

'I Love My Theatre Orangeville' fundraising campaign kicks into high gear

By **Constance Scrafield**

Theatre Orangeville's Artistic Director, David Nairn was happy to tell the Citizen, 'We are selling subscriptions at an unprecedented rate.'

In an interview over Zoom with Nairn and Ingrid Watt, Theatre Orangeville's Development Manager, we discussed the importance and status of the theatre's current fundraising campaign, called 'I Love My Theatre Orangeville.'

'There are record numbers of new people coming out,' says Nairn. 'People are just lining up. I thank the heavens every day.'

But, he adds, 'There is still the need for us to press on with our fundraising campaign.'

Announcing the new 2024-2025 season much earlier than in the past may have helped encourage the rush to purchase subscriptions. Loving the rush, the company remains cautious about survival over the next year or so.

To invigorate public enthusiasm for the funding of Theatre Orangeville's campaign, Watt and Nairn want to remind the public that Theatre Orangeville is a full-fledged not-for-profit charitable organization. It's in the same circle as a church or a hospital, Nairn says.

Those two serve their communities in other essential ways and Nairn is certain Theatre Orangeville's service is also essential to this community's well-being.

Newly appointed as Theatre Orangeville's Executive Director, Sharyn Ayliffe has written a blog setting out the many reasons for loving the local theatre. Nairn describes it as an important social document.

'An evening in the Theatre is a collaborative human experience that will never be repeated,' writes Ayliffe, observing that no two live performances and no two audiences are ever the same.

She points to how Theatre Orangeville nurtures young minds, creating safer spaces, as a leader in accessibility and inclusion. Here is a pocket of the world 'where all are welcome to share a piece of themselves without fear of judgment.'

Over the last four years, of which Theatre Orangeville's doors were closed for 18 months of Covid restrictions, by dint of energetic imagination and a determined drive to keep people employed, the staff and dozens of artists were busy with filmed-for-viewing online cabaret shows, sketches and one-act plays. It meant a connection with theatre was maintained in the minds and hearts of the patrons who were missing it so much.

At last, with the permitted full return to live theatre, the excitement and love for all the arts Theatre Orangeville engages, the financial needs must be supported and it is to this campaign that attention is drawn.

'We are encouraging individuals, businesses and the community at large to invest in Theatre Orangeville as it serves as an important part of the community,' says Nairn.

It is well understood the necessary benefits of tourism to any town and he had the tourism statistics handy during his interview with Citizen. For every dollar spent on a ticket to a show at Theatre Orangeville, \$17 is spent elsewhere within the town.

'How else would anyone hope for a 17 to one return?' he asked. 'This is an opportunity for people to invest emotionally as well; to say, 'Look how we value Theatre Orangeville.''

Of the many partnerships Theatre Orangeville has established, that with Mount Alverno Luxury Resort sees the setting in August for Theatre Orangeville's Summer Festival, an inclusive hurrah for all the arts, festooning the resort's beautiful property with music, magic, all kinds of displays for kids and adults ? plus acts from Fringe and Drag Bingo.

On the main stage of Theatre Orangeville now in its 31st Season, are some of the finest performances by actors who have walked the boards across the continent and further afield. This is a theatre season after all. The main stage plays run from September to May each year. Concerts and add-ons are part of why these doors must stay open.

There are still two shows to come this 2023-24 season. ?The Darktown Strutters' Ball? is a musical revue taking you back to ?the early days of music halls and vaudeville, days that have inspired every musician right up to, and including those of today.? It's running from April 25 to May 12.

The delightful Leisa Way and her Wayward Band are bringing her Opry Gold, a salute to the greatest of Country Music and is such a treat over the weekend of June 25 to 27.

The ?I Love My Theatre Orangeville? fundraising campaign has an ambitious but necessary goal of \$350,000. There are plenty of ways to donate and they can be found at www.theatreorangeville.ca

To read Sharyn Ayliffe's blog: www.theatreorangeville.ca/post/i-love-my-theatre-orangeville-why-it-matters.