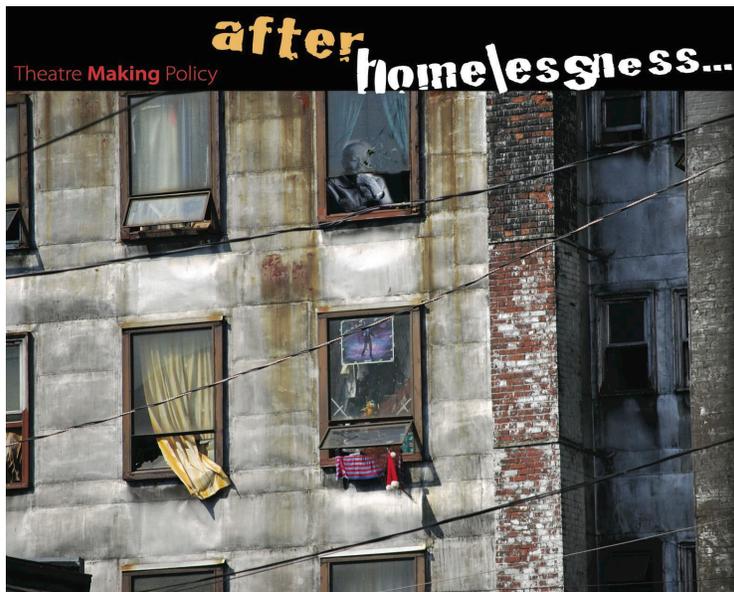


after homelessness...



PUBLICITY FINAL REPORT

Submitted by:
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January 2010

Operating Funders:



Project Funders:



Media Sponsors:



Community Partners:



Overview

Overall, the publicity Headlines Theatre received for *after homelessness...* was very successful. We attained many previews and coverage throughout the run. The only major disappointment was the utter lack of mainstream reviews of the show. This fact did not, however, seem to affect attendance as much as I feared it would, but it did leave us without media assessment and appraisal of the production, which the cast, crew and team sorely deserved.

However, in conjunction with outreach and the strength of the production, we were sold out often and the 15 performance run was strong to the end.

This being my first production with Headlines, there was much to learn about the company and the subject matter the play would deal with. This learning continued right to the end of the production and though quite stressful at times, gave me a deep appreciation of the work Headlines does within the community.

After homelessness... was not your average theatre production and I stopped thinking of it as such very early on. This was a project with many components: a gallery exhibition, a play and a series of dialogues on the issues of housing. When seen together, this project took on grand proportions and really brought home the issues we were dealing with. This was a terrific way to discuss *after homelessness...* with the media that illustrated the importance of the work.

Photo Contest

One of the first projects I worked on was helping Dafne Blanco, Outreach Coordinator continue the promotion of the photo contest to find the image for the publicity materials for the show. Disposable cameras were distributed through Sandra Pronteau to interested parties in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) to engage those who were really involved in the story Headlines was trying to tell.

We received a number of entries over the course of the contest, and pushed the deadline from the 31st of July back to the end of August after discussing the contest and possible cross-promotional ideas with Gallery Gachet (see below).

I created a Facebook event for the contest and in the final two weeks before the closing, purchased a Facebook ad that targeted users whose interests fell into certain categories (ex. photography, visual arts, activism, theatre...). This was the first time Headlines had tried this means of reaching the public, and I suggest making use of it again in the future, as social networking sites are used by most of the population and the ads themselves are not very costly.

After much deliberation, Donna Ross' entry was chosen. The image of the four windows in an old and unkempt building was thought-provoking and beautiful, and I believe really captured what the project was trying to express.

Gallery Gachet and Exhibition

Gallery Gachet was very interested in being a part of the project, and offered to be a sponsor. After discussing possibilities, it was agreed that Gachet would be a Community Partner and that they would put on an exhibit of the photo contest entries.

Gachet agreed to jury the entries from the photo contest and exhibit the top choices at the gallery. Headlines would choose the winning image and Gachet would choose the second place finisher and the remainder of the ten images. Gachet would also organize and run a photography workshop to teach the community the basics of photography and help interested people plan their pictures. This was meant for the community in the DTES but was open to anyone who wanted to join. Unfortunately, no one attended the workshops.

The dates of the exhibition were set as November 6 to 29 and it was agreed that we would take part in a group show with Oppenheimer Park's Community Art Show and PIVOT's Hope in Shadows contest.

Although the exhibition went well, and opening night was a success, there were a number of factors that made this portion of the project difficult: miscommunication, forgetfulness and having too many cooks in the kitchen were a few of the factors that led to issues regarding who would do what and meeting deadlines.

If Headlines does a collaboration of this nature again, I recommend having a strategic meeting and delineating responsibilities to each party clearly.

Community Dialogue Sessions

I came into the project after the Community Working group had met to discuss what the general makeup of the Dialogue Sessions would be. David Diamond, Dafne Blanco and I did meet to discuss possible changes and additions, and after these were agreed upon, invitations to sit or moderate panels were sent out. My main responsibilities were creating the copy for the brochure and preparing the biographies we were receiving from panelists that had agreed to participate. I also mentioned the Sessions to the media I was communicating with at the time. When discussing the Sessions in the context of the project as a whole, the response was positive and encouraging.

My involvement with the Community Dialogue Sessions lessened when Melanie Kuxdorf, PR and Outreach Assistant, took over their promotion. I continued to discuss the Sessions with media, but my focus was garnering attention to the show while Melanie publicized the Sessions. She was able to coordinate an especially wonderful piece in the Courier newspaper that brought a number of people in to participate.

Materials

I began working on the promotional materials with Dafne as soon as possible. The Printing House gave us a terrific price on postcards and the brochures for the Community Dialogue Sessions. For the posters I went to Benwell Atkins as our unusually-sized poster (14x20) was priced better there. Finally, Image West

printed our transit posters and posters of the show were mounted at Staples. The final product looked great and I recommend using Staples again.

Even though the materials were created by different companies, the final products were uniform and looked great, a compliment we received numerous times. Dafne's designs were fantastic.

Things in this area ran quite smoothly until there was a size discrepancy with the transit posters sent to Pattison Outdoor for positioning in New Westminster. There were two posters that did not fit the locations. The choices were: cut the bottom of the poster and lose sponsor logos or print two more. Unfortunately there would have been too much of a loss of the logos and so reprinting was the only option. This was a Pattison issue but the sales agent I dealt with was not willing to cover the costs of reprinting and so this error forced the cost onto Headlines.

Media Sponsorship

This year's media sponsors were Co-op Radio, the CBC (radio, television and online) and the Georgia Straight.

The Co-op sponsorship remained the same as years past and they read out PSAs I had written promoting the show and the Dialogue Sessions.

I approached the Georgia Straight as the print sponsor for the production. In previous years, the WestEnder had done it, but I wanted to try the Straight due to their increased readership and weight in the local media arena. (I believe that this decision came back to bite me when we received no coverage in the WestEnder, despite my contacting their reporter, arts and managing editors, the relevance of the topic and the fact that most other papers previewed the project.)

After discussing the project with Laura Moore, the Straight's Ad Manager, it was clear that *after homelessness...* was a viable project for them and Laura was excited about a partnership.

They provided four ads at a good rate and two more ads were purchased for the Community Dialogue Sessions at that price and size. There was also a banner ad run on the Straight's website for the production and a ticket giveaway on Straight.com. Their website also streamed the *after homelessness...* webcast on November 29.

The CBC sponsorship offered Headlines with promotion on TV with CBC's **What's Happening** events calendar, on the radio on **CBC To Go** and with ticket giveaway on shows and online on the CBC's events calendar and with a permanent link to Headlines website.

Each relationship afforded Headlines with exposure and a number of audience members mentioned that they had heard about the production through these channels. Maintaining these relationships will be advantageous to the company.

Distribution

Distribution began the final week of October, 2009. Harry Wong (who is amazing!) took posters, brochures and postcards to the suburbs as well as community centres throughout Vancouver. Harry is an asset to Headlines as the

volunteer base is very small. In exchange for distributing materials he receives tickets to the play.

I contacted the person who has been distributing for Headlines for countless years and he agreed to distribute 250 posters. I chose him despite a less than stellar experience I had with him at a previous company; he was contracted to poster the city and those posters did not seem to be anywhere. After reading the glowing recommendations previous Headlines publicists had given him, I chalked up my experience as a one time thing. Unfortunately, it seems to have occurred again and Melanie and I took three days to run around town in the pouring rain to poster busy and populated areas.

In his defense we did see one poster in a café on Commercial Drive, but Headlines should seek out a new postering company for future productions.

Barry LaMaigre, a workshop participant, agreed to distribute postcards and Dialogue Sessions brochures along major corridors in the city for a fee. Dafne confirmed that she did see our material at cafes Barry stopped in but after he demanded more money we were unable to continue working with him.

Heart of the City Festival

Another great partnership Headlines built this year was with Vancouver Moving Theatre and the Heart of the City Festival. After discussing possibilities with Terry Hunter it was decided that Headlines would open the doors to the final day of the workshop and allow an audience to take part in the afternoon of interventions as a pre-festival event. The exhibit at Gallery Gachet would be included in the festival and *after homelessness...* would be placed in the post-festival events section.

This was a terrific way to promote Headlines and the project as the Heart of the City Festival also works with the population in the DTES and through the VMT networks we were able to reach out further into the arts and activism communities.

Social Media Initiatives

This year we decided to increase Headlines' presence on the web through social media initiatives. Although Headlines already had a Facebook group, a Fan Page was created which allows for more control, greater influence and is a good way to build long-term relationships with fans.

A fan page is visible to unregistered members, and therefore can be found through an internet search. User statistics are also a plus as well as being able to create related events, send out updates through the news feed, publicize the page with social ads and host discussion and picture boards.

Melanie also began a Twitter account and she updated both sites regularly throughout the production. We also began a blog on the show's website to update users. The blog was linked to the Facebook page and so once a new post was added it would also appear on Facebook.

Maintaining these sites with regular updates (during a run every day, and at other times as news or needs arise) is vital at sustaining interest and increasing numbers. I would also suggest adding a blog to Headlines website to continue updates.

Georgia Straight Webcast

After discussion with the CBC fell through on streaming the webcast, I spoke with the Georgia Straight about this option. After having Chris Bouris (Web master) discuss what such a partnership would entail for the Straight's web team, it was agreed that the webcast of *after homelessness...* would be streamed on the Georgia Straight website. As of the final day of my contract at Headlines, I did not have the statistics from their site in regards to the webcast.¹

Advertising

Ads were purchased in the Georgia Straight (through the sponsorship agreement), the Vancouver Courier, the WestEnder, the Vancouver Sun, the Burnaby Now and the New Westminster Record. As in previous years, there was also a 10 second still ad shown at Fifth Avenue Cinemas. Headlines was confirmed in the Vancouver transit shelter poster program for ten posters and six posters were purchased in New Westminster through Pattison Outdoor for a very good rate.

After having been confirmed by the Vancouver transit shelter program for four weeks beginning November 3rd, I was informed that they had had too many entries and that our posters would not go up until the 16th- the week we opened. There was not much to do; although I requested that if any organization dropped out that Headlines' posters be put up earlier. The benefits of having the shelters up, even at that late a date outweighed removing ourselves from the program. It is good to note that November is a very busy time for them, and even though our request was received in June, this still occurred.

Pattison's Sean Longhi was very supportive and gave us six strategic positions in New West for the price of two and a half. The only irksome point of my dealings with him not being informed of poster size differences and subsequently his refusal to cover the costs of the posters that needed to be reprinted to fit the shelters.

Ads were purchased through Manon Paradis at the Courier for the Vancouver Courier, the New Westminster Record and the Burnaby Now. In total, eight ads were purchased for the show and two more ads for the Dialogue Sessions.

My conversation with Manon began as a possible sponsorship until the Georgia Straight came on board. However, a sponsorship with the Courier should be strongly considered in future years as they were extremely supportive of the project and Headlines and gave us terrific support both through advertising and editorial coverage.

Through the WestEnder, I purchased three ads. I purchased four through the Sun and six through the Straight.

Unexpectedly, the representative I had been dealing with from Cineplex left the company and somehow our agreement was misplaced. The ads were to begin running the 23rd of October for five weeks but due to the change, this fact was not passed on to the new rep. As a means of making it up to us, the ad began running

¹ These are contained in the Artistic Director's final report.

on the 30th of October for five weeks but looped twice, consequently giving us double the exposure for the same price. Not a bad mix up.

The production was also listed in all major papers, online through media, activism, theatre and arts sites and through radio PSAs. Separate listings were created for the play and the Dialogue Sessions to increase the reach of the project.

Coverage

I believed *after homelessness...* was going to be an easy sell. The issues covered in the play: homelessness, mental health and housing, were extremely relevant in Vancouver and across the country. Not to mention the theatre factor. This was both very true and very wrong. It was a fight for people to see that this was a news item and not simply entertainment. Although this worked a few times and we received coverage in news sections, the majority of media attention was relegated to entertainment sections.

We received a lot of attention leading up to the play from local media but national outlets were not interested. Answers to why varied from lack of funds to the production only being pertinent locally. Although I tried to argue that point, it was to no avail.

Papers that did not cover the project at all were: the WestEnder, the Vancouver Sun, 24Hrs and Metro. The two dailies were contacted but no one returned messages or emails, and never seemed to be in the office. The only reason I see as viable for lack of coverage by the WestEnder is the change in sponsorship. The project fit very well with the WestEnder and was covered extensively in other similar papers. In regards to the Sun, I began contacting their theatre critic early but was unable to connect for awhile. Finally after speaking with him and discussing the project there was no interest. I am very unclear as to why *after homelessness...* was not covered by the Sun, especially after their sister paper, the Province, did.

The media call was sent out nearly two weeks prior, and then again the week of but there was no response to it. A cast member was missing at the time and so I am content that no one attended for that reason, but as to why, there may be a few answers. Something I heard about often was cutbacks. I was told by one television station that mobile crews were only for news, not entertainment. There was also not much interest from television stations in general especially due to lack of B-Roll of the production (which is near impossible due to the creation process of Headlines' work).

We did, however, garner many previews. Two in particular, the first written by the Surrey Now was inaccurate (a correction was run) but ran in two other community papers and brought in numerous reservations for the leg at the Holy Trinity Cathedral.

The second notable interview mentioned often by audience members was Justine "Fraggle" Goulet's on CBC Radio's On the Coast which brought people to the performances at the Firehall.

A disappointment in coverage came with the refusal to write reviews. Again, reasons for this ranged from the fact that Headlines was awarded a preview, to lack of staff to having too many other events that needed covering and lack of time and space. David's request that audience members send us (and the media) their

reviews, and a couple online reviews of the play are all that have been received so far.

In addition to mainstream and community media coverage, the production was also mentioned in a number of personal and social activism blogs online. Although the reach of these sites is not as great necessarily as that of a media site, they provided Headlines and readers personal perspectives on the play. The majority were extremely positive.

In Conclusion

I am extremely pleased with the scope of coverage obtained by *after homelessness...* despite a few disappointments. Although leaning towards previews, the project received exposure throughout the run and audience numbers remained steady. There were also a number of repeat audience members who wanted a chance to try their idea on stage.

There were many people that mentioned hearing about the show everywhere, so that was a big win for Headlines. Through outreach, publicity and the strength of the play itself, we were able to fill houses.

Appendix

- Publicity Budget
 - Copies of *after homelessness...* ads from:
 - ♣ Georgia Straight
 - ♣ Vancouver Courier
 - ♣ Vancouver Sun
 - ♣ WestEnder
 - ♣ Burnaby NOW
 - ♣ New Westminster Record
 - Copies of the Community Dialogue Sessions ads from:
 - ♣ Georgia Straight
 - ♣ Vancouver Courier
 - Print out of Georgia Straight Ticket Giveaway
 - CBC Sponsorship Contract
 - Expenditures
- Media Release
- Media Call
- PSA Scripts:
 - Photo Contest
 - Show
 - Community Dialogue Sessions
 - CBC
- Listings
 - Show
 - Community Dialogue Sessions
- Email Bulletin
- Media Report
 - Press Clippings
- Blogs about *after homelessness...*
- Websites and community bulletins listing *after homelessness...*
- Heart of the City Festival
 - Program
 - Pre-Festival Workshop piece
 - “We Call It Home” Exhibit piece
 - Post-Festival *after homelessness...* show piece
- Show photographs on CD
- Show poster
- Show postcard
- Show programme