

Theatre Orangeville's 'Twas the Night Gala set for November 16th

By Constance Scrafield

An interview with Laura Sheehan Austin, Theatre Orangeville fund raising committee chair, and committee member Hazel Mason, spoke to how soon Theatre Orangeville's fabulous annual 'Twas the Night Gala is coming up.

Set for November 16 and staged this year at the Hockley Valley Resort, this party promises all it has been and more.

The luxurious establishment is at 783522 3rd Line, EHS in Mono, L9W 5X7.

The banquet, silent and live auctions, will all be held in the hotel's Montclair Ballroom. which seats 300 people very comfortably. To have the silent auction there means patrons can still see the entertainment and have access to all the chances to spend.

During the course of the evening, Artistic Director David Nairn will stand for the 25th year as auctioneer, as only he can ' cajoling and teasing bidders to increase offers between competing bidders.

For Laura Austin, this year's 'Twas Gala is about its being David Nairn's last year as host and that needs to be celebrated. As a major support in the fund raising, she praised a great canvassing committee, with amazing volunteers, collecting silent auction contributions from an unbelievable community.

Every year new people still join in the effort, including the incomparable Joy Bell, who has been with them all this time.

Traditionally, Father Christmas attends. In the Montclair Ballroom, a pianist on the stage will provide seasonal music and the Theatre Orangeville Youth Singers will sing carols on the stairs.

For this most important fund-raising event of the year, Ms. Austin is organizing the Silent Auction items, 'a huge amount of work,' she said, comparing it to '84,000 emails.' She is willing though, for 'the actual night is so much fun, being in a room with a community who are raising funds, joyously living in a community within two degrees of separation.'

Ticket sales are doing well; tables are being reserved.

This year, people were looking for a change in the menu from prime roast beef. The new menus are a vegetarian meal of green salad and stuffed pepper. For meat lovers, it is carved beef tenderloin and chicken supreme, with green salad. Dessert all round.

Once again, Anne Marie Warburton, founder and owner of Gallery Gemma at the Alton Mill Arts Centre, is donating a fabulous piece of jewellery.

There are several new Live Auction items, from wine tastings, with tickets to the Shaw Festival, tickets for the Women's Hockey League; likewise, another professional hockey game of choice. All of which add one night accommodation.

Both the Hockley Valley Resort and Adamo Winery have donated combination packages. The Toast of Orangeville offers dinner at Blue Bird Restaurant and overnight at the Nest, plus tickets to Theatre Orangeville.

Later, in conversation, David Nairn he described his last 'Twas as 'bittersweet.'

For 25 years, he has been 'Master of the House and head cheerleader,' although he admits that he and his wonderful lady, Leisa Way, are looking forward to attending the great event next year as guests.

?The name change to ?Twas kept things fresh,? he explained but, withal, the event is generally acknowledged as the beginning of the festive season. He confirmed that in as many of the Theatre Orangeville galas as he has attended and hosted, there has never been one he did not enjoy.

At every one he has attended, he has come away with admiration for the support, the camaraderie and fellowship of the community.

When people see the talent of the singers and performers at ?Twas, he reminds them it is the support of people that helps these young people blossom, making the point that most of the donations came from local artisans and businesses.

?This is a fundraiser,? he was clear. ?The money is important ? all those sales are vital funds and also a darn good night mingling with friends.?

The proof of how good a night shows in the numbers of people who keep coming back. For entertainment, there are some ?super stars,? super-exciting and a few surprises, we were promised.

Why attend? Because it's a beautiful night out to get dressed up and support our theatre, something we want to continue.

?The success of annual fundraiser is essential or we wouldn't be able to offer the programs that we do,? Nairn said.

For tickets, call the festive folk at the Box Office 519-942-3423 or go to www.theatreorangeville.ca.