



Centre Stage – supporting small theatres in the capital

A submission from London & Partners

Introduction

Thank you for sharing the *Centre Stage* report evaluating London's small theatres and for suggesting actions that London & Partners could take forward to support this agenda. We are keen to continue to support this important promotional work.

We have considered the report recommendations and summarised our work in this area below.

London & Partners' work to promote small theatres

London & Partners welcome the opportunity to respond to the report into London's small theatres.

We are aware of our remit to ensure visitors have sufficient information to explore smaller theatres, fringe productions and different areas across London that may not be so obvious.

Visitlondon.com currently features 1370 theatre listings for productions taking place in London, showcasing a huge range of theatre productions taking place, from the internationally acclaimed Book of Mormon to the latest production at Islington's Kings Head Theatre.

In addition there is also a dedicated section for pub theatres within London which features smaller venues such as the Landor in Clapham, The Gate in Notting Hill and the Tabard Theatre in Turnham Green.

London & Partners also uses other channels in addition to the website to communicate theatre messaging. For example a July blog post on visitlondon.com highlighted the Menier Chocolate Factory and the Visit London Twitter feed has recently highlighted the new St James Theatre to our 130 000 followers.

London & Partners includes theatre within our PR activity and press trips for international journalists. Recently, London & Partners has hosted international journalists at the latest Punchdrunk promotion and theatre is a key vehicle for showing London as one of the most creative cities in the world.

London & Partners also work with the travel trade and with tour operators in markets where London & Partners do not directly target consumers.

London & Partners works with London theatre institutions and stakeholders to promote theatre across the city. London & Partners works with the Society of London Theatre, who run their own promotions such as Kid's Week and the Olivier Awards showcasing the breadth of London's theatre offer. London & Partners also work with individual theatres and promoters to raise awareness of London's theatre and London theatre productions and many individual London theatres are commercial partners of London & Partners.

Promoting London's small theatres is a partnership approach and as the report mentions, there is a role for public bodies, local councils and business groups. We should also acknowledge that there are many other places where people look to get information from, whether that is a daily newspaper, theatre reviews, online blogs, direct communications from theatres themselves or publications such as Time Out.

London & Partners will continue to look at our promotional activity to ensure we provide excellent value for the public funding we receive but also promote all elements of London as an international visitor destination as effectively as possible. For example, throughout 2012/13 we have been developing umbrella campaigns to promote sectors of the tourism economy and we will continue to liaise with partners and stakeholders across the industry to bring visitors into London. For example, visitlondon.com hosted theatre month in May 2013 resulting in 78,600 visits to visitlondon.com which included at least one page in the theatre section. This represented a 25% increase year on year, a 22.5% uplift in traffic to the top theatre editorial pages, a 7.6% year on year increase in theatre ticket sales on the site and an increase in social media mentions.

London & Partners' work to promote the theatre sector

London & Partners promotes the capital as a destination to audiences across key international markets. Theatre is one of the key drivers for visitors to London with theatre attendance reaching almost 14 million in 2012.

The quality and diversity of London's theatre offer from Shakespeare to We Will Rock You and from Punchdrunk to War Horse is one of London theatre's unique selling points and theatre forms a key part of the London offer across our leisure tourism promotion.

London's theatre scene also contributes to the image of the city more generally and enhances London's reputation as one of the world's most creative cities.

As the Centre Stage report states visitlondon.com received 24 million visits in 2012/13 and provides an in-depth guide to the city in 6 languages across the full range of London sights, attractions and things to do including retail, theatre, parks, restaurants and hotels.

Theatre forms a central part of the picture of London we present in our promotional activity. Theatre occupies a prominent place on the visitlondon.com website and provides information on large West End theatres right through to small local theatres.

London & Partners ensures the information we provide caters to the full range of visitors the capital receives - from the first time international visitor attending a blockbuster show in London to a repeat domestic visitor looking for something different.

The vast majority of visitors to visitlondon.com would expect the latest blockbuster and popular shows to be prominent on our website and to be able to buy tickets or see offers for them. To reach the greatest number of visitors we need to ensure we are providing relevant content visitors want to read in order to provide the best value for public investment.

The relationship between London tourism and theatre is clearly a symbiotic one. The existence of a diverse range of theatre and performing arts venues help promote the capital as an exciting place to visit – attracting more visitors to contribute to London's economic success. In 2012-13, London & Partners delivered £102 million additional GVA from leisure visitors attracted to London, many of whom would have attended London theatre productions.

We welcome the Economy Committee's report and moves to further support London's small theatres and would be happy to meet with you to discuss further.