

Inside View:

Second To None

Entertainment Director Keith Maynard talks about Queen Mary 2.

By

Richard H. Wagner

After working on Cunard's Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth for two years, Keith Maynard became Entertainment Director on Queen Mary 2 this year (2012), alternating with Paul O'Loughlin. In that position, he is in charge of the entertainment and activities onboard the transatlantic liner.

"The entertainment is something we are very proud of. We like to provide entertainment that is for a more educated clientele. We provide a really good Cunard Insights lecture program with some great speakers. For instance, Bill Miller is on this voyage - - Mr. Ocean Liner himself, who had written over 70 books and who has been lecturing on cruise ships and ocean liners for 35 years. Nicholas Owen is on at the moment as well talking about his experiences being the royal correspondent for ITN for six years and as a current broadcaster for the BBC. Next voyage, we have the famous author Baroness P.D. James. Later in the year we have Sir David Frost coming on. We have famous people traveling with us all the time."

"There is our association with the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, so you get that wonderful cream of British theater with [their performances of] Merchant of Venice and the Canterbury Tales. The Julliard association - - Robbie Jones is onboard at the moment, one of the leading teachers at the Julliard School, giving concerts every night. There are a lot of very memorable aspects and that is not mentioning our own in-house production team, The Royal Cunard Singers and Dancers, and all the guest artists that we get on as well."

"We have the biggest ballroom at sea and make use of that for events. Last night we had the Big Band Ball. We are the only company at sea that can have an in-house big band ball combining our Royal Court Theatre orchestra and the Queens Room Orchestra - - 17 musicians playing including a big brass section."

"We like to have a lot of activities as well. We celebrate sea days; that is what the ship was built for. We are not a ship that exists to visit ports and ports themselves are the attraction. The ship

itself is the destination. She is built with tremendous amounts of public space.”

“The function of an ocean-going liner is to make this a world in its own, a world that you don’t want to leave. That is why on every voyage I hear people say ‘I want to come back the other way.’ They want to come back for another seven days at sea, heading back to New York or back to Southampton.”

“There is so much to do. If you look at the daily program, there are options every half hour. Some may say too many options but we have 2,500 guests. People like to do different things at different times. I believe you are entertained from first getting up in the morning with my TV show all the way through to the early hours of the morning if you want to dance in G32 or relax in the Commodore lounge with a cocktail, it is your choice.”

“It is a relaxed approach, still slightly more formal than other companies. People have a choice in what they do. We are not pushy with our product. In some of the companies that I have worked for before there is a much more in your face feel about entertainment and activities. I think on here there is enough space and public areas so if you want to get involved you are invited to but if you want to just be anonymous and have a more private experience then you are able to.”

Looking beyond the onboard entertainment, Maynard noted some other factors which hallmark the onboard experience on Cunard.

“All of our ships pride themselves on service, the service of the staff. I have daily conversations with guests who say they can’t believe how friendly and nice [our] people are. I think we genuinely want to give the guest a good holiday or vacation as the case may be. It is the

White Star service that we pride ourselves on.”

“We are very proud of our history. It is 172 years of history there and we refer back to that. We are very proud of our connection with the royal family. It goes back to 1912 to King George V when he visited the Mauretania, all the way to Her Majesty attending the opening ceremony for Queen Elizabeth. When you sail with Cunard, you taste and buy into that history as well.”

Since 1997, Cunard has been under the umbrella of Carnival Corporation, which owns several other cruise lines. However, Cunard provides a much different experience than its sister companies including the popular Carnival Cruise Lines. “If you go on any of our ships, you will see that we have a very strong concept and belief in who we are and what we do and that is something that Micky Arison [Chairman of Carnival Corporation] is very keen that we keep and very keen that we remain a unique product.”

“It was [Carnival’s] investment that ensured that we could build the ships that we currently use. Without their help we would never have been able to build this very beautiful liner. If you look around this liner, you’ll see that they believe very much that we have a product that is worthy of being unique and they very much want us to hark back to the glory days of ocean travel.”

The onboard experience on Queen Mary 2 is also influenced by the composition of its passenger body. “At the moment we have 1,100 Americans, 1,100 Brits, 125 Canadians and a mixture of other nationalities. When we go out of Hamburg, we have a high percentage of German guests, up to maybe 1,800 Germans onboard. It is a very

international feel. We are proud of that and keen for that to continue.”

Maynard sees the onboard experience on QM2 as growing through evolution rather than radical change. “Change is part of life. We all change as

people. But I believe we have a team onboard who are passionate about the product, about maintaining its identity and about giving the very, very best. I believe that what we offer is second to none “