



e: info@savethefuturist.co.uk

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05/01/2017

Dear Councillors

We write to you at an extremely critical time with an exciting and hitherto unexplored proposition.

Based on a pioneering, sustainable business model, this document will summarise our medium and long-term goals for retaining, restoring and modernising the Futurist Theatre as a vital cultural and economic asset.

Our goal for a reopened Futurist has received wholehearted support from a number of national bodies and companies, including the Cinema Theatre Association, The Theatres Trust and John Thompson and Partners and it is our hope that, upon considering the information contained within this document, councillors will vote to grant an immediate stay of execution - allowing sufficient time for the funding and preparation of a meticulously researched business plan and feasibility study based on our vibrant business model.

It is also our hope that this may kindle a dialogue between *Save the Futurist* and SBC with our common concern for the wellbeing of our borough at its heart.

We believe that this issue is above party politics and ask that you fully consider and reconsider the information contained within.

Our vision is to provide Scarborough and the borough with a viable, world-class, landmark theatre capable of improving residents' quality of life through the provision of the highest quality entertainment, fostering a dramatic and sustained increase in cultural tourism and therefore continually generating millions of pounds for the local economy.

It is understandable that, as custodians of the Futurist, SBC wishes to see a robust business plan for a sustainable Futurist Theatre. Although invitations have previously been made to this effect, it was impossible for *Save the Futurist* to undertake this work at the time.

However, as we are all aware, it is not too late.

The intervening time has not been spent idly. Our group has become a conduit for the vast local support for the Futurist; our Facebook following exceeding 4,000 people and a live video stream of our December public meeting having reached over 19,000 people.

Having since recruited theatre practitioners, architecture and business experts, we are now able to offer a business proposal hitherto unexplored in any plan or study yet submitted to SBC.

Through extensive work reaching out to the local community we are also able to take advantage of voluntary contributions from local trades and businesses and offer professional structural repairs to the theatre roof and removal of the Futurist's cladding at no cost to SBC. This will improve the aesthetic of the building whilst making it safe and secure for the months required to fund and compile our business plan.

This truly is a community enterprise with real community ambition - something which SBC should surely nurture.

Adam Flynn

Debi Silver

Adam Flynn: +44 (0) 7952 548 074 **Debi Silver:** +44 (0) 7946 729 243



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Immediate Stay of Execution – Business Plan and Feasibility Study

Although reports, plans and studies have been submitted to SBC over the years, we believe that one model – our “Mega Musical” model – has the greatest potential to generate millions of pounds for the local economy and has never been fully explored for consideration by SBC.

This was echoed by the former Director of The Theatres Trust Mhora Samuel in her letter of 2013 to Cllr Tom Fox regarding the 2012 Wafer Hadley update of the Burton/Cogo-Fawcett report.

The paper starts with the proposition that “the continued operation of a Theatre in the current site is unsustainable” and outlines the process through which this conclusion has emerged. Whilst we would acknowledge that the process has been thorough, we would argue that it is flawed, and, as a result, has come to some conclusions about The Futurist Theatre and the wider theatre infrastructure within Scarborough which are not correct.

For councillors to approve demolition of the Futurist without fully considering all other options would do a great disservice to the residents they were elected to serve.

At this stage, Save the Futurist are not asking for the lease of the building. Only the time to fully investigate our business model and submit it to SBC for full, fair and transparent consideration.

Our aim is to prove conclusively whether or not there is a sustainable future for the Futurist.

Save the Futurist (timescale 12-18 months):

- Form a charitable trust - currently in progress with CAVCA 12/2016
- Raise non-council funds circa £40-£50k e.g. *The Architectural Heritage fund*
- Arrange and undertake phased repair of Futurist roof, removal of cladding and cleaning of auditorium using voluntary contributions of local businesses and tradespeople (see appendix)
- Employ independent consultants e.g. *Bonnar Keenlyside (Burnley Empire feasibility study)*, *Jura Consultants (North Berwick Arts Centre feasibility study)*, *ACL Consultancy Solutions (Kings Theatre, Southsea feasibility study)* to compile feasibility study based on hitherto unexplored business model
- Consult with architecture, theatre and construction experts to investigate, design and fully cost the required works outlined in the business model
- Present findings of feasibility study and business plan to SBC for full consideration

Scarborough Borough Council:

- Allow an immediate stay of execution permitting sufficient time for completion of above
- Enter into immediate dialogue with *Save the Futurist* regarding access for roof repairs and cladding removal
- Grant building access to *Save the Futurist* and other required personnel in order to allow a full investigation of the building condition to provide the design team with sufficient information to progress initial design work and costings.
- Grant access to all structural and ground investigation work that the Council has carried out to date
- Give full, fair and transparent consideration to resulting business plan and feasibility study with a view to implementing model contained within

Business Model

This exciting proposition is more than simply a statement of our ambition for the Futurist; it is a statement of our ambition for Scarborough and the borough.

We wish to see the Futurist fully modernised and beautifully restored as a central part of the tourism and cultural provision for both the town and the wider region. We also believe that an updated, sustainable Futurist Theatre - re-fitted as a world-class facility - would bring untold economic benefits to each and every resident of Scarborough; theatregoer or not.

Structural Work and Modernisation

Key to the Futurist succeeding as a thriving commercial arts hub, are structural works, expansion and a comprehensive modernisation programme.

It is currently impossible to give accurate plans and costing for the required works including the crucial addition of dock doors and expansion of wing space. However, with sufficient building access, consulting with architects, engineers and quantity surveyors, we will provide a full set of plans and costing within our business plan based on investigation of the following points.

Please Note:

- Feasibility and business plan will review the phasing of these works as they may be funding dependent
- The Futurist Theatre Trust will be responsible for ongoing repairs to the fabric of the building upon agreement of lease
- Required work will, in all likelihood, include the takeover and conversion of retail units at southern end of the site for inclusion into the business. As these have also been slated for demolition, this will be of no loss to SBC
- Plans may include additional stories above the current structure in keeping with the original architectural aesthetic

Building wide structural works

- Replace roof
- Remove cladding and sympathetically restore original building façade
- Asbestos removal

Building wide modernisation

- Security and fire alarm systems
- Overhaul of heating, cooling, ventilation and hot water systems
- Investigate use of solar, wind, tidal or wave power (possible second phase)
- Investigate use of rainwater harvesting (possible second phase)
- Addition of substantial network and IT facilities – include new website and integrated online ticketing system
- Update/overhaul power supply and electrical wiring including CEE form, powerlock, domestic lighting, emergency lighting and 13 amp
- Addition of zoneable building wide PA system
- Tasteful redesign of architectural lighting
- Addition of interior and exterior digital billboards and signage

Structural improvements to stage house

- Expansion of stage left, stage right and upstage wing space to maximum possible dimensions
- Addition of dock door in consultation with haulage firms e.g. Paul Matthew International
- Investigate haulage parking & access from street in consultation with haulage firms, NYCC and SBC
- Addition of large sub-stage area
- Flattening of raked stage
- Addition/expansion of orchestra pit
- Investigate replacement of gridiron
- Possible conversion to double-purchase counterweight fly system
- Improved access to fly floor and fly tower removing need for access ladder

Modernisation of stage systems

- Substantial overhaul of lighting, sound, stage and AV infrastructure in consultation with relevant experts and practitioners – thoroughly investigate and prepare for changing technologies for coming decades.
 - Replace and rewire all dimmable 15amp LX rigging positions front of house and onstage. Additional provision of 16amp and/or 32amp hard power in these positions
 - Purchase of basic “general cover” stage lights, industry standard 15amp stage lighting dimmers and industry standard lighting desk
 - Redesign and replacement of signal cabling, tie lines, patch panels including DMX, Network, cue lights, comms and AV
 - Replace and rewire all sound rigging positions front of house and onstage
 - Purchase of basic stage sound system and industry standard sound desk
- Replace or update safety curtain and drencher system
- Investigate becoming broadcast ready with outside broadcast and live recording infrastructure for HD, 4K and 8K

Structural improvements to backstage areas

- Expansion of stage door/backstage reception and administration area
- Reorganisation and modernisation of dressing room facilities
- Addition of en suite and company shower facilities
- Addition of company offices for touring staff
- Additional offices for building staff
- Addition of meeting/boardroom(s)
- Addition of green room/communal area
- Addition of wig, costume and laundry facilities
- Addition of substantial rehearsal studio matching stage and portion of wing space dimensions - possible second use as additional performance venue
- Addition of basic recording studio/music room facility

Modernisation of backstage areas

- Replace show relay, monitors and PA system
- Free, secure, high speed WiFi for building and touring staff
- Improved security procedures for stage door access
- Improved security for dressing room access
- Improve access to all backstage areas

Structural improvements to public areas

- Reorganisation and expansion of front of house infrastructure e.g. box office, foyer, entrance, access, bars and toilets
- Addition of Restaurant and piano bar with rooftop terrace

Modernisation of public areas

- Integrated POS systems for box office, website, bar, merchandise and restaurant sales
- Improve access to all public areas
- Update, add or replace where necessary all bar, kitchen and catering facilities
- Sympathetically redecorate auditorium and front of house areas in keeping with architectural aesthetic – including domestic lighting, houselights and theatre seating (possible second phase)

Funding for Structural and Modernisation Work

- Upon guarantee of tenure, seek funding from bodies including *National Lottery*
- Seek corporate and private sponsorship of the Futurist's 2,155 seats in return for "membership" perks e.g. two tickets annually with complimentary refreshments and backstage tour
 - £2,000 per seat will generate £4,310,000
 - £1,000 per seat will generate £2,155,000

Key Operational Points

- To be operated by The Futurist Theatre Trust on a long-term lease (50 years +) at peppercorn rent
 - Rates to be paid from year 2
 - Will not rely on council funding or subsidy for operating costs
- Dramatically increase Scarborough's cultural tourism by becoming and remaining a dynamic, pioneering, world-class facility in order to attract the highest quality commercially successful product
- Reinstate the Futurist as a key player on the number 1 national touring grid
- Aspire to a "*Scarborough Sees it First*" model rivalling "*Manchester gets it first*" (see appendix) by offering spacious, flexible, cutting-edge production facilities, a dedicated local audience and dynamic and knowledgeable staff.
 - Scarborough has seen many years success as a town of world premieres. Amongst others - including *The Woman in Black* - more than 70 of renowned playwright Sir Alan Ayckbourn's works have premiered in the town prior to west end or Broadway transfers
- Ensure highest quality staffing at all levels reflected in salaries and wages in line with and above UKT/BECTU guidelines
 - Run apprentice schemes within relevant departments ensuring the highest level of training, whilst nurturing and instilling creative and professional conduct thus investing in future generations
- Operate primarily as a receiving theatre favouring A-rated large-scale touring productions or "mega musicals" whilst also offering an exciting programme of drama, comedy, opera, dance, smaller scale musicals (B-rated), annual pantomime and possible occasional cinema use
 - Tender annual pantomime to nationally recognised production companies in years 1-3 e.g. *First Family*, *QDos* and *Evolution*.
 - Transition to producing an annual pantomime in house by year 4
 - Foster links with production companies and other producing theatres, possibly leading to occasional investment as a co-producer of musicals and/or drama by year 5
 - Investigate occasional in house production of musicals and drama for national tours and/or west end transfers by year 10 e.g. *Leicester Curve* and *Chichester Festival Theatre*
- Make accessible the highest quality facility to residents and visitors of all walks of life
 - Investigate scheme offering timetabled use of shower and laundry facilities to local homeless charities e.g. *Foundation*
 - Foster close links with neighbouring residents offering annual discount for certain performances
 - Commit to regular signed, captioned, audio described and relaxed performances
- Spearhead a broader cultural tourism strategy for the borough in partnership with other venues of all sizes and programming
 - Spearhead healthy co-operation between Scarborough's theatres and performance venues to ensure complimentary programming
 - May lead to joint marketing initiative with venues, hotels, restaurants, arts institutions and other businesses across the borough e.g. *Worthing Theatres* and *Manchester Theatres* offering ticketing, dining and hotel package deals from a central ticketing office
 - Investigate improved transport links primarily focussing on more frequent, later operating train services connecting Scarborough's night time economy to the wider region

Figures are indicative and will need more benchmarking as part of a proper business planning exercise

Projected Box Office Take – based on average ticket price (80/20 Box Office split with producers) and programming of comparable venue

Years 1-3

FULL HOUSE – 2,155 seats

	No.Perfs	Mean/Perf	Mean/Annual
Panto – tendered	48	£11,744.75	£563,748.00
Musical	203	£18,748.50	£3,805,945.50
Comedy	7	£12,714.50	£89,001.50
Opera	5	£12,499.00	£62,495.00
Dance	37	£12,770.53	£472,509.61
Total	300		£4,993,699.61

HALF HOUSE – 1,077 seats

	No.Perfs	Mean/Perf	Mean/Annual
Panto – tendered	48	£5,872.38	£281,874.00
Musical	203	£9,374.25	£1,902,972.75
Comedy	7	£6,357.25	£44,500.75
Opera	5	£6,249.50	£31,247.50
Dance	37	£6,385.27	£236,254.81
Total	300		£2,496,849.81

Year 4-5

FULL HOUSE – 2,155 seats

	No.Perfs	Mean/Perf	Mean/Annual
Panto – produced	48	£58,723.75	£2,818,740.00
Musical	203	£18,748.50	£3,805,945.50
Comedy	7	£12,714.50	£89,001.50
Opera	5	£12,499.00	£62,495.00
Dance	37	£12,770.53	£472,509.61
Total	300		£7,248,691.61

HALF HOUSE – 1,077 seats

	No.Perfs	Mean/Perf	Mean/Annual
Panto – produced	48	£29,361.88	£1,409,370.00
Musical	203	£9,374.25	£1,902,972.75
Comedy	7	£6,357.25	£44,500.75
Opera	5	£6,249.50	£31,247.50
Dance	37	£6,385.27	£236,254.81
Total	300		£5,033,715.81

Other Revenue Streams (est. £750,000 - £850,000 gross)

- Lease of café/restaurant
- Sale of concessions e.g. programmes, light refreshments
- 25% of merchandise sales
- Bar sales
- Backstage tours
- Rehearsal room hire
- Meeting room hire
- Recording studio/music room hire

Projected Annual Operating Costs (est, £1,400,000 years 1-3) (est. £1,600,000 from year 4)

- Staffing £750,000
- Other costs including utilities £650,000
- Annual pantomime production (from year 4) £150,000 - £200,000

Sustained positive impact on local economy

Scarborough's local economy has already suffered as a result of the closure of the Futurist. A regenerated and refurbished theatre based on our "mega musicals" model would benefit the local economy to the tune of many millions of pounds annually through a dramatic increase in cultural tourism.

Mega Musical (see appendix)

In 2013 an article in the Manchester Evening News gave an insight into the benefits that the 2012 tour of The Lion King brought to Manchester's local economy.

"During its 21-week run in 2012, Manchester's tourism and leisure providers - such as hoteliers and restaurateurs - were estimated to have taken a massive £15m extra revenue on the back of the show...Playing to more than 322,000 fans at 166 performances...visitors [travelled] from as far north as the Shetland Islands, more than 460 miles away...sixty per cent of the audience have travelled from outside the region to see the production and 64pc were visiting the Palace [Theatre] for the first time, generating huge benefits for the city."

- It is clear to see that productions of this calibre bring huge cultural and economic benefits to the relatively small number of regional theatres capable of hosting them.
- A single run of 166 performances may be ambitious for Scarborough however based on this example, we can estimate that a mega musical would benefit the local economy to the tune of £90,000 per performance (full house) or £40pp. This equates to roughly £18,000,000 annually based on 203 musical performances estimated on page 7

Sample of Letters of Intent

INFINITI SCAFFOLDING LIMITED
Unit 6
Olympian Business Park
Cayton Low Road
Scarborough
YO11 3BT
T. 01723 500 888
E. info@infinitiscaffolding.co.uk



8th December 2016

Dear Mr Kitson

RE: Assist with the Futurist

Following our conversation on Tuesday 6th December 2016, we would be happy to assist you with the removal of the façade on the front elevation of the Futurist Theatre Scarborough. We are willing to provide the following works:

Erect / Dismantle Scaffolding.

All Lifts to be protected with visqueen for public protection.

Removal of the Façade.

Harris fencing for protection.

We have noted that skips will be provide by A Brunton, for the debris removal.

all scaffolding with be erected to TG20 guidelines

If this project goes ahead, we will provide the necessary RAMS to the principle contractor.

Kind Regards

**Joe Naylor
Alex Willgrass**

Pure Steel Construction

Telephone
Mobile 07806 556355



ESTIMATE / QUOTATION

Customer Name Ken Kitson Date 4/01/17
Assist with the futurist
Address
Foreshore Road, Scarborough
Post Code
07711235989 assistwiththefuturist@outlook.com
Tel No Mobile Email

Hello Ken ,

Please except my help with the futurist project, My company ' Pure Steel Construction ' specialise in Steel erection , Welding and fabrication , managing and supervising large projects (The Shard of glass , London , Olympic Stadium , Cheese Grater , Walky talky tower are just a few we have worked on)

We specialise in taking old buildings down and our engineers can make safe the project whilst assisting with any works, I am myself a 'Temporary Works Co-ordinator' 'So I am used to propping and strengthening old buildings like this.

We also Plan crane lifts and supervise any crane-age as we have our own 'Appointed persons and crane supervisors.

Please check out our website (<http://www.puresteelconstruction.co.uk>) and like I said I would be willing to come down and manage and supervise any works with my certificates plus I can throw a couple of men at the initial works to get it started-Certification – Lee Hare

SMSTS , SSSTS, NVQ , CPCS , CSCS , EMTA , ENTRA , CITB .

Thanks

Lee Hare (Director)

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject: Futurist - Scarborough

Date: Wed, 4 Jan 2017 10:08:57 -0000

From: CRMS Ltd <info@crmsltd.co.uk>

To: assistwiththefuturist@outlook.com

Ken

I am extremely interested in supporting the restoration of this fabulous theatre back to its former glory.

We are a Construction Company in roofing and cladding works for new and refurbishment developments.

We are able to remove and dispose of existing asbestos cladding and replace with new insulated composite roof cladding.

This will include guttering and other necessary products.

There will be costs involved however these will be at a reduced rate from our specialist manufacturers and suppliers.

Trust the above is of interest and look forward to speaking to you.

Mobile Number 07717133445.

Many Thanks

Paul



CRMS Ltd offer a "One Stop Shop" Facility for Refurbishment, Maintenance, New Build Works and Surveys

BEFORE



MJW Deepclean
Carpet & Upholstery Cleaning

www.mjwdeepclean.com

03/01/2017

Dear Ken Kitson/Sue Slee

Just to confirm that my company have offered to deep clean & stainguard the seating & carpeted areas of Scarboroughs futurist theatre as our gift to Scarborough.

The family & myself have had many happy days out & holidays to Scarborough and this is our way of giving something back.

We continue to offer our support for the save the futurist group and if we can also help in any other way please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Many thanks & keep up the great work

Mark Walton



CHARTERED BUILDING SURVEYORS

Fishers Farm House, Town Street, Settrington, Malton, YO17 8NR
Tel: 01944 768561, Mobile 0748 4646778, Email : matthew@mkn-surveyors.com
Web : www.mkn-surveyors.com

Dear Debi

Re: Structural Survey for the Futurist at Scarborough.

Following our conversation, I can confirm that my fee for carrying out a structural survey at the Futurist would be £3500 + vat. This survey would cover, the roof where accessible, gutters, walls, fenestration, ceilings, internal walls and voids, timber work, other building elements.

The survey would take several days, probably around 3-5. I can also confirm that I would carry out the survey and write the report free of charge as MKN Surveyors Ltd contribution towards retaining the structure and facility for the borough of Scarborough.

Further works will be chargeable at £75 + vat per hour, e.g. project management.

If you need additional information, please let me know. Whilst we carry Personal Indemnity Insurance, it would be necessary for the firm to take out a one off policy for this service in order to make sure we are suitably covered.

We would also need to rent specialist equipment for roof access, though I recommend that preferably you use a roofing contractor to inspect this element due to the height and the fragile nature of the asbestos cement roof.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Noble BSc (Hons), MRICS.

Company Registration No : 10136651
RICS Firms Registration No : 786631



Regulated by RICS

Hi Debi

It was great to speak to you over Christmas and hear about all the great work the group has already done to try and secure the future of one of Scarborough's most iconic attractions. I would like to formally offer the following services:

- Help to formally set up the Trust.
- Help dealing with any other ad-hoc financial queries.
- Preparation of the first two years accounts free of charge and all future years at a discounted rate.

If you require any further assistance do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards

Jonathan Dowson

Senior Accountant
Lloyd Dowson Chartered Accountants

Lloyd Dowson Medina House • 2 Station Avenue • Bridlington • East Riding of Yorkshire • YO16 4LZ • (T) 01262 602456 • (F) 01262 670314 34 Falsgrave Road • Scarborough • North Yorkshire • YO12 5AT • (T) 01723 361039
info@lloyddowson.co.uk • www.lloyddowson.co.uk

Burnley Empire gets critical green light in viability study



Inside the derelict Empire Theatre in Burnley. Photo: Fragglehunter

News by David Hutchison - Nov 28, 2016

TWEET THIS

SHARE NOW

Burnley's derelict Empire Theatre could become a functioning venue once more after a viability study confirmed it was possible to restore it.

The news has been hailed as a "big moment" by a campaign group that is aiming to restore and reopen the theatre, which has been dark for more than 20 years, with the help of the local community.

The Empire Theatre became the [fifth most at-risk theatre building in the UK](#) earlier this year, rising 17 places up the Theatres Trust's annual ranking.

Burnley Empire Theatre Trust was bolstered with funding from the Theatres Trust and the local council to get the study up and running – after [one councillor claimed the theatre was in the "last chance saloon"](#).

Welcoming the positive findings, BETT acting chair Shaun McCree said the study paved the way for a second, more in-depth viability study.

This will involve a full architectural analysis, an outline of possible funding strategies for a restoration, and ideas for how the theatre could be operated.

"We originally had to agree that if they said there was no possibility of it being restored, that was the end of the project. However, despite the fact that it's not easy to find the way forward, they've found ways," McCree said.

He added: "A year ago today I was sharing the [petition to get people involved](#)... it's been a remarkably eventful year, let's put it that way. I don't think any of us anticipated being where we are now. But it is a big moment."

After being given the green light, the second half of the viability study is expected to go ahead in the new year.

While McCree said any restoration would take several years, he confirmed the trust hoped to open the building before it was fully refurbished to host some theatre and other performances.

"As soon as possible in some way shape or form we want to open the doors and see it as a venue again, but whether it's only part of the building we'll have to wait and see," he said.

In October the building was [put up for auction](#) after a misunderstanding between BETT and the Crown Estate, which owns the abandoned building by default. It was [later removed](#).

The Lion's share for Manchester as hit show at Palace Theatre nets £15m bonanza

Musical boosts trade at hotels and restaurants, as it is revealed that 60 per cent of the audience for Disney's multi award-winning musical is from outside the region



BY DEANNA DELAMOTTA
08:50, 18 APR 2013 | UPDATED 20:07, 25 APR 2013

NEWS

The Lion King has been a roaring success for Manchester – attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors and boosting the city's economy by more than £15m.

Disney's multi award-winning musical will complete its record-breaking run at the Palace Theatre on Saturday, having generated £15.2m for the Manchester economy, with hoteliers and restaurateurs among those reaping the benefit of Lion King fever.

The show, the UK's largest touring theatre production, has been a sell-out throughout its 21-week run, playing to more than 322,000 fans at 166 performances since opening at The Palace in November.

Visitors from as far north as the Shetland Islands, more than 460 miles away, have come to see the heart-warming tale of Simba the lion cub, who grows up to avenge his father's death.

Sixty per cent of the audience have travelled from outside Greater Manchester to see the production and 64pc were visiting the Palace for the first time, generating huge benefits for the city.

Andrew Stokes, chief executive of Marketing Manchester, said: "The Lion King has been, without doubt, one of the biggest tourism highlights of recent years. The £15.2m economic impact of the show has been a welcome boost to local businesses and proves just how crucial the night-time economy is."

Sarah Bleasdale, general manager of the Palace Theatre, said: "The 21-week run has been an unforgettable experience for us, and our audiences. The response to the show has been nothing short of phenomenal, and the excitement and joy the show has generated has been wonderful to witness."

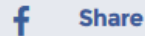
Bookings at hotels and restaurants near the theatre have received a welcome boost during the show's run.

Palace Hotel general manager Richard Grove said: "The Lion King has proved a great hit for our Tempus Restaurant and bar and we have also seen an increase in the number of families staying at the hotel thanks to the show."

In recognition of the sell-out Manchester run, The Walt Disney Company yesterday presented a lioness mask from the production to the Palace Theatre. The mask, designed by the show's director, Julie Taymor, will now go on display in the foyer.

Ambassador Theatre Group Launches Manchester Gets it First

by BWW News Desk May. 16, 2011



The Ambassador Theatre Group Ltd (ATG), owners of the Palace Theatre and Opera House, has launched Manchester Gets it First - the company's commitment to bringing the biggest new musicals to Manchester before London and other major cities.

Manchester Gets it First follows the hugely successful run of GHOST The Musical at the Opera House, which earned standing ovations from sell out audiences and sold almost 100,000 tickets.

The plan to launch more shows at ATG's Manchester theatres chimes with the City Council's Cultural Ambition as a global city - and as such has won the backing of council Chief Executive Sir Howard Bernstein. Manchester City Council has warmly welcomed the collaboration with ATG on the project.

GHOST The Musical had its world premiere at the Opera House on March 28 as part of a strictly limited 7 week season in Manchester prior to opening at the Piccadilly Theatre in London's West End on June 24.

It is the first of what ATG hopes will be many high profile productions opening in Manchester, with producers using the city as a launch pad for new musicals.

Howard Panter, along with his wife **Rosemary Squire**, is Joint Chief Executive of ATG. He says: "I wanted Manchester to get it first because I know it as a city with a great foundation in music and theatre. I've been talking to producers in North America and Australia and saying that Manchester is a great place to launch musicals and they get it, they understand it, because of Manchester's heritage. It's rare for a £6m musical like GHOST to premiere in Manchester, but I think it's just the start. New musicals need to have a place where the team can work with a knowledgeable, sophisticated audience. If you can make it work in Manchester it will work anywhere."

Colin Ingram, producer and general manager of GHOST The Musical, said: "We have found Manchester a terrific city to open a new musical. With a large catchment area, and two wonderful musical theatres - we've been able to have two months to fit up and rehearse a very complex show which could not have been done anywhere else outside London. Manchester and the surrounding area has a long tradition of theatre going and are extremely warm and open to new work. The audience has greeted GHOST with open arms instead of closed arms. The media have been extremely supportive and professional and ATG lead by **Howard Panter** and all the staff at the Opera House and Palace Theatre have worked diligently and professionally to help us bring GHOST to the market place. We transfer into London's West End in a good place with strong word of mouth, powerful marketing tools such as an EPK, photography and a knowledge base of what our audience want from our show"

Councillor Mike Amesbury, Executive Member for Culture and Leisure at Manchester City Council, said: "These are exciting times and this collaboration with ATG reinforces how Manchester has become an artistic powerhouse, which brings tremendous cultural and economic benefits to the area. Just look at the success of the Manchester International Festival (MIF), where a world-class event is hosted in the city and draws massive audiences. Events such as MIF and major musicals like Ghost also boost the production capacity of Manchester, using our expert creative skills and creating further jobs in the industry."