

## **Usher Hall Performance Report**

The Usher Hall is currently in Year 3 of the current manifestation of the Business Plan (2002 to 2005). This report aims to report on the performance of the Usher Hall in the last financial year (2003-4). This will serve to report on the Usher Hall's contribution to the Museums and Arts Sub-Service Plan and, therefore, the Department of Culture and Leisure Service Plan.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- *Objective 1:* to increase the range, quality and number of concerts and lifelong learning projects through our own promotions and increasing the range and number of cultural partners
- *Objective 2:* to ensure that the Usher Hall audience base is developed and expanded through active programme collaborations and specific, audience focused initiatives
- *Objective 3:* to improve and enhance our quality of service and customer care making the Usher Hall an indispensable focal point for music with the public and partners, and be recognised as one of the UK's premier concert halls
- *Objective 4:* to provide a dynamic, fun and motivational environment where staff can develop and flourish
- *Objective 5:* to complete a second phase capital programme to provide all Usher Hall users with international standard facilities and resources
- *Objective 6:* to improve financial efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in order to deliver the business plan and operate as a successful business unit within City of Edinburgh Council

To achieve these objectives, Usher Hall has in place a number of strategic plans consisting of: Artistic and Programming, Lifelong learning, Commercial, People and Finance. These are supported and realised through a comprehensive Marketing Plan and Strategy.

### **ARTISTIC AND PROGRAMMING REPORT 2003/4**

Key highlights:

- The success of programming of high gala events such as Kiri Te Kanawa, Bryn Terfel and Renee Fleming averaged 77% houses. This is the Usher Hall's strongest programme attendance area, slightly ahead of rock and pop (74% average attendance)
- A second International Classics series of 8 concerts was completed to great critical acclaim,
- The Jazz World and Folk season continued to provide a strong programme, both critically and in terms of audiences, attracting over 13,000 people. The strength of our commitment to world music was recognised internationally through the hosting of the BBC Radio 3 Awards for World Music concert
- The Music Beyond Mainstream Network provided a forum for networking artists in different genres and developing collaborative, cost-saving partnerships
- The inauguration of the Usher Hall organ was held in June and this has been followed up with a string of lunchtime concerts and workshop demonstrations by the City Organist, John Kitchen season
- Arts hires increased across the board, reflecting the pattern of increasing usage of the hall by audiences for all sorts of events as well as the increased support that the new management team can offer to hirers

### **LIFELONG LEARNING REPORT 2003/4**

Key highlights:

- Completion of equipment audit for new educational space
- Voice of a City project involved the SCO, Usher Hall and hundreds of participants from various amateur groups.
- Pre-concert talks have increased in popularity over the year, attracting over 100 participants and providing a valuable insight into orchestral music
- An 27% year on year increase in use of the hall for concerts specifically designed for young people attracted over 12,000 audience members to the hall
- A series of organ workshops supported the inauguration of the Usher Hall Organ and subsequent recital season.

- Doors Open Day attracted nearly 1,000 people into the hall for a range of educational concerts, presentations and 'behind-the-scenes' tours

### **AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2003/4**

Key highlights:

- The appointment of a full marketing team.
- The submission to Scottish Arts Council (subsequently successful) of funding towards a Pricing Policy Research Project
- A 16% year on year increase in total audience figures, rising to a 42% increase for the total audience excluding the festival
- Completion and publication of Usher Hall Audience Research Survey by The Audience Business, providing valuable demographic and customer satisfaction information. 1,000 people surveyed across range of events.
- The development of the Usher Hall website used regularly by up to 26% of our audience
- Publication of new Usher Hall hire packs aimed at promoters and commercial hirers

### **COMMERCIAL REPORT 2003/4**

Key highlights:

- A 14% year on year increase in total box office income
- A tendering process resulted in the purchase of a new box office system, to be installed in 2004 with an online sales facility
- An 14% increase in total hires resulted in 12% increase in hire income compared to 2002/3, with a marked increase (66%) in rock & pop hires, vindicating the hall's development work in this area
- Achievement of a 16% increase in bar sales as a direct result of the increased audience numbers and number of shows
- Over £600,000 generated towards the Phase 2 capital programme through trusts, foundations and individual giving
- The first meeting of the Scottish Music Venues Network is chaired by Usher Hall, with the aim of establishing programming and knowledge partnerships

### **PEOPLE STRATEGY REPORT 2003/4**

Key highlights:

- Customer satisfaction survey interviews 1,000 patrons across a range of issues, resulting in a 4.4 out 5 score for quality of events, and 80% of respondents viewing Usher Hall events as good value for money
- All staff trained in customer care through Winter Training and other programmes
- Introduction of measurable customer complaint forms
- A successful bid to Scottish Arts Council for c. £2,800 to take 4 staff members to Womex 2003 in Seville (music industry tradefair) as part of training/development plans
- Appointment of a number of key vacancies including
- Review of Usher Hall Health and Safety procedures
- Completion of wheelchair platforms for promenade style concerts

### **FINANCIAL STRATEGY REPORT 2003/4**

Key highlights:

- A 14% increase in total turnover compared to 2003/4, reaching a figure of over £2.8 million in ticket sales, bar income, box office agency and hires
- Introduction of risk management form for programming own-promotions has provided a radical improvement in assessing the risk and viability of the Usher Hall programme and artists promoted
- Regular meetings of the Usher Hall Working Group has provided an improved understanding of Usher Hall finances and monitoring

**Karl Chapman, General Manager**  
**September 2004**