

News Release

BRITISH THEATRE PLAYHOUSE HAS WIDE-RANGING AUDIENCE APPEAL

Singapore, 30th January 2007 - Many thanks to our audiences who participated in the British Theatre Playhouse survey during "A Bedfull of Foreigners" held in November 2006 (15th – 19th Nov) in Singapore.

"Our audiences' feedback will go a long way to making their next visit more enjoyable. We engaged Podium Asia to conduct a consumer research to test various suppositions and preconceptions and also to understand a number of factors to help with client servicing. For sponsors, we now have a wealth of data to help them make "informed decisions".

Here are some interesting findings unveiled." says Cecilia Leong-Faulkner, Director, British Theatre Playhouse.

Survey results

- BTP audiences are die-hard theatre fans – 79% attend at least 4 times a year with 54% stating "as often as possible"
- BTP audiences travel frequently – the average attendee takes 7 leisure trips and 5 business trips per year
- The average income of the household of a BTP audience is S\$18,180 per month which represents more than twice Singapore's average monthly household income.
- BTP audience member belongs to an affluent household; mostly own a car, have more than one bank account and travel extensively beyond Asia
- Comedy is – and would be the biggest draw for BTP audiences
- BTP offers a great experience for the theatre lover and a significant number of respondents are open to non-British plays

Survey source: Podium Asia Pte. Ltd.

Background to British Theatre Playhouse

In April 2004, British Theatre Playhouse produced its first play in Singapore, "How The Other Half Loves", a comedy by the British playwright, Alan Ayckbourn.

The four performances, presented at the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore, were sold-out and the production a great success; we have since gone on to produce four more, extremely successful shows at venues in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Bangkok. British Theatre Playhouse was delighted that their production of "The Importance of Being Earnest" transferred to London's Greenwich Theatre in March 2005.

That success illustrates the popular and growing demand for top quality, internationally-known stage plays in Singapore and the region.

British Theatre has a long and rich history of comedy writing going back over 500 years, even beyond! In the past three or four decades especially, playwrights such as Alan Ayckbourn, Tom Stoppard, Richard Harris, Peter and Anthony Shaffer, Willy Russell, Michael Frayn and Alan Bennett have achieved substantial success with humour that is recognized around the world.

The Playhouse chose hotel dinner-theatre as the principal setting as it provides the most convivial environment for such shows. Patrons dine well and then watch top class entertainment in 5-star luxury hotels. Dinner and the play never take place at the same time. However, we also offer performances without dinner – show only - when appropriate.

The event can be in the same ballroom for dinner and the play, as in the case of the Hilton Kuala Lumpur and The Oriental Bangkok or, as for Raffles Hotel, Singapore, with dinner in the hotel ballroom but the play in Raffles Hotel's Jubilee Hall Theatre.

Dinner may be taken before or after the performance. For example for *"The Importance of Being Earnest"*, cocktails were served before the show with dinner being taken after the play. The choice is left to the respective sponsor but our own experience has taught us that dinner after the performance does lead to a greater enjoyment of the evening for the audience.

We produce and stage at least two, British comedy plays within a one-year time period in a 5-star hotel dinner-theatre setting. Since 2004 we have produced five plays. The plays and their authors will have an international reputation and proven box-office success to attract theatre lovers of all ages and backgrounds.

British Theatre Playhouse has a target market that comprises of three main demographics:

- Local, regional and global audiences, which include an already established niche group of theatre-going public who appreciate British Theatre but do not have a great opportunity to see it.
- The young, tertiary-educated audience, many of who studied abroad, who are proving their liking for international theatre and now comprise a substantial percentage of local audiences in the region.
- The expatriate community especially employees of British, American and European companies in major cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Bangkok and the region.

FINDING THE RIGHT "PRODUCT"

The Theatre scene in Singapore has developed rapidly over the past decade. Quite often, though, it's a case of "feast or famine" with three or four plays a month to choose from or none at all. That means that the choice of production is extremely important and the key to success. The Producers have to seek gaps in the market in terms of the style and content of any play chosen.

British Theatre Playhouse firmly believes that the concept of established British plays with professional UK casts and the emphasis on comedy and comedy-thrillers, is the correct path for us and that has been confirmed by the success of our five productions so far.

"For our forthcoming production in May 2007, British Theatre Playhouse will be presenting *"Relatively Speaking"*, the celebrated comedy by the world's most successful, living playwright, Alan Ayckbourn at the Raffles Hotel Singapore, 2nd – 6th May 2007.

We will tour the play and take it to Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Bangkok. Hong Kong and China are also possible destinations.

I will say the talent base in the region is reasonably small and, as local artists tend to move from one production to the other, so there is a demand from audiences for new "faces" in shows.

British Theatre Playhouse's policy is, therefore, to bring professional, established artists from the UK, as well as directors and designers, providing an opportunity for audiences to enjoy international talent. This is also in keeping with our established brand identify.

Of course this is also a more expensive way of producing shows and costs are high when travel and accommodation are included but, as our past productions have clearly shown, it is an extremely popular and successful policy and therefore one we will pursue," says John Faulkner, Director of British Theatre Playhouse based in Singapore.

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