recycling. It is planned that they will deliver recycling engagement sessions with staff and help to set and achieve targets.

FINANCE+

CFT's statutory accounts for 2019/20 are attached at Appendix 1.

In 2015/16 Reading University undertook an Economic Impact Study of CFT. As in previous years, Appendix 4 uses the same model to estimate the economic impact of CFT in 2019/20 (assuming a 2% per annum inflationary increase to visitor spending). The Net impact generated for the district in 2019/20 is calculated to be £23,571,187, reflecting an increase from £22,704,639 in 2018/19. CFT, Pallant House and Novium Museum have discussed jointly commissioning an Economic Impact Study, this has been delayed due to Covid-19 but it remains the intention to undertake a full Economic Impact Study when feasible.

CONCLUSION

Despite the impact of Covid-19 on our business, it is heartening to reflect back on the successes and achievements of 2019/20. As the third highest achieving festival season ever for CFT, and with strong sales for Festival 2020 already in place alongside an increased level of financial support from individual donors through our various funding schemes, the organisation began the new financial year with a healthy reserve. Our financial position has helped CFT to weather the storm over the past eight months without redundancies and any immediate threat of closure and we are fortunate to be reopening our building to audiences once again at the end of October. We are planning a season for 2021 with caution knowing that the cost of delivering work on our stages without any sense of whether there will be a further lockdown or an audience ready and willing to return to the theatre is a huge risk for us.

2019/20 was a year where partnerships and engagement with our community was further deepened and embedded across all of our work and inclusion continues to be at the forefront of our objectives both on and off the stage for our artists, our workforce and audiences. We are committed to continuing to connect with and support the communities of the district and the wider theatre industry as we carefully navigate the challenging times ahead.

The on-going support of CDC, both financially, and through the support and engagement of councillor's, portfolio holders and staff is invaluable to CFT and we extend our thanks to CDC and the committee.

Kathy Bourne
Executive Director
20 October 2020

APPENDICIES

Appendix 1 – Statutory Accounts for the Financial Year 2019/20.

Appendix 2 – Arts Council England (ACE) feedback to CFT reflecting on Creative Case for Diversity.

Appendix 3 – Statistical analysis of sales from within the Chichester District

Appendix 4 – Estimate of CFT’s Economic Impact on the District, April 2019-March 2020.

Appendix 5* – 2019/20 Facts & Figures and Financial Analysis

*CFT has not produced an Annual Review of 2019/20 due to financial implications and limitation of resources associated to Covid-19, two pages that would usually feature within the Annual Review are attached at Appendix 5.