



Southampton
Passion



EVENT EVALUATION

The purpose of this document is to celebrate the success of the Southampton Passion and to take an honest look at the lessons learned from the experience so that we can improve and seek to be more efficient on future projects and seek to stage higher quality productions in the years to come.

The Southampton Passion took place in the newly refurbished Guildhall Square in the centre of Southampton on Good Friday, 22nd April 2011. It was the first event of its kind to be staged in this space and the City Council were keen to see how their new 'Cultural Quarter' would cope. Early comments suggest that they were hugely impressed with what we achieved and were overwhelmed by the number of people that showed up to witness the event. We estimate that there were approximately 9-9,500 people there to see the production and one of the first things the Event Management Team asked us was if we would consider doing it again next year! The Mayor of Southampton, Cllr Carol Cunio wrote, *"a splendid production of the Passion... I thoroughly enjoyed it."* And Cllr Peter Baillie added, *"Just to congratulate you for a wonderful event last Friday. It was really quite sensational. I think you have created a major new artistic event for the region."*

All in all the Southampton Passion was a huge success and achieved its primary purpose, which was to put Jesus back at the heart of Easter for the people of Southampton. The number of website comments, tweets and Facebook messages has been amazing offering congratulations and thanks for what was achieved with the production. One comment even read, *"The most moving experience I have ever experienced, at times I was ashamed to watch Jesus, it felt so real"* (Mrs Janet Gibson). Even the Bishop of Winchester, the Right Reverend Michael Scott Joynt spoke of the Passion saying, *"You caught, you expressed, the story in the Gospels, marvellously, suggestively, movingly and it all confirmed, and stretched, my own faith and understanding."*

The Passion brought together a wide variety of people from a wide variety of churches and community groups to stand together and achieve something memorable. Friendships were formed, barriers were broken down, people were re-united with old friends whom they'd lost touch with... and this was all before we'd even stepped out onto the stage! It was the largest outdoor Christian event ever staged in Southampton and many church leaders have commented that it has changed the spiritual atmosphere of our city and opened up the way for more great things to come. The Passion showed a united church working together to achieve something for the city and has made people and the media see what we believe and what we can achieve. The Daily Echo called it an 'Outstanding Easter Spectacle'!

The Southampton Passion truly was a great success!

As with any event, however it is important and wise to look at the aspects of the event and the whole project that we feel we can seek to improve for future projects. This is not to point the finger at anyone or any area of the project for not getting things right but instead, with the power of hindsight to look at what could have been done differently and how we can be more efficient in the future. This document seeks to set out the main learning points from our experience so that we can benefit ourselves but also so that we may be able to advise others who seek to stage an event like this and that they too can learn from our experiences.

The document is separated into the different areas of the project and there are some more general categories added as well. In some cases there may be overlap and repetition.

Publicity, Promotion and Artwork

On the whole the Publicity and promotion for the Passion was very successful and this was evidenced by the number of people that turned out on the night to witness the event. The support of the Daily Echo (local paper) was incredible and the relationship formed with them was vital in securing such good build up coverage and the reports the following day! The local TV companies were slow to take an interest and so we could look at how we develop this for future events to get them involved earlier on in the process.

The Bus campaign was a real success, as were the lamp post banners and would be definitely considered again for future events. The large banners outside churches worked well as this reached into the heart of communities and this could be offered a lot earlier next time with clear communication about the cost to a church. The cards were popular for people to be able to have to distribute to friends, family and in some cases neighbourhoods and maybe in the future we make more of an effort to ensure that more churches have a supply of the cards to encourage their own people to get excited about an event and tell others.

The 'image' of the Passion was fantastic! The artwork became a real recognisable logo around the city and helped to connect the different forms of publicity. Already the Nativity logo is out there and again I believe this will have the same effect.

The use of modern web based forms of communication was really successful and allowed us to communicate to a much wider spread of people. It also allowed for interaction and communication to flow which helped build trust and support for the Passion.

PARTICULAR LEARNING POINTS:

- Clearly planned and written Publicity schedule/timeline to be produced at the start of a project so that we can assess budget needs and ensure deadlines are met without rushing to get stuff together.
- More posters to be printed and distributed to churches/groups – not to rely on them printing stuff out themselves as this just may not happen. Batches of flyers/cards to be sent to churches/groups as well.
- Ensuring details are correct, accurate and sufficient before committing to print material.
- Invest time in meeting with more magazine/newspaper/TV editors face to face to build relationship which may encourage more involvement and coverage.
- Establishing clearer relationships with churches (in particular) to ensure that our publicity is reaching them and more importantly that it is being shared with the wider church.

Now that we have 'proved' ourselves and earned the respect of churches, community groups and the council I believe we will find a greater openness to our publicity and promotion of future events. Our reputation will go before us! This goes for publicity and promotion but also for our relationships and liaising with churches.

Church Liaison

We have now established a really good distribution list for churches in the city and beyond which will be invaluable for communication of future events. We have built good links with a number of churches in the city and have established good relationships with them which will be useful and save time and energy in the future.

We have set in place a good clear process for communicating with churches and this was well co-ordinated and it was very good that all our info went through Sarah as the point of contact. We got to visit a number of churches but this will be something to target more in the future as being in churches with people certainly raises more interest and often stimulates more interest and involvement from them.

As said previously, it would be good to establish better feedback from churches and to establish a relationship that allows us to know that what we send is being communicated to the rest of the church. The best way forward for this would be to have a project 'Champion', representative in each church – someone who is our point of contact and who we can trust to deliver the information and also encourage and inspire people to get involved. This would then benefit many other areas of the project, such as fundraising, volunteers and publicity.

For future projects it would be beneficial to be able to 'follow up' contact with churches through phone calls or visits to leadership. This personal touch would help the building of confidence in what we are seeking to do and again ensure we are being supported in an appropriate way.

PARTICULAR LEARNING POINTS:

- Establish project 'Champions' in churches to work on our behalf and promote what we are seeking to do.
- Develop a more 'project management' style approach to what we will communicate with churches and when we need to communicate it so as to avoid bombarding them all at once with last minute requests. This will allow everyone involved to plan their own time and ensure they are meeting their deadlines for communicating with churches.
- More face to face interaction with churches – meeting leaders and the people to share the vision 'in the flesh' and to encourage earlier involvement.
- Distribute a printed information sheet to churches to keep them informed and updated so that no-one can say they 'didn't know' what was going on.

As with our publicity, we now have a 'reputation' – we have proven that we can be trusted and we can pull off something credible and honouring to God and to the church in the city. I believe this will certainly aid us in the future and there will automatically be that trust already in place that we can build on and start to implement some of these other ideas.

Fundraising

To date the Southampton Passion raised funds to the value of £68k (approx) which is quite incredible in a time when our nation is in a financial crisis!

The fundraising for the passion had an early hiccup with the change of personnel and the cancellation of a major fundraising event and so there was a sense that we were always playing catch up a little bit but the above figure is a testimony to the hard work and commitment of Carol and her team.

The fundraising events were creative and varied and a lot of fun was had at them as they not only raised money but raised awareness of the Passion and almost built up the excitement of the main event that was coming! For future projects it would be useful to have a clear schedule of the events right at the start so that we can ensure communication about them is timely and that team members can plan to be involved or present at them.

An earlier start to the fundraising is essential for future projects. As said before we had a 'hiccup' this time round but it would be beneficial to have already raised a larger percentage of our costs before we get to having to spend out larger amounts of money. We would also need to have more of a focus on sponsorship and corporate income to pay for a large event as this is where the 'big' money would come from and it is not then dependant on individuals choosing to come and give money at an event.

For future events we could look to separate the areas of fundraising and have specific people oversee the different aspects, such as Grant Applications, Events, Church Donations and Corporate Sponsors. Each person is still responsible to the co-ordinator but then this one person doesn't have to be doing all the ground work themselves.

PARTICULAR LEARNING POINTS:

- More time and focus on corporate sponsors/funding bodies to secure larger amounts of money
- Schedule of fundraising events planned in advance and spread more evenly across a longer period of time.
- Increase awareness of the fundraising activities and ensure people know clearly what is taking place and when so that they can choose to come and support it
- Greater openness (within reason), with cast/choir etc about financial needs so that they can make a choice to invest in the project, or support the fundraising events.
- Seek to raise a larger percentage of finance before/during the event planning stage so that there is more money available much earlier in the proceedings.

Finances & Accounts

The total cost of the Passion (which is still being finalised) will be in the region of £75k. This is a huge amount of money and has been dealt with honourably and accurately by Huw (and his wife Vanessa!) We are all aware of the struggles that we faced when it came to our finances and how this led to looking at 'plan B' in some areas of the production and left us looking at how we could do things as 'cheap' as possible. This was not ideal and made extra work (and stress) for a number of people.

There needed to be much more openness and honesty about budgets and figures and there should have been much clearer 'department' budgets set earlier in the process. A question that was often asked was what will the whole event cost and it got slightly embarrassing having to say 'we don't know'! One of the first activities of future projects (once design etc has taken place) will be to set an 'ideal' budget for a department. This then sets out a clear target figure that the fundraising team can aim for and that we can publicise as our funding goal.

The production team would benefit from an Administrator and one of the key roles of this person would be to handle all of the invoices. This would make the process a lot smoother with one point of contact and they would be able to get everything sent to them and then handed on to the finance manager. The Administrator could also oversee some form of central ordering system so that accurate figures for commitments could be available. There was a sense that no-one had a consistent overall handle of all the costs (and the precise amounts) that were being committed, so this would give us a better handle on what money was being spent where.

A project of this size and complexity would also have benefitted from online banking, which would have made it easier to keep track of payments and balances etc.

Income on the night was slightly disappointing and this was due to lack of clarity regarding the CD sales and the collection buckets. A number of people have commented since the event that they really wanted a CD on the night but couldn't find where to get them. Clearer 'sales' areas need to be designated for future events. Also, the collection buckets weren't utilised as efficiently as could have been and for future events we need to have stewards stationed clearly on all 'exit' points so that people have a chance to give.

PARTICULAR LEARNING POINTS:

- Clearer department budgets set much earlier in the process
- Greater and clearer communication about costs and budgets between dept. heads and finance manager – more realistic budgets set in the first place.
- Online banking is essential to oversee the cash flow for an event like this.
- Develop a finance team (such as administrator role), who would help to make processes smoother, more manageable and more efficient for us as team but also for contractors/companies we're working with.
- Set a clearer (ideal) target for the finance required to stage an event and then work back from this in an orderly fashion if it is unrealistic.

Prayer & Follow Up

Right from the outset we stated that prayer would play an important part on the success of the Passion and thanks to a committed group of pray'ers and large numbers of people in churches across the city (and beyond), God blessed this event in so many ways. The prayer for the Passion was well organised and the events leading up to the date of the event raised the expectation that God would do amazing things.

Prayer is often a 'private' thing and so we'll never know who asked for prayer and for what needs but it would be good to incorporate the pray'ers more into the life of the team in future and call on them more in the midst of testing situations or sickness etc. and make this the first thing we do rather an afterthought.

The prayer on the night was somewhat hidden away and in hindsight there should have been much clearer identification of where people could go if they wanted to talk and pray with someone. And the same could be said of the follow up team, who again were not easily recognisable for people to approach.

The follow up was well organised by Above Bar church and was very comprehensive in its approach offering people a number of ways to respond to the gospel. On the night it was felt that not enough emphasis was put on the follow up and that 'how' to respond should have been clearer. There was also confusion it seemed over the programmes for the event where a number of stewards were almost 'demanding' a donation before releasing a programme which was not the idea as they had been specifically funded so that they could be free and give people the information they needed about follow up. As a result, we had a huge amount of programmes leftover from the evening.

PARTICULAR LEARNING POINTS:

- Clearer signage and direction to the prayer tent/area for future events
- Utilise the prayer team more effectively – keep them more informed of situations that need to be prayed into, both generally and personally.
- Include the follow up team a lot earlier in the planning process to get their input into different aspects of the event.
- Give more of a focus on answered prayer so that people are encouraged and testimonies are shared more openly.

Site Planning and Management

The Guildhall Square was a fantastic venue for the Passion and the space was utilised efficiently to ensure we had everything we needed in that space and that it was still suitable for an enjoyable and safe experience by the crowds that came to witness the event.

The site planning could have been improved and better organised if there was clearer information from all departments regarding space requirements right at the start of the planning process. Also there needs to be closer planning between director and site planner/stage designer so that the performance areas are better supported and the overall vision of the production can be communicated and implemented. Using one company to supply and build all of the stage areas would also help in getting exactly what we want and would mean that the company build and pack down the stages, saving us a job!

The 'crew cabin' was a good reference point for all people but could have been used/managed a bit more efficiently so that it was the only point of contact for all stewards/volunteers during the duration of the site build/show/de-rig. All stewards should have been 'accounted' for so that they could have been used more efficiently in some cases and jobs could have been allocated quicker if it was all managed from this central point.

We would have benefitted from more defined and organised site crew teams – people working in shifts to ensure there were fresh people at certain points in the process, such as the de-rig after the performance. There was confusion at this point which resulted in a very small group being left to tidy the site into the early hours rather than there being a clearly designated team of crew who were ready to come in and make this a much speedier and efficient process. It would have also been beneficial if there was clearer logistics planning for clearing the site and returning equipment to various locations as again this was left a small number of people to complete and made it a very late night!

Once stages were built and signed off, it would have been ideal if no-one removed steps or amended the structures as there were a few cases of things being moved over night to help with fencing etc but it made extra work and caused delays the following day.

PARTICULAR LEARNING POINTS:

- More direct involvement from the site planner/manager from the start of the project in terms of site design and space requirements for all technical/staging areas.
- Better organisation of volunteers/stewards/crew for building and de-rigging to avoid shortage of workers at any given time. Clearer designation of responsibilities and work for volunteers as well.
- Better system for use of radios/ear pieces etc, to ensure all equipment is accounted for and clearer records kept of where equipment is at all times.
- More adherence to schedules and time plans for the site – i.e. keeping to schedules for tech run throughs, lighting tests etc (dependant on build going to plan) and clearing any sound/light/video/etc runs, or testing with site manager before going ahead.

Event Planning and Management

The planning of an event this scale is complex and very detailed and Matt did a fantastic job to co-ordinate and manage the Passion. There is so much legality around planning an event like this in a public space and many different licences and permissions you need before you can go ahead, not to mention the Health and Safety that has to be in place. It was important to create a good relationship with the City Council so that they would be supportive of what we were doing and generally this was the case. There were a few occasions when it seemed they were slightly remiss in pointing out things and even on the day of the event they raised an issue that we had been open and honest about with them previously but they seemed to 'change' their stance on it which led to unexpected costs being incurred!

For future events there needs to be more people working on the 'event management' side of the project from the outset. We need to have a clearly identified list of requirements, licences and permits so that we can factor these into our budget and ensure that we have them all in place in plenty of time to proceed with our planning and organisation. Clearly identified roles will help with this as well so that the management of the event can be broken down into smaller roles (as with fundraising), all of which still come under the co-ordination of the Event Manager. We also need to ensure that all of our event insurance is up to date and in place much earlier for future events.

The planning of the event on the whole was well structured and well managed but in hindsight there could have been others involved in the Production/Management team from the start that would have avoided confusion and breakdowns in communication at times. Again, in hindsight it was a mistake to split the Production Team in two for part of the planning process as this lost a sense of unity and direction and led to breakdowns in communication between people that could have been avoided. In future we would need to schedule in whole team meetings AND the separate 'creative/technical' meetings so that all aspects are being covered continuously. We will also maintain the 'structure' of the management of the event so that we only have dept heads at 'main' meetings and they then, in turn head up their own meetings with their teams.

The financial restraints made a lot of the planning of the event difficult at times as dept heads had to keep re-assessing their budgets and changing their plans. In future this can be rectified by clearer financial/budget planning for each department and then earlier fundraising activities.

PARTICULAR LEARNING POINTS:

- Establish an event management team with more people taking certain responsibilities so that it does not all fall on one person.
- Clearer outline of all necessary licences/permits/insurances etc to stage an event of this size
- Improved communication within the production team – appoint administrator to aid with this and be main point of contact for external communications/enquiries.
- Greater clarity and organisation of workforce (volunteers) in run up to event and during event
- Finishing well – ensuring the project is 'closed' appropriately and all loose ends tied up satisfactorily and efficiently and each person closing their 'area' in the right way.

Technical (Sound, Video and Lighting)

The experience of the Passion was amazing and this was due, in a large part to the technical aspects of the production. The sound was big, the lights were bright and the screens... well they were the largest in the world!

Sound:

Generally, we were happy with how the sound system package ran. The team worked together very well and the overall feedback has been good. Sound system coverage was not as good as we would have liked at the back of the square, but this is partly due to the distances we were trying to throw and partly due to having to keep sound levels sensible across the rest of the space. There were conflicting opinions regarding the levels (volume) of the sound system and this would need to be clarified for future events and everyone made aware of the appropriate and 'allowed' sound levels so that we all arrive on site with the same understanding and expectations.

We were very happy with how well the wireless systems worked; these were completely rock solid and credit to Ruth and team for smooth mic swapping throughout the show. It would have been really beneficial to have had an experienced stage manager / prompter with the sound engineer to cue the radio microphones as there were a few lines missed during the show. Singing in the centre of the audience (disciple's entry in hosanna was through the centre of the square) was not a good idea owing to time delays from the main arrays and made it very difficult to sing in time, we could have given all the disciples in ear monitoring but we didn't have the budget for this.

We need to ensure the quality of on stage monitoring as this is crucial in maintaining the confidence of the cast. The monitoring used did not appear to be that clear on the main stage for singers and the guitar monitoring was difficult for 'We Believe', mainly due to the sensitivity of the radio mics.

PARTICULAR LEARNING POINTS:

- Clearer communication and understanding of sound levels – finding the balance between what is allowed, what is needed and what is expected.
- Clarity on monitoring for cast (on stage and in crowd if needed) and clearer communication about what will be available during the performance.
- More time allotted for testing the system in location and keeping to schedules for run throughs and mic checks etc.

Video:

With regards to the big screens, these worked well. We had one small issue with the positioning of the one at the Guildhall end as the lighting tower was higher than expected and would have created an issue with erecting the screen; however this issue was quickly and easily resolved by changing where we positioned the trailer unit.

The plasma screens in the marquee and prayer tent worked well. The only small issue was that to be able to get a feed with the audio embedded in the signal the OB truck had to give

us a feed from the record VT, which meant that on occasions before the show the screens had a frozen image, when the VT was not in record mode. The plasma screens in the Guildhall had a slight issue in that they did not have the HDMI inputs we were expecting, however we were able to run a composite feed to these. This had the slight drawback that we had no audio and that the video had a slight disturbance caused by mains induction on the long cable runs.

We probably could have done with using a slightly better arrangement for playing in the video clips. For future projects we may need to look at hiring / borrowing a more professional unit for playing in video clips.

It was generally felt that the students from Solent University lacked the experience we really required for such a large event and that the camera work was not always up to scratch with some action being missed. Whilst this was not necessarily apparent to the general public on the night it has been commented on and now that we are using the tapes from these cameras to attempt to compile a DVD of the production we are seeing the 'holes' that are there in the footage.

On the whole the use of the Solent OB truck and the screens did ensure that everyone in the Square that night got to see the action from wherever they were stood.

PARTICULAR LEARNING POINTS:

- Clearer planning and communication between all involved with video to ensure compatibility and smooth operations for the event
- Source more efficient method of playing video clips to ensure they run correctly
- More experienced camera operators, or more time for camera rehearsals to ensure better coverage of the live action.

Lighting:

The lighting for the Passion really contributed to creating the right atmospheres and the lighting of columns at the Guildhall in particular looks stunning in some of the event photography! It was difficult only having a short time in the space (in darkness) in which to focus the lights and get them set as required but what was achieved was excellent.

There were some major issues with compatibility of equipment which was sadly the result of lack of budget to source all lights from one supplier. This resulted in a lot of extra work having to be done on site to rectify this and enable all the lights to work together. In future a priority would be to source all lighting equipment from one supplier and to only hire what we knew was necessary as there were pieces of lighting equipment that never got used but that we paid for!

The design of the lighting ideally should have been carried out with a lot more collaboration between those involved/responsible with more regular meetings and greater communication about requirements and ideas. There needed to be clearer definition within the lighting team about roles during the build and on the night as there were last minute changes in 'personnel' which led to less experienced people operating lights. A clearer team from the start would have been beneficial.

PARTICULAR LEARNING POINTS:

- Clearer communication and collaboration amongst those responsible for lighting
- Only use one source for lighting hire to ensure compatibility and uniformity of the equipment which will ensure a smoother process for lighting the show.
- Greater clarity in the lighting design so that nothing is missed and the look/vision of the production can be realized.
- Greater familiarity with the script by the lighting designer and/or lighting operator to ensure cues are correct.

Production & Music

Overall the final performance of the Passion went extremely well and each cast member performed at their very best and gave their all! The feedback about the production has been really positive and the style and approach to the story has been highlighted as being particular well handled.

The rehearsal process seemed to work well with breaking down the production into scenes and then bringing all of these together to form the whole towards the end, although there could have been more time spent on 'bigger' more substantial scenes and more time allowed for full run throughs. It would have been beneficial to have more involvement from technical (lighting in particular) at the rehearsals so that there is a familiarity with the script and the look of the scenes and cues etc.

In future there will need to be better organisation for rehearsals and better timekeeping from production team as the majority of rehearsals started late and sadly this became the 'norm' even prompting comments from cast members about the tardiness! More attention could be given to the finer details of scenes where in this case it seemed that some scenes were accepted as 'good enough' due to lack of time to go over details.

The design and look of the production was very successful with the staging, set and costumes fulfilling the original creative vision for the Passion. The contemporary look was achieved really well in the costume direction and the script and music served to enhance the contemporary feel of the production.

The Music for the production was discussed early on with Nathan and the concepts and styles were developed over time. The majority of the songs were written (in a basic format) before we started auditioning and this was intentional so that we could make informed decisions about casting. Tweaks and alterations were made where necessary to suit people's voices and a whole new song was written based on the fact that we found so many excellent female singers! We planned the rehearsal schedule so that all singers would learn their songs and become familiar with them as the first part of rehearsing so that when we got to pulling the scenes together people could perform the songs confidently in there context. This worked really well and would certainly intend to do this again.

The formation of the choir was a fantastic asset to the production and gave the music and the performance a real lift – it also created a greater opportunity for people to get involved. The ideal was to have 'live' musicians perform on the night but it was deemed too logistically complicated to go ahead with this and so we went with backing tracks, which worked really well.

PARTICULAR LEARNING POINTS:

- Better organised rehearsals – starting on time and giving more opportunity for attention to detail
- Working more to stricter deadlines – avoid finishing aspects of the production so late in the proceedings and having video/props/set/sound fx etc in place much earlier in the rehearsal process.
- Have a clearer timescale for song writing and recording and allow enough time for re-writes and re-recording if needed.