

Ticketing Annual Report, 2014-15

This was the first season in which we used the Vendini online ticketing system. Major reasons included the convenience of patrons, increased sales and the possibilities for email marketing that are integrated into the system. Online sales would also present a more professional image to the public. The decision was a risk that involved considerable outlay of funds for setup and equipment and the fees involved meant that Shuswap Theatre would receive less money per ticket. It could only be justified if it resulted in more tickets sold. While there are numerous reasons that our financial year has been so amazingly successful (excellent shows, good publicity, etc), I think it is reasonable to conclude that the Vendini system has played a significant role.

It has been a steep learning curve. The Vendini system has many powerful features but learning to navigate all of them has required time and energy. There have been bottlenecks at the box office before performances (with the occasional annoyed patron) because we were just learning and it does take longer to process tickets than it did under the old system. We are becoming gradually more efficient and accurate but it will never be as quick as the old system. The benefits are worth it.

We now keep various email lists on the Vendini database including:

- Membership list
- Friends of Shuswap Theatre (non-members who receive our newsletter)
- Media list

We compose *The Prompter* right on the Vendini website and send it out using these lists. This allows us to put “Buy Tickets Now” buttons right in the newsletter that allow recipients to buy the moment they have the impulse. The same is true with our website. Our publicity is aimed at driving more and more people to the website.

Some statistics:

- Just under 30% of all tickets for Mainstage shows were sold online.
- 19% of Improv tickets were sold on line though the percentage varied widely from show to show (26%, 11% and 26%).

We expect that these numbers will increase over time as more people are comfortable buying on line.

Over the season we have experimented with how and when to use Vendini as opposed to selling tickets the old fashioned way. For example, to save the Vendini fees, we opted for a cash at the door only policy for the Christmas show, *Bah, Humbug!* This led to a variety of problems with groups wanting large blocks of tickets which meant individual patrons

waited patiently for the doors to open only to find that there were few tickets left. Our conclusion is that we should use Vendini for every show. People are now used to buying on line or with their credit cards and we should be consistent in allowing them to do that. As pointed out already, using Vendini actually brings in more money overall in spite of the fees.

We continue to use Intwined Fibre Arts as our ticket agent and that is working very well, as Althea is a dedicated member of Shuswap Theatre and often goes the extra mile in making sure customers are satisfied and the theatre's needs are met. In the coming year we will be reviewing the compensation she receives for this work. Althea also is the backup administrator for the Vendini system.

This season, for the first time we offered "Pay What You Can Thursdays" instead of our former "Thrifty Thursdays" (which at half the adult price would have been \$10 per seat). This was a big success as the average amount paid at the door was actually around \$12 and it meant that no one was excluded from seeing the show based on inability to pay. It appears that we had more patrons who have never been to live theatre before, or have never been in our theatre, and we had good houses on those days. We recommend that this practice continue.

All in all, it was a year of learning and of significant successes.

Submitted by Kim MacMillan