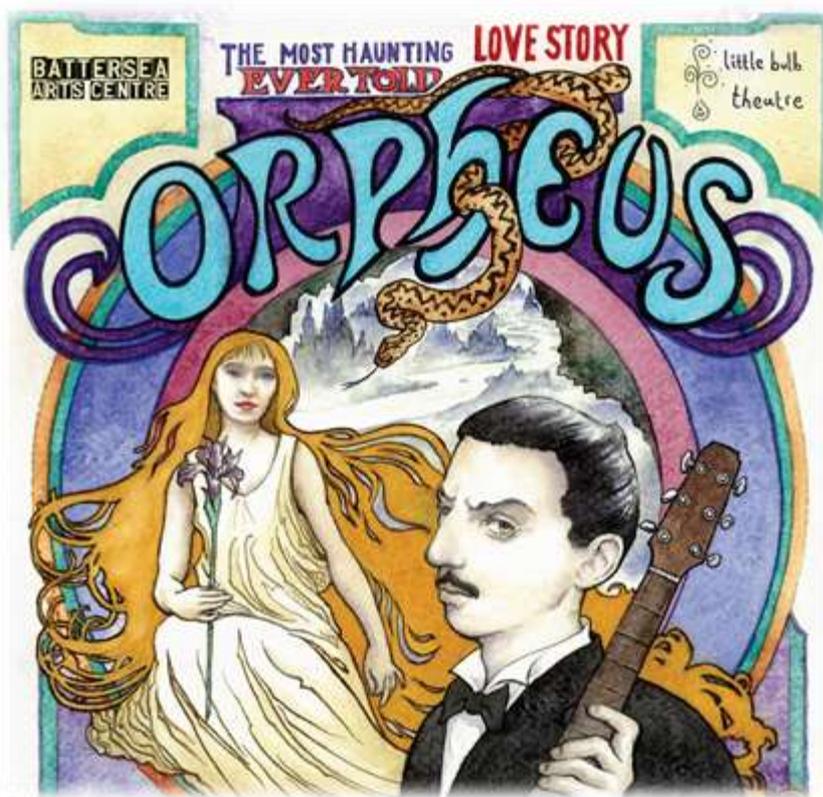


Orpheus: effectively manipulating audience behaviour



Katie Elston

Marketing and Communications Manager
Battersea Arts Centre



Published 2013.

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/)

Supported by



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Created and managed by



In partnership with



Background

Little Bulb are a new and fairly unknown company, who had not long left university. Their show *Orpheus* was far bigger in scale and ambition than anything they had done before and was performed in Battersea Arts Centre's Grand Hall for 4 weeks in April-May 2013.

The show is an unusual concept bringing together the Greek myth about Orpheus and the story of the legendary Jazz musician Django Reinhardt.

Key selling points:

- Classic Greek Myth
- Live, quality music, 1930s, swing, jazz, opera
- Night out, experience – 1930s glamour
- Cheap tickets available
- Exciting new artists

Objectives

- Fill early shows with risk takers, early adopters, Little Bulb and Battersea Arts Centre fans and capitalise on word-of-mouth.
- Significantly increase the profile of the show and company before opening.
- Convey the grandness of the show, the feeling of a theatre event, the difference from their other shows.
- Get people to come down early to experience the 1920s world we have created around the show in our beautiful building and to buy food and drink and to stay after the show at the weekends for more music and drinks.

Target audience

- Core culturally engaged 25-35 yr olds on BAC's list and in London
- Little Bulb fans
- Jazz fans
- University students (in particular drama, music, classics)
- People into 1930s swing music/doing things from bygone eras (trendy East London)
- People into Classics
- People who work in the Industry
- Young opera fans

Process

The pricing structure was key to the campaign. We set all tickets in the first week at £10 (much cheaper to front-load the show); £17.50, £15 concessions for the 2nd and 3rd weeks; and £20, £17.50 for the last week (by this time we were assuming that audiences would be coming because of reviews and would be less price sensitive.)

There was a big push in February to all our key networks to book early to get the £10 tickets in the first week. We ran recommend-a-friend offer for attendees in the first week to pass on for the second/third week on selected shows. This was feasible because these attendees had bought cheaper tickets, so we were not offering their friends a better deal.

The look and feel of all the marketing was tied into the 1920s era. We always try to be playful with our marketing. Social networks were key for the first and second weeks. On the first night we ran a Twitter event (people who won tickets on Twitter were invited for drinks before the show and encouraged to Tweet). At the beginning of the second week we ran a dressing up night with a 1920s glamour theme, free Bellini's and an old fashioned photographer taking pictures.

We reached out to Jazz and music networks through distribution and researching, and building relationships with new venues and contacts.

The food offer was also themed around the show and was integrated with the marketing right from the beginning. Pre-show emails explained the schedule of the evening and encouraged people to come from 6pm to experience the 1920s world and enjoy food and drink if they wished.

Outcomes

- The first week sold out well before opening. There was then a bit of a dip in sales, but thanks to capitalising on word-of-mouth through offers, social networks and a small amount of advertising around opening they picked up significantly post opening.
- Reviews were good. The plan for getting reviews out had already been put in place so we were ready to promote them to networks very quickly.
- It had been agreed that if we made over a certain amount in sales, a little more budget would be allocated to marketing for more advertising with the reviews. Again this was planned for, so as soon as we made this amount we were able to implement the advertising immediately.
- The 3rd and 4th weeks sold extremely well, with all shows in the final, most expensive week selling out, indicating that those coming purely because of reviews were not price sensitive as we expected.
- Far more people than usual arrived between 6-7pm.

Key points for effective practice

- Using price in a marketing strategy can be extremely effective. This requires early discussions between the marketing and producing teams.
- Word-of-mouth should not be assumed to be entirely self-perpetuating. There are lots of ways of encouraging and increasing word-of-mouth.
- Planning ahead for different scenarios in ticket sales will mean that you can act fast and with more insight rather than making last minute decisions or missing out on opportunities.
- Pre-show emails and marketing can significantly change audience behaviour if the offer is right.

Conclusions and recommendations

Planning ahead and considering all elements of the marketing mix before a show goes on sale is extremely beneficial. Here the pricing strategy really led the campaign.

In order to catapult a relatively unknown company to success on a low budget, word-of-mouth was used to its full potential. It is important to recognise this as a tool, which we can manipulate.

It seems that audiences who came to see the show because of reviews were not price sensitive. If the reviews were bad however, the final week would have struggled. This was a risk. We had a contingency plan for some targeted offers, but we would have had a completely different financial outcome.

If there is an offering around a show, which we want audiences to take part in, this needs to be integrated into the marketing campaign from the beginning to see the best results. Pre-show emails, which go out to bookers a couple of days before their visit, can also be very effective in influencing audience behaviour.

Additional information

The show will be returning to Battersea Arts Centre April-May 2014.