

Theatre on the Edge 2016

Final Report

The second year of any event, especially when the first year was as successful as Theatre on the Edge, is haunted by the question - Can we do it again? The answer was clearly a resounding 'yes!' Not only did we pull it off again, but the audience grew by about 30% and the feedback from attendees was positive, almost rapturous. We have clearly discovered a need just waiting to be filled.

Mamahood - Saturday, July 16

This year, through a grant from Playwright's Guild of Canada and the Canada Council, we were able to hold a kick-off event the weekend before the festival. The idea was to present a free theatre event, publicize the festival, and sell tickets and passes. *Mamahood: Turn and Face the Strange* was a one-woman play reading presented by Nicolle Nattrass and her friend/technician Florence Ballard.

Technical

Stage/Venue Manager - Mike Nash, Sound Operator - Marcus Smith, Lighting Operator - Ann Skelhorne, Technical Assistants - Monica Gignac, Joy Peters, Festival Lighting Design - Jean Angers

Once again, the technical side of the festival ran exceptionally smoothly. Mike gave groups 90 minutes for tech instead of the 60 provided last year, and most groups found that to be completely adequate. All shows but one ran on time. Kudos to Marcus, Mike and Ann for their diligence and attention to detail.

Edge Club/Concession/FOH/Entertainment/Decorating

Music Booking - Joyce Henderson, Concession - Judith Skelhorne, Bar - Teresa McKerral, Décor - Lois Archer-Duell, Front of House - Pat Larmand

The Edge Club was once again a key part of the festival. From the first show at 3 pm on Friday, people inhabited the relaxed and animated space between and during shows, and met and visited with friends and performers. The live music was a huge part of creating that 'buzz' that we have always envisioned for the festival. More than one person told me that alternating the plays with live music was a really important part of creating that atmosphere.

This year Lois Archer-Duell volunteered to decorate the front of house area. Outside and inside looked much more pulled together and inviting.

Once again this year the food truck/vendor organization was challenging, as the food truck that Joyce had booked earlier in the year dropped out unexpectedly in June. Our food concession was much more streamlined this year. Wine from Marionette sold very well and people appreciated having the choices of beer on tap or bottled as well as cider.

Box Office

Vendini Master - Kim MacMillan, Ticket Sales - Glenda Marchand

This year we sold a total of 1011 tickets, a 32% increase over 2015. The actual average of seats sold per performance was 72, higher than the budgeted number of 60, meaning that box office revenues were higher than projected. Shuswap Theatre's share of the box office increased by 28% over last year.

There was a slight increase in ticket fees which added up to 16% of the total gross box office. I would like to see if we can reduce that percentage for next year. 50% of our sales were at the door, meaning that we have the opportunity to bypass Vendini and its charges for simply printing tickets, as long as payment is by cash. The Vendini package system worked much more smoothly this year, reducing wait times (and frustration!) for patrons at the door.

Publicity/Promotion

Website - Kim MacMillan , Email/Prompter - Susan MacMillan , Publicity - Jaci Metivier

Publicity is always a very large component on the immediate pre-festival organization. This year we paid for 2 advertisements; one in the Shuswap Tourism yearly brochure, and one in the Ozone Festival programme.

This year the first promotional item to be released were attractive rack cards on glossy card stock. I got a good price for a large number, and was able to spread them far and wide. With information about each show as well as performance times and ticket info, they were very effective and easy to use.

We were very happy to have support from ShuswapEvent.com immediately before and during the festival. They are quickly becoming an important place for people in the Shuswap to get information about what's on in real time through a variety of social media platforms. Our Facebook page was a key way to get out our information, and in combination with traditional media releases, posters and other printed materials we were able to get good local coverage.

Financial

We were fortunate to receive sponsorships from SASCU, and from the City of the Salmon Arm (through the Community Foundation). It was wonderful to have the enthusiastic support of Marionette Winery this year. They provided their wines to us at a discount in exchange for a small display beside the bar and promotion through signage and social media. They were very happy with how it went and have already asked to be a sponsor next year.

We managed to just break even this year. Ticket revenues were of course higher than budgeted this year and were matched by a small increase in the payments to artists. Much of the increase in gross ticket revenue was absorbed by convenience fees.

For next year, I will be looking into ways to increase revenue such as other grants and sponsorships, increasing ticket prices, changing our percentage of ticket sales etc.. to give us a little more financial 'wiggle room'.

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