

VENABLES

THEATRE



Annual Report 2020 - 2021

Oliver Community Theatre Society

Report prepared by Leah Foreman – Theatre Manager

Annual Report

July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

This year at the Venables theatre was a strange one. We had a lot of ups and downs, pivoting and resilience but we managed to come out of this year in good shape. We are really hoping for a better season in 2021-22 where we can see more artists perform on our stage.

Marketing and Ticket Sales

For the shows we were able to do we saw excellent ticket sales. We had 5 shows at 50 people and all the artists sold out at least one show. The shows we had onsale that we were unable to present also had strong sales.

Lobby Services

With the restrictions in place and only 50 audience members permitted we used the opportunity allow guest to bring drinks into their seats. This seems to work well and all audience comments were positive. We purchased stemless wine glasses to minimize the potential spillage and although a very limited number of shows we saw no major issues.

Performances and Stats

In the fall we kept the doors open doing smaller shows. We had a well thought out safety plan and did all we could to keep our audiences feeling safe and comfortable. We continued to reimagine and redesign our plans and had great success.

The restrictions in place made it unfeasible for outside renters to bring in shows. The Oliver Community Theatre attempted to keep the arts and culture alive. We began contracting BC based touring artists for shows of 50 people. We had contracted Mike Delamont, Bobs & Lolo, Barney Bentall, Alex Cuba and Harry Manx. We also had tentative agreement with Ballet Kelowna and Bruce Coughlan. As we were ramping up our bookings the next lockdown took place and we were never able to present any of the shows we had originally booked. We are still attempting to book these artists for next season.

The theatre was used by a few different groups this year. In the early part of the year we had the Town of Oliver Council meetings, the Oliver Ambassador program as well as a handful of other community meetings. In the later part of the year we had many dance schools recording for competitions or year end shows. Normally we have 2 dance schools but with the Cleland Theatre in Penticton closed we had 5 schools use our facility. We were able to give all the groups a reduction in costs due to the CEWS and knowing that they were incurring the additional costs of the videographer requirements.

Rental Category	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/2020	2020/2021
SD 53 "Reserved"	34	39	34	31	33	31	5
Local users	19	36	33	38	55	40	11
Children and Youth	11	16	18	17	22	8	16
Commercial Renter	3	4	7	11	12	11	1
Lobby events, tours and meetings	5	26	34	29	28	17	14
SOSS "Last Minute" Rehearsal and class blocks	36	58	31	26	15	10	6
Total blocks used	110	182	160	153	165	117	53

Board, Staff, Volunteers and Membership

The board acquired two new member, Merrill Bjerkan and Ritchie Kendrick, who joined the board at the AGM in September to bring the total to 8 board members. Kenn Oldfield remained president and Linda Nunes stepped into the Vice President role. Gordon Hahn is Treasurer and Tara Hovanes is secretary. The board continues to meet as necessary either in person or via Zoom to continue to offer much needed guidance in these very uncertain times.

A number of volunteers were still willing to perform duties for our much smaller shows. We modified their duties to reduce the amount of contact between them and the audience members. We also eliminated their need to check seating and washrooms by hiring a custodian for this job. Volunteers that were reluctant to comeback were reassured that they would be allowed to return when they felt comfortable enough to do so.

The limits of responsibility for the theatre manager were adjusted in order for the theatre manager to work more efficiently. The title of Theatre Manager was changed to General Manager. Also, the manager can now spend a portion of the artist fee budget for the following year in order to put deposits down for shows without direct board approval.

Presentations by the Society

Due to the smaller audience size and restrictions on travel the OCTS put together a local artist series. We had an open audition call and had 25 video submissions for the series we called *Venables Alive!*. All of the submissions were musical acts. We originally chose seven artists for the fall and due to the success of the program added three more to the early part of 2021. We got through five artists before

the shutdown. We had one of the cancelled artists do a live stream and one do a recorded concert. All five of the cancelled artists that we were not able to present this year are on the calendar to perform in the 21-22 season.

Through funding we were able to offer live stream and recordings to the artists done by a professional videographer. Some chose to live stream and some chose to simply record. This was a great opportunity for the artists to have professional video recordings that they can use for promotional materials.

Financial Management

This year's financial stability relied heavily on the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy. The funds received allowed us to plan and pivot while supporting artists and community groups. Due to this subsidy and other grants received we were able to come out of this year in very healthy financial shape.

The General Manager submitted grant applications and received a substantial amount for our presentation series. A BC gaming grant for \$8000 was received for Family and dance programming specifically. We were awarded \$28,000 from the BC Touring Council who via the BC Arts Council and the Government of BC. These funds were either sent on to the artists or deferred for our 21/22 presentation series.

There was a resiliency grant awarded to the theatre from the Town of Oliver this year. The funds, totaling \$32,000, will be used in the 21/22 season to allow for local renters to book the theatre at a significantly reduced rate.

Community Engagement and School Relations

We have continued to work with the schools on a number of different assemblies and performances. The Secondary School musical was cancelled but we were able to house the Oliver Elementary School musical that was recorded for a virtual audience.

We welcomed the Town of Oliver council meetings and the AGM for the South Okanagan Concert Society. The Oliver Youth Ambassador program was able to do a scaled down version of their annual gala.

The GM also joined the Oliver 100X100 committee. Attending meetings regarding the celebration of the people in Oliver and the Osoyoos Indian Band.

Looking Forward

We are starting to see a light at the end of the tunnel as some things begin to reopen gradually and we are really hoping to be back welcoming audiences in the fall. We will continue to work with the community and outside renters to present exciting arts and culture for the local community. We see no reason that we cannot adhere to protocols and still present a myriad of events and meetings. We know that audiences may be slow to return to the theatre but we are confident that we will succeed through the support of the community and funders.