

# Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 16 November 2021

## Capital Theatres Company Performance Report 2020/21

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All <a href="#">46</a>
---	--

### 1. Recommendations

---

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee:
  - 1.1.1 Note the positive performance of Capital Theatres during 2020/21;
  - 1.1.2 Note that whilst the report focus is on 2020/21 company performance, the context of COVID-19 should be acknowledged and therefore the impact, mitigation, advocacy and recovery planning implemented by Capital Theatres as a result; and
  - 1.1.3 Refer this report to Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee.

**Paul Lawrence**

Executive Director of Place

Contact: Lindsay A Robertson, Culture Manager

E-mail: [Lindsay.robertson@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Lindsay.robertson@edinburgh.gov.uk) | Tel: 0131 529 6719

# Report

## Capital Theatres Company Performance Report 2020/21

### 2. Executive Summary

---

- 2.1 This is the eighth annual performance report prepared as a requirement of the Services and Funding Agreement process adopted in 2013/14.
- 2.2 This report encompasses 18 months from 16 March 2020 to September 2021. The period covers the enforced closure of the Festival and King's Theatres and Studio, the start Fiona Gibson's tenure as Chief Executive, and provides an overview of the exceptional period impacted by COVID-19.
- 2.3 The continued stability of the organisation has been achieved through strong leadership and advocacy achieving essential substantial emergency funding alongside maintaining staff and management team commitment and cohesion throughout. This business aptitude under extreme circumstances evidences the resilience of the Trust to date and moving forward.
- 2.4 Following a short delay in progress and planning as a result of the impacts of COVID-19, Capital Theatres also now continue with the King's Theatre Redevelopment Project. Regular project updates have been, and will continue to be, featured in the Culture and Communities Committee Business Bulletin.
- 2.5 Several significant existing and new activities have also been sustained, adapted, developed and delivered, working with key communities throughout this period.

### 3. Background

---

- 3.1 This is the eighth annual performance report prepared as a requirement of the Services and Funding Agreement process adopted in 2013/14.

### 4. Main report

---

- 4.1 Capital Theatres reports on its performance to Council Monitoring Officers as required by the Strategic Partnership Agreement on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis.
- 4.2 In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, the Leadership Advisory Panel in [March 2020](#) agreed that the Council priorities contained in the Strategic Partnership

Funding Agreement for 2020/21 should be suspended. It was also agreed that this funding could be re-purposed towards COVID19 impact mitigation activity. It was subsequently agreed by Committee in [March 2021](#) that this supportive approach to Council funds for Capital Theatres would be continued into 2021/22.

- 4.3 The Trust's survival also depended on the company's unrestricted reserves; many months of successful lobbying for essential substantial emergency funding grants; public crowd funding and fundraising campaigns; short term borrowing from the Trust's Theatre Development Fund; and collaboration with producers facing postponement and cancellation of shows.
- 4.4 The Trust also focused on communication, retention and engagement amongst their staff through this period of furlough and uncertainty. It should be noted here too, that very sadly during this time, the Trust lost a member of their box office team, to COVID-19, and Scottish actor, comedian and regular panto lead, Andy Gray who passed away in January 2021.
- 4.5 Under these exceptionally challenging circumstances, Capital Theatres has continued to deliver services to their communities and develop new strands of creative work in 2020/21:
  - 4.5.1 An online engagement programme was developed, 'Raise the Curtain' which included creativity sessions for children, back stage tours, films of staff talking about their roles, radio plays and the 'Tea & Jam' and 'Contactless Afternoon Tea Parties', all to help to maintain some structure, creativity and social contact with their most vulnerable audiences;
  - 4.5.2 Given the closure of the theatres and Studio in March 2020, several dementia-friendly events also had to be cancelled. Continuity for participants being very important, the programme was adapted to deliver a remote series of events informed by the participants and created by staff and artists working from home;
  - 4.5.3 'Contactless Afternoon Tea' deliveries to approximately 70 people in the Lothians, expanded in partnership with Dementia Friendly East Lothian. The entertainment was pre-recorded and available online or posted out in DVD format and baked goods were delivered by local bakers;
  - 4.5.4 'A Brew and a Blether', a relaxed Zoom drop-in chat for people with lived experience of dementia evolved into a variety of events shaped by the participants and their needs;
  - 4.5.5 'Tea and Jam' moved onto Zoom. The monthly sessions encourage everyone to grab an instrument, or sing, and jam along;
  - 4.5.6 'Sundown Stories' was a series of short stories adapted for film for anyone who might enjoy a calming and relaxing story. The stories, written by and for persons living with dementia, were delivered in a calming environment, at a gentle pace and with a soothing tone;
  - 4.5.7 The Trust also adapted its annual 'Care Settings Theatre Tour' commission to create a series of short audio dramas, 'When the Sun Meets the Sky', for

people living with dementia, their loved ones and carers, with accompanying sensory resource packs and a guide as to how to make their own. This was delivered through a collaboration between Capital Theatres and the Traverse Theatre;

- 4.5.8 'Joy to the Moment' - Capital Theatres put out a call online for short films of people being creative outdoors. These were edited together and sent to people shielding indoors or those in care settings isolating in their rooms. King's Ambassadors Grant Stott, Ian Rankin and Alexander McCall Smith provided films, as well as others from children at The Edinburgh Steiner School, local artists, dancers and comedians and other members of the public;
- 4.5.9 Although the 2020 King's Panto season could not go ahead, 'Panto Presents' did continue bringing an appropriately adapted panto experience to children and families in hospital over the festive period. This involved a completely new approach where a 'box of delights' designed to transform into the King's Theatre with some easy-to-follow instructions was delivered to each child. Alongside COVID-safe bedside performances on the wards, the Trust's team also captured this year's original relaxed performance as a short film, 'Panto Presents ....Where Has Panto Gone?' which was watched by families in the hospital over the Christmas period; and
- 4.5.10 Lastly, 'Curtains Up' was a brand-new programme where the children created unique and playful scenes which were projected and traced onto the inside of their hospital curtains.
- 4.6 The Trust also held a competition for freelance artists to secure a commission to create a work of art for the Festival Theatre. Edinburgh-based emerging artist Sophie Fields won the commission and created a statement of thanks to all who supported Capital Theatres over 2020, in her textile-based installation 'Hanging by a million threads'. The work was made up of hundreds of comments from supporters of Capital Theatres' Crowdfunder campaign.
- 4.7 In a producing partnership with Pitlochry Festival Theatre Capital Theatres launched a brand-new 'Musical Commissioning Hub' in the autumn of 2020. The first call out for submissions has resulted in three finalists who have been awarded seed commissions and are being supported in the development phase of their projects with scratch performances for an invited audience scheduled in the Capital Theatres Studio in September 2021 and at Pitlochry Festival Theatre in early 2022. The finalists are Niloo-Far Khan with 'The Light Travels' (Working Title); Shonagh Murray with 'Nessie', and Tommy Antonio with 'Rebel'.

## **5. Next Steps**

---

- 5.1 Capital Theatres will continue to adapt and deliver against both their Business Plan as well as relevant elements of the Council Strategic Partnership Funding Agreement going forward. The Third Party Cultural Grants Review agreed by

Committee in [June 2019](#) recommended the creation of a Strategic Partnership Theatres Grouping of which Capital Theatres is the lead partner. The grouping includes the Lyceum Theatre, the Traverse, Edinburgh Performing Arts Development (EPAD) and Lung Ha Theatre Company. Evidently, the Priorities and Targets included in the related Funding Agreement have been overtaken by the COVID-19 crisis. All Strategic Partners (revenue funded organisations and groupings) are being asked to report on the re-purposing of their funding with reference to the original Priorities included in the original Funding Agreements, and on subsequent mitigation, resilience and activity/event re-design activity.

- 5.2 Business and programme planning options continue in the exceptional context of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and associated Public Health Guidelines.

## **6. Financial impact**

---

- 6.1 The Council awarded a grant of £586,130 to Capital Theatres in 2020/21.
- 6.2 Capital Theatres continue to successfully manage and deliver a robust financial performance.
- 6.3 The Council has agreed a £4m capital grant and Prudential Borrowing of up to £5m to the King's Redevelopment Project. The release of these resources will be subject to Capital Project reporting requirements.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

---

- 7.1 Capital Theatres has an extensive and successful Engagement Programme reaching a very wide community base alongside its main theatres and Studio programmes seeking to deliver accessible programme of activities and theatre.
- 7.2 Capital Theatres meet their Council Funding Agreement Conditions.
- 7.3 Capital Theatres has an Environmental Policy – [Towards a Greener Future](#).

## **8. Background reading/external references**

---

- 8.1 Capital Theatres website: [Capital Theatres](#)
- 8.2 [Capital Theatres Annual review 2018/19](#)
- 8.3 Capital Theatres Company Performance Report 2019/20, report to Culture and Communities Committee, [17 November 2020](#)

## **9. Appendices**

---

- 9.1 None.