

Ticket Manager Report 1999/2000

Ticket sales breakdown

Performance	Sales					
	Side [*]	Centre [†]	Total	% full	Full price	Conc. price
Tuesday	60	155	215	51%	64	151
Wednesday	122	168	290	68%	103	187
Thursday	258	172	430 [‡]	101%	157	273
Friday	84	169	253	60%	156	97
Saturday (M)	34	152	186	44%	97	89
Saturday (E)	251	173	424	99.5%	311	113
Totals	809	989	1798 [§]	-	888 ^{**}	910 ^{††}
% of total sales	45%	55%	-	-	49%	51%

Average house for the run was 301 (71%).

^{*} 258 tickets available (including 4 seats for ushers)

[†] 168 tickets available

[‡] This is clearly more than the maximum possible sales but the auditorium was by no means full.

[§] Maximum possible sales for the run totalled 2556 (6 performances at 424 for each performance)

^{**} *More information regarding the breakdown of full and conc for side and centre to follow.*

^{††} Some comps are included within this figure.

Sources of sales

Source	Number of tickets sold	% of total sales
General public	206	11.5%
Ticket stalls	134 [*]	7.5%
Sales on the door	202 [†]	11.2
Old soaks	36 [‡]	2.0%
Cast and crew	1220	67.8%
Total	1798	100%

^{*} Many of these sale were, however to members of the cast who bought their tickets from the stalls rather than from me at rehearsals. (*Precise breakdown to follow*)

[†] A large proportion of these were to the general public whom I had told to pay on the door because they had telephoned me too near to the show to make payment in advance possible.

[‡] This only includes those old soaks that purchased their ticket directly from me; some will have bought their tickets from members of the cast and crew.

Comments on the role of ticket manager

- It is not possible to be in the show as well as being ticket manager (whether as cast or crew). Just being a last minute addition to *Trial By Jury* was a nightmare in terms of show week and during rehearsals, and I only managed it because *Trial* was performed after *Pinafore*. During show week, most of each performance was taken up by selling tickets on the door, calculating audience figures and counting takings, this took at least the duration of the first act each night.
- Next year's TM *must* have an answer machine and *very* understanding housemates. During show week and the week before I received up to 40 telephone calls each day. At times I found this irritating and I *was* the TM!!!
- It also helps if the TM has no job/course/social life/friends/purpose in life.... A couple of members of the public expressed displeasure because they left answer machine messages and did not get a response until that evening (when I returned from work) despite clear instructions on the answer machine that his would be the case. A box office constantly manned during office hours would be ideal but perhaps something MUGSS cannot achieve.
- The union also caused a few problems (surprise surprise she says bitterly). Despite having my contact details communicated to them on several occasions, when a member of the public enquired about tickets they directed her first to Piccadilly Box Office, then to the Palace Theatre and finally, after transferring her to several union offices, they gave her my details. Needless to say, by the time she had contacted me, left a message and I had called her back, she was not impressed! I am not sure what we can do about this: the union is just crap and we may just have to live with it.
- Ticket stalls were an administrative nightmare, tickets were lost and takings rarely corresponded to number of tickets purporting to have been sold or indeed the number of tickets remaining and given to me at rehearsals. We should bear in mind the fact that tickets sales from ticket stalls accounted for only 7.5% of all sales and a large number of these were either to cast and crew who would have otherwise collected them from me at rehearsals or university staff I had directed to the stalls. However, when considering whether to continue having ticket stalls we should also consider their impact on publicity around the universities.
- Another complication was the requirement to keep track of individual sales so that the underwriting fee could be paid back on a basis proportionate to the number of tickets sold by each person. This was particularly difficult when it came to splitting ticket stall sales between up to nine people! Now, thankfully, that information is not needed as everyone can be repaid in full so I needn't whinge about it in any great detail!

General comments

- I think we are selling our tickets too cheaply. Although I would think long and hard before increasing student prices (perhaps by undertaking some quick market research amongst friends and housemates), full price tickets could certainly be more expensive- £4 is nothing for an evening at the theatre! As far as non-students are concerned, the cost of the ticket is not what prevents them from buying one, factors such as getting around to telephone for availability, being able to leave work early, arranging a babysitter etc are. Once all of these obstacles have been overcome, an extra couple of pounds on top of the current ticket price would not put them off seeing the show, in fact, they expect to pay more. Many

of the people to whom I sold tickets made the comment upon the cheapness of the tickets! A couple of extra pounds per ticket- particularly on popular nights such as Thursday- is not much to each individual audience member but cumulatively it is a lot of money to us.

- The 7.15pm start time caused considerable problems in terms of sales on the door. I appreciate that when this decision was made in September, there was little other choice- performing two shows generally takes considerably longer than performing one and the committee were not to know that Pete would take his usual approach of conducting like "Santa Claus on speed"!! However any future committee should consider the matter *very* carefully before departing from the standard start time of 7.30pm. On most nights potential audience members were still arriving part way into the first act, each night I had a rush of people arriving between 7.20 and 7.35pm, on several nights I was still selling tickets on the door at 7.50pm, but anyone stupid enough to arrive that late did not deserve to see our fabulous first act anyway!!
- From my point of view, I think the committee have done a fabulous job, and have certainly made my job much easier. They have been very good at communicating to me their requirements, backing up the message I gave to the society and giving me any assistance I needed. They made sensible decisions on matters such as refunds policy and communicated these to me promptly. I wish to thank them for their support.

Publicity

Although not strictly within my remit, I am in the unenviable position of knowing exactly how each ticket was sold and having personally spoken to every person who bought a ticket other than through members of the cast and crew or from a ticket stall (other means of selling tickets accounting for approximately 24.7% of total sales). Apart from audience members themselves, I am therefore in probably the best position to comment on the effectiveness of the show publicity.

- Feedback from members of the public purchasing tickets over the telephone was generally good- they had heard about the show from a variety of sources including various newspapers, direct mail shots and even from collecting a flyer from Chorlton bus stop!
- We made a significant number of sales from our advertisement in the Forum Theatre programme for their production of *The Mikado*. We should cultivate relationships with other amateur groups within Manchester, as this is where we will find the bulk of our audience. People who are already at an amateur show are much more likely to pay to see another, and people who are already at an amateur production of a Gilbert and Sullivan show are guaranteed sales. Flyering these shows is a much better use of our resources than flyering professional productions of shows such as *Les Mis* in the city centre, or productions of straight drama at venues such as the Royal Exchange or the Green Room. People who go to see productions at these venues go because they want to see professional productions of the type staged there - very different from student productions of light opera - and it will be much more difficult for us to persuade them to make the switch. In a situation where we have limited time and limited money to spend on printing flyers, we should be concentrating our efforts where we have the most chance of achieving sales.
- Similarly, flyering in the city centre on the Saturday yielded little in the way of sales. Arguably anything that might yield a single ticket sale should be tried but in a situation where flyers cost money, giving out 200 flyers to sell two tickets isn't cost effective. In addition, as few society members are going to turn out to publicise the show in all weathers, seven days a week at every location I would suggest we choose our locations carefully so that we can demand less of their time but make more of an impact when we do ask them to help out.

- Lecturers and university staff made up another significant section of the sales to the general public. We need to target them better with posters and flyers. A couple of university staff commented that they thought the show wasn't publicised around the universities terribly well. I think they were wrong but that we targeted students rather than staff. Students are unlikely to come to see the show unless they already know someone in it - believe it or not the vast majority of the student population are not G&S fans, but lecturers and university staff are. Next year we should target this group of people more as they are easy sales.
- Flyers, posters and tickets need to be printed and available *much* earlier in the academic year than they were this year, ideally by November and certainly before Christmas. Not having flyers and tickets available until mid-February did cause me difficulties and means that places cannot be postered properly because it is done in a tearing rush as show week approaches.
- A large number of community groups and other amateur dramatic societies were mailed in the run up to show week. This is a good idea in principle but yielded a low number of sales - two of the groups mailed purchased tickets and one of them was SMAOS, with whom we have good connections already. A much better approach, which concentrates resources much more effectively, is to mailshot only those groups that have purchased tickets from us in the past. I have these details, along with the names and addresses (postal and email) of every member of the public who has bought a ticket for the past 3-4 shows. If we are going to mailshot anyone it should be these people. Al and I sent flyers to most of these people in late February but it should have been done earlier - preferably late January. This year we **MUST** collect the names and addresses of people interested in receiving details of future productions during show week - apparently this was not done in Sorcerer year so the mailshot that Al and I did was from a list that was a little out of date. Even so, it yielded better results than the mailshot to community groups (which sold four tickets).
- We should also consider putting up posters and distributing flyers in places other than Fallowfield and Rusholme. G & S fans are generally older middle class people who don't frequent student areas. They are also more likely to travel further to see a show - they might even come from as far afield as the wilds of Stockport or even Cheadle.

All that remains for me to do is to thank you for listening to all of this/reading through the whole of this tome and congratulations for making it to the end!