

?Blast? ? a concert and exploration at Theatre Orangeville

By Constance Scrafield

When you have an albeit seasonal venue with the potential to host almost any entertainment in a waterfront park setting, first you need to try it out to see how well it will work.

In this event, Theatre Orangeville is working in concert with the Credit Valley Conservation (CVC), with sponsorship support from the Town of Orangeville, Orangeville BIA, Dufferin Arts Council, Orangeville Highlands Rotarians, MacMaster Buick GMC and Scotiabank, plus assistance from Friends of Island Lake, to explore the possibilities of building a floating stage on a tiny inlet of the lake within Island Lake Conservation Area.

Bill Lidster, senior superintendent of field operations with CVC, explained the relationship.

?We're facilitating an event, not getting involved,? he said. ?We're supplying the venue. We just think it's an opportunity of getting people into the park that wouldn't normally come so that they can see the connection between entertainment and nature.?

He went on to outline the responsibility of protection for the conservation area. ?Whatever we do, the document that dictates what we do and do not do in the park is the Management Plan,? he said.

CVC's responsibilities are to ensure the protection, appreciation and recreation within the park.

Lidster also explained that this particular space is not suitable for swimming. It is an area of mown lawn and not a specifically protected place. It is a spot for accompanied dogs to play and people to sit at the picnic tables with their lunches or just to enjoy.

This is exactly what we had the chance to do with Marilyn Logan, chairperson of the Island Lake Stage Committee, which includes representatives of Theatre Orangeville, CVC, Rotarians and interested community members.

We talked about the potential and the challenges of the floating stage, the programming that might work and the possible influence on the neighbourhood.

The test concert, as it were, is scheduled for June 21 ? as Logan pointed out, the longest day of the year. It will be an evening of quite varied music from many performers, who are all donating their time and talent. The Town of Mono has suspended its noise bylaw for the evening to allow an opportunity to determine how such a concert will influence the comfort of the people who live in the immediate vicinity.

In other words, there is a general enthusiasm for this project, for the idea of staging performances in a beautiful outdoor setting, surrounded by trees and floating on the water, throughout the summer months.

That idea came about in this way. When Theatre Orangeville and Community Living Dufferin (CLD) partnered to build the Dream Factory, as the theatre folk call it, part of the plan was to build an outdoor stage in the natural bowl on the property. Eventually, that plan did not work out and, once ?that door was closed,? there was a search for another place to create such a venue. The idea of a floating stage on Island Lake was not long in coming to mind.

When the executive of the theatre approached CVC, they were told there was already a plan to create a stage for performances in one of the fields. Changing the location to the water raised no concerns and the idea has been floated, with a degree of excitement, and worked on since then.

There are many aspects to establishing a permanent structure that need to be examined, hence the upcoming concert. This is the exploration concert.

?As part of it,? Logan began to explain, ?we are looking at bringing in electricity. Will generators work or do we need to install electricity? This will make a difference to the budget.?

Of the possible audience capacity, she said, ?We can logistically accommodate 1,000 people. This is an area that regularly sees that many people coming in for other events. We are not impacting on the nature of the area, other than the music. We're just trying to do our due diligence here.?

So, we dreamt of everything going well on June 21, the night of the concert. What are the decisions to follow?

The staging and the engineering are prime considerations. The stage is planned to be 20 by 40 feet, but its construction and covering need careful designing. A floating stage is quite a different matter from one built on terra firma. The environmental issues have to be taken into account from the point of view of the construction.

There are grant applications to begin work on.

A huge part of the whole is choosing the programming.

The perception of the project by the people living closest to it needs reassurance. They must be aware of the control CVC has over parking: there are designated spaces for both able bodied and wheel chair patrons, firmly directed by CVC members.

Logan also mentioned, ?There can't be events every weekend because the CVC has other things going.?

?I believe there will be a venue here,? she added. ?It's mainly a matter of the programming.?

Blast ? A Community in Concert is set for June 21 at the Island Lake Conservation Area, entrance off Buena Vista Drive. The Lions Club will have a food truck onsite.

Gates open at 6 p.m. for the outdoor concert, rain or shine. Don't forget to bring bug spray, chairs and/or blankets, a picnic if you like. Bring the whole family. Tickets are \$20 per adult, students \$10, under 5 free; they cover entrance into the park and parking in addition to a fabulous concert.

Tickets are available at the Visitor Information Centre, Island Lake Conservation Area, Town of Mono, Theatre Orangeville box office and Scotiabank. Also, online at www.orangevilletix.ca or www.theatre orangeville.ca