

Three 25th anniversaries look to the future

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

Somehow, 25 years ago, three of the cultural pillars of this headwaters region were founded: The Dufferin County Museum and Archives (DCMA), Theatre Orangeville and In The Hills Magazine. In recognition and honour of this slightly astonishing arm-in-arm survival, like any three friends who have seen a lot of time go by together, Nanci Malek of the Museum, David Nairn of Theatre Orangeville, and Signe Ball of In the Hills magazine decided to look forward rather than reviewing the past.

Armed with this attitude, they have devised a competition of sorts to recognize the very brilliant young people coming up the ranks now. This is the 25 Under 25 invitation to nominate for the honour any person under 25 in any field in the widest possible meaning of culture, who is leading the way with passion, dedication, bravery.

With a view to getting the best understanding behind this initiative, we went first to Nanci Malek, the events, marketing and promotional administrator for the DCMA.

Said Ms Malek, "We were so pleased to be marking this anniversary, we just wanted to do something different and, so, instead of looking back, we decided to look forward and look at what the younger people are doing.

"There is a long list of subjects and not all arts, but science and sports, farming too that are of interest. People can nominate someone 25 or younger who is involved in practically anything."

When asked what she was doing when she was under 25, she told us in an email, "When I was 25 I was working at Citytv in Toronto. I began my career working on Citytv productions and counted myself as very fortunate."

Signe Ball, founder, editor and owner of the very elegant In the Hills magazine also responded by email about the impulses behind celebrating the trio of 25th Anniversaries by writing, "Our very first issue in 1994 included a feature about Dufferin's two new cultural organizations - Theatre Orangeville and Dufferin County Museum & Archives, and the three organizations have been good friends ever since. The fact that all three have grown and thrived is a direct result of the exceptional enthusiasm and support of the community we live in.

"We realize that many young people here have never known a time when the cultural landscape of the hills did not include the theatre, the museum and the magazine. For our joint 25th, instead of looking back, we wanted to look ahead and salute the next generation who are continuing to change the life of the community for the better."

In response to the question about her own life at 25 and under, Ms Ball wrote, "I had graduated with a degree in English and had my first job in publishing, doing ad traffic for a daily paper that served the construction industry across Canada. The best thing about it was that it was one of the last publications in Canada that was set in hot lead - so I feel like I have participated in the whole arc of change in the publishing world. The best moment: the day I had to go to the press room and say, "Stop the press!" It was always thrilling to see that great chugging Heidelberg press in action, but also pretty exciting to command it to halt."

David Nairn, Artistic Director of Theatre Orangeville, coming now into his 20th year on the job, told us in a brief telephone interview, "We're interested in this 25th year because, as you know, the three opened at the same time. Astonishingly, the year before was the start of the Dufferin Arts Council. But why? What was it - the alignment of the stars? It must have the collective energy in the county. How do these things happen? Boom - all together at the same time. It's remarkable that we're all still standing. We're taken by the way, the how - what makes the headwaters here flow from us into all the waters to the south."

He continued, speaking about the 25 Under 25: "This is not really a competition; it's a celebration- we don't want to look back, we want to look forward. I don't think I'll be here for the next 25th - the 50th - but lots of them will be. I want to make sure that those young people keep it going. It's our responsibility to encourage and mentor. We want to celebrate that journey with young people

who are starting to go down their own roads.?

Mr Nairn was keen to define the wide scope of the 25 Under 25 nominations, saying, 'This is culture in the broadest sense of the word, completely open. 25 for 25 makes sense ? there are 25,000 [in the age range] all starting off on this journey.

'It's as broad a pallet as we can imagine- young farmers, CSA, doctors ? not specifically a competition. To me, anyone who's nominated is of worthy of recognition.?

Of his own youthful days at the under 25 range, he told us, laughing, 'I was at theatre school pursuing my dream of becoming an actor. I was also torn: I was a 'carnie,' for the summer months [working in the travelling carnivals]. They wanted to keep me full time, travel down to Florida with the show ? all year 'round. The most desirable prize at the games were the Holly Hobbie Dolls. They were the big deal then.?

So, there you have it and you only have until July 15 to make your nominations. Look around at the amazing young people and the work, the volunteering, the performance, the creativity in so many ways ? you name it. There a list of 17 ideas, really, suggestions as to categories but they are not the defining limitations.

For nomination details and forms, go to 'Introducing 25 under 25 / In the Hills.?

Read all the details and click on the nomination form online.