

Theatre Orangeville's 'Twas the Night Gala starts the Holiday Season

By Constance Scrafield

There are still tickets for 'Twas the Night Gala, Theatre Orangeville's most important fund raiser of the year, set for November 25 at the Best Western Plus Orangeville Inn and Suites.

This year's 'Twas the Night Gala date does not conflict with the Santa Claus parade, which offers more people the chance to come.

The evening is always the highlight and the first party of the upcoming holiday season. We wear our best 'bib and tucker,' stroll the wonders of the Silent Auction, tap our toes to the jazz trio and nibble on the proffered trays of hors d'oeuvres.

We schmooze and browse and bid. Soon, but not too soon, dinner is announced, and we make our way to our assigned tables, ready to enjoy the meal, the wine and the entertainment. Along with the last is David Nairn, Artistic Director of Theatre Orangeville and emcee, Bon Vivant and ' most importantly, the auctioneer of the Live Auction, which he will work through during the course of the evening.

In anticipation of this grand event, the Citizen sat down over Zoom with Laura Sheehan, Austin and Hazel Mason (Committee Co-Chairs), Amanda Doerrie (TOV Marketing Strategist), and Artistic Director David Nairn to hear more about the fun and temptations for this season's Gala.

Two matters were first to gain attention.

First was praise for the people without whom this event could not happen: the volunteers, noting how many of the volunteers were coming back from last year and the years before. Ms. Austin's and Ms. Mason's daughters are both on deck to help this year, remarking that 'when they see their mothers as role models, involved in volunteering, they are encouraged to do the same.'

As well, there are volunteers from Young Company this year, and the comment was, 'Good to see it come full circle.'

'The Theatre Orangeville crew and admin crew are outstanding,' David Nairn enthused. 'They put this show together with the stage, sound, lights, all of it, all above and beyond their work at the theatre. At the end of the Gala, tuxedos and dresses are swapped for jeans and T-shirts and they're rolling up wires and everything else that has to be done.'

Donations for the silent auction are already being delivered, many of them in the form of certificates for restaurants, theatres and services. One is valued at \$300 worth of interior decorating. A Rickenbacker guitar, John Lennon's favourite, is in the auction mix, plus top hockey tickets.

There is plenty of scope for all sorts of items to be donated, and it is an excellent way to draw attention to an individual business' product line.

The 30th anniversary Theatre Orangeville is celebrating is traditionally marked by pearls. This year, jeweller extraordinaire Anne-Marie Warburton plans to pick the pearls she loves while staging her pearl show and sale this weekend at her Gallery Gemma, in the Alton Mill Arts Centre. She herself will create a fabulous piece of jewellery with the pearls she chooses as a donation to the Gala's fundraising.

Artist Mary Scattergood's painting of Orangeville's Town Hall and Opera House is the image on the Gala's program this year.

Tina Clare's art is reflected in a line of clothing featured in the silent auction.

Yes, as Mr. Nairn always promises us, "There will be entertainment."

The very much revived Theatre Orangeville Youth Singers (TOYS) choir is back! Under the direction of their Music Director, Elisabeth DuBois, they will sing from the staircase in the lobby of the Best Western at the beginning of the "Twas Gala evening. Re-established just last season after being suspended due to COVID, TOYS performed their first concert for a packed theatre in May. This season, the choir has expanded from 13 members to more than 20 now, which is very exciting. They are fitting this appearance into the very busy performance schedule they have coming up over the next couple of months " six or seven performances, we were told.

Mr. Nairn cheered them on, saying humorously, "It was nice of them to fit us in!"

On the stage in the ballroom where dinner is served, we can anticipate a number of performers, some we know and already love, others new to delight us, with David Nairn taking his turn between to auction off another fabulous item.

Many of the live auction offers are experiences; some of them are trips escorted by senior Theatre Orangeville staff, usually Mr. Nairn himself, to Stratford or Niagara-on-the-Lake (Shaw Festival) for lunch and to see a show. What makes these trips so special is going backstage to meet the actors and have a visit to see how the magic happens. Sometimes, you will realize that the actor you are meeting in Stratford or the Shaw is a person you have also seen in a Theatre Orangeville production.

"You would never get this anywhere else," Mr. Nairn assured us. "These are the sort of experiences only a theatre can offer."

What makes this Gala so special for him is that ever since it began 25 years ago, "it has been a team sport for the many people involved and the tremendous support from the community."

He reminded us that every dollar raised for the theatre goes to support the many programs Theatre Orangeville runs over the year. Theatre Orangeville is a charity that needs to raise funds in order to continue to "satisfy our hearts. Without your support," he said, "we cannot exist. Step up and say the theatre is important."

Like a person with a delicious secret, he hinted about the entertainment, "There will be a couple of surprises. One very special performer " one I've been trying to get here for a while."

For tickets to "Twas the Night Gala on November 25, call the Box Office at 519-942-3423 or go online at www.theatreorangeville.ca and click «Support us.» The Box Office is open at the Opera House, 87 Broadway, Monday to Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.