

**Hull Truck Theatre**

**Audience Development Strategy Update 2017-18**

**Introduction**

Since 2015 the theatre has worked to build audiences and income using a strategy that can broadly be broken into three strands – re-engagement of lapsed audiences, retention of current audiences and development of new audiences. Audiences have increased from 48,375 in 2014/15 to 75,482 in 2016/17.

Having had a low return on investment from campaigns specifically targeted at lapsed attenders (such as ‘we miss you’ mailings and special ‘welcome back’ offers), since 2016 target groups have been split into current audiences (attended within the last three years) and new audiences (never attended or attended over three years ago).

2017-18 will see the further development of strategies which have proved effective at increasing audiences, including: building relationships by rewarding frequency of attendance and early booking, working with partner organisations to reach new audiences, accessible pricing, building trust in the Hull Truck Theatre brand, raising profile and increasing positive perception of the theatre.

The first sell-out production of Hull’s year as UK City of Culture 2017, *The Hypocrite*, was the theatre’s fastest selling production and was covered extensively by national press. The theatre will continue to capitalise on the increased profile, media attention and greater public confidence throughout Hull2017 and as part of the theatre’s Year of Exceptional Drama.

The theatre gathers, submits and interprets audience data in a variety of ways, using it to inform campaigns and decision making. Box office data is submitted to The Audience Agency and ShowStats, and Hull Truck Theatre is part of a benchmarking project conducted by &Co. Marketing between five producing theatres in Yorkshire. As part of Hull2017, cultural venues across the city are joined up via Spektrix, which will give greater insight into local and visiting audience behaviour. Audience experience is monitored and fed into national data analysis via Purple Seven’s Did You Enjoy That? survey.

Areas of focus for 2017/18 will be:

* Current audiences – retention and repeat visits
* New audiences – culturally engaged audiences from beyond a 30 minute drive time
* New audiences – local audiences from areas of low arts engagement

**Targets**

Audience and finance targets and actuals for **produced work** (from Business Plan 2015-2018).

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Aud. Target | Aud. Actual | Fin. Target | Fin. Actual |
| 2014-15  (*A Taste of Honey, Cinderella*) | 49% | 49% | 40% | 38% |
| 2015-16  (*The Ladykillers, Dancing Through the Shadows, Sleeping Beauty, Martha Josie and the Chinese Elvis*) | 46% | 47% | 41% | 34% |
| 2016-17  (*Folk, Educating Rita, The Gaul, Treasure Island, The Hypocrite*) | 51% | 64% | 46% | 50% |
| 2017-18 TARGETS | 56% |  | 51% |  |

**Areas of focus**

*Retention and repeat visits*

**Target audiences:**

The theatre’s top three Audience Spectrum segments are\*:

* Dormitory Dependables, 24%
* Trips and Treats, 20%
* Commuterland Culturebuffs, 14%

The top 10 audience attendance postcodes are identifiable as the more affluent areas of the city (Trips and Treats), including around the university, and as the surrounding villages in the East Riding (Dormitory Dependables & Commuterland Culturebuffs).

We know that 63% of all audiences only attend once a year\*\*.

**Programme strands:**

* Modern interpretations of classics (e.g. *Richard III*)
* Plays with local resonance (e.g. *Mighty Atoms*)
* Comedy
* Live streamed films

**Messaging:**

* Drama Deal offering multi-buy discounts
* Drama Deal Plus offering priority booking
* Dinner & a Show deals
* Targeted marketing with suggestions based on booking history
* Positive profile of the theatre and brand, including media coverage and Year of Exceptional Drama for Hull2017 and beyond

*Culturally engaged audiences from beyond a 30 minute drive time*

**Target audiences:**

The theatre currently reaches just 4% of the Commuterland Culturebuffs population of Hull and East Riding of Yorkshire\* and 81% of bookers came from HU postcodes in 2015/16~. There is potential to reach new audiences with the East Riding of Yorkshire and from cities with high levels of culturally engaged audiences within an hour’s drive time, including York, Leeds and Sheffield.

**Programme strands:**

* New plays with national and international resonance (e.g. *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*)
* Work with high profile cast or creative team members (e.g. *James Graham*)

**Messaging:**

* Positive profile of the theatre and brand, including media coverage and Year of Exceptional Drama for Hull2017 and beyond
* Targeted digital advertising using geotargeting and profiling
* Outdoor advertising on transport routes

*Local audiences from areas of low arts engagement*

**Target audiences:**

Hull is the third most deprived local authority in the UK, with low levels of engagement with the arts. Facebook Families in particular are significantly over-represented Audience Spectrum segments compared to national data^. Facebook Families make up 20% of adults living in HU postcodes (compared to 12% in Yorkshire & The Humber)\*.

**Programme strands:**

* Plays with local resonance (e.g. *Mighty Atoms*)
* Family Christmas (e.g. *A Christmas Carol*)

**Messaging:**

* Accessible ticketing via Pay What You Can nights, £5/£2 tickets for patrons receiving unemployment benefits, family ticket discounts
* Working with partners including community organisations, charities and schools
* Facebook advertising and word of mouth
* Community Dialogues – our Paul Hamlyn Foundation-funded project researching barriers to attendance in two areas of low arts engagement in Hull

\*Audience Finder Audience Report 2015/16

\*\*Baker Richard Customer Analysis Report 2015

~House Lights Report (&Co. marketing) 2015/16

^The Audience Agency Area Profile Report 2015/16