

# Theatre ticket app 'is Uber of the West End'

**Alistair Foster**

Showbusiness Correspondent

THE makers of a new app claim that it will revolutionise buying tickets for West End shows and have as much impact as Uber has had on taxi services in London.

TodayTix will make unsold tickets quickly available to users who can book up to an hour before curtain-up in a process that takes 30 seconds.

The app has had a successful start on Broadway in New York and has the backing of major theatre owners in London, including Cameron Mackintosh, Andrew Lloyd Webber, The Ambassador Theatre Group and the Royal Court.

About 30 per cent of West End tickets go unsold every year, with many seats sold through agents, including last-minute ticket booths.

Tickets are sold above or below face value, depending on demand, sometimes with an additional booking fee.

TodayTix's creators – Broadway and West End producers Merritt Baer, 30, and Brian Fenty, 29 – have promised

never to sell a ticket above face value and to charge a flat fee of £3 a ticket.

Mr Baer said: "It's about making it easier for the tickets to get into the hands of customers."

"At the end of the day we want to put bums on seats – and the next generation of bums on seats. In New York, we found the average age of theatregoers is 44, but the average age of people using our app is 32."

"Just like the world of Uber has disrupted taxi services in London, we are innovating in a mobile-only way."

London's black cab drivers took to the streets of Westminster this week in protest at the growth of Uber and similar apps, but Mr Baer and Mr Fenty said West End theatre owners had reacted very positively and tickets for 40 shows will be available on the app when it launches next week as a free download on iOS and Android.

They also hope to offer additional deals with theatres, adding: "We are insiders – we try to deliver unique partnerships and deals. We've done this with great success on Broadway and hope to continue in London."

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"Surreal": Hugh Bonneville with a Norway Red Fish highlights the global threats to ocean life

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## Good lord, what a catch! Downton star poses for fish campaign

HUGH BONNEVILLE is the latest celebrity to pose semi-naked with a sea creature to highlight the global threats to ocean life.

The Downton Abbey and W1A actor was photographed with a Norway Red Fish for Fishlove – a campaign that highlights issues such as illegal fishing, over-fishing and pollution, and urges consumers to buy only sustainably caught fresh and tinned fish.

Actresses Dame Judi Dench, Julie Christie, Zoë Wanamaker and Fiona

Shaw all posed for similar shots for the new Fishlove collection, by British photographer John Swannell, ahead of World Oceans Day on June 8. Previous supporters of the cause include Helena Bonham Carter and Gillian Anderson.

Bonneville, 51, said: "I'd never done a photo shoot with a fish before. It was a surreal experience. Especially when he whispered in my ear, 'I know a man's gotta eat but please – fish fairly.' Fair point from a fine fish. Fish fairly."

Dame Judi said: "I chose a lobster

because I have a passion for them... it is not every day you get to cuddle a lobster."

Fishlove was launched in 2009 by actress Greta Scacchi and Nicholas Röhl, the co-owner of Brighton restaurant MOSHIMO.

Mr Röhl said of Bonneville: "He was fantastic. I originally wanted to get him to pose with an eel – but I didn't think it wise to get the Earl of Grantham covered in eel gunk."

Lizzie Edmonds

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