

Oliver Community Theatre Society

Annual Report

July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018

“The Vision of the Oliver Community Theatre Society is to enhance and sustain regional interest and engagement in the performing arts at the Frank Venables Theatre.”

This year the Oliver Community Theatre Society has been working on goals and projects identified in the past few seasons and at a strategic planning session held with facilitator John Singleton in November. On a large scale, the drive is to attract new renters to the theatre and build audiences for all performances by expanding and increasing marketing. Other goals include increasing community use and engagement in the theatre, bringing in a series of performances for children and enhancing the look of the lobby.

Board, staff, volunteers and membership

There was only one change to the membership on the Board of Directors at the annual general meeting held in October. Midge Wyse departed following the end of her term, and Kenn Oldfield was brought on as a new director at large for a two-year term. Tom Szalay remains as President, Wendy Newman as Past President, Jennifer Busmann as Vice President and Gordon Hahn as Secretary and Treasurer. Also continuing to serve as directors at large are Bob Park, Andrea Furlan, and Brad Fossett.

Deb Martin remains as the Theatre Manager, responsible for many aspects of operating the theatre, including booking arrangements, contracts, liaising with the schools and Board of Directors, artist and community relations and ensuring all events run smoothly.

Aimee Grice added the role of Front of House Manager for shows in addition to her position as Marketing, Promotions and Box Office Coordinator. Aimee’s job duties include customer service, marketing for all events happening at the theatre, maintaining the website and social media accounts, and volunteer coordination.

Larry Schwartzenberger was hired in January as a casual, part-time employee to sell tickets at shows. With the above staff adjustments, the Theatre Manager has been able to rededicate a significant amount of her time to address administrative matters.

The Society has a full complement of 22 volunteers who perform the jobs of welcoming guests, scanning tickets, ushering and concession sales. A fire safety training session was held in the fall with Fire Chief Bob Graham, and a volunteer appreciation party took place in December. We now have a waiting list of people who have expressed interest in becoming future volunteers.

Society membership fees remain low to encourage participation.

Marketing and Online Tickets

Consumer ticket purchasing methods remain steady at 60% of transactions completed online and 40% in-person and telephone sales. The box office is still open three days a week to accommodate in-person sales. The number of people signed up to receive the email newsletter is now 1645, over 400 unique addresses more than last year. The number of customer accounts in the ticketing program has grown to 1,900, an increase of about 660 patrons.

Mica Knibbs of Crema Communications has been contracted to create a new logo and look for the theatre for marketing purposes. The need for a consistent image that reflected the theatre's brand was identified in a marketing session that followed up on the strategic planning session. We are looking forward to launching the new look when the Theatre's series of presentations is announced, and other marketing tools are revamped over the fall.

Performances and stats

There were 62 public events out of a total of 153 bookings this year. The total audience count for all events was just under 16,500, an increase of 2,000 partly due to SOSS using the theatre for their monthly assemblies. The number of commercial rentals is up significantly to 11, along with the audience numbers for these shows.

Almost 1,000 hours of volunteer time was recorded, not including the time spent on governance by Board members. In addition, almost 4,000 people were on stage, backstage, in the technical booth or planning and making the entertainment happen.

February saw the first sold out show since the theatre opened in 2014, "Working My Way Back to You," A Tribute to Frankie Valli, produced by Sonic Flower Entertainment.

Rental Category	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
SD 53 "Reserved"	34	39	34	31
Local users	19	36	33	38
Children and Youth	11	16	18	17
Commercial Renter	3	4	7	11
Lobby events and Tours	5	26	34	29
Community meetings	2	3	3	1
Total public use	74	124	129	127
SOSS "Last Minute" Rehearsal and class blocks	36	58	31	26
Total blocks used	110	182	160	153

Overall, audience numbers for all categories have remained close to last year, with a slight increase for commercial shows. The marketing team is working to focus efforts on reaching target audiences for each show and expanding awareness into Penticton to reach new markets.

Technical Equipment and other Acquisitions

The Society applied for and received a grant from the Government of Canada, Department of Heritage Cultural Spaces Fund and a contribution from the Adopt A Seat fund held by the School District to acquire specialized theatre equipment. These funds were used to purchase the Marley dance floor, stage side lights and the microphones described in the annual report last year. The remaining funds were used to purchase additional lights, bases and stands.

In addition, and with assistance from a donation by the South Okanagan Concert Society, more wireless and other specialized microphones were purchased based on recommendations from the Technical Committee and the technicians hired for shows.

Presentations by the Society

The first presentation of the season was the one-woman play “Jake’s Gift” featuring Julia Mackey and telling the story of a veteran who returns to France to mark the 60th Anniversary of Juno Beach. While there he encounters a precocious young girl and discovers a unique connection with her.

The two dance presentations were combined to create a “Passport to Dance” series. Ballet Kelowna returned in February with “Elles: Extraordinary Dance Created by Women” and new to Oliver was Flamenco Rosario with “La Monarca, The Monarch and the Butterfly Effect”, in April.

The Ultimate Comedy Show came to town in May and was presented as a community fundraiser for local flood relief. A total of \$685.00 was raised from ticket sales, concession sales and a donation jar and given to Oliver Osoyoos Search and Rescue.

Community Engagement and School Relations

The Society was pleased to once again host the Festival of Trees, starting with the Oliver “Christmas Light Up” in November and continuing through December, with the trees available for viewing in the lobby during office hours, performances and events. This festival is an on-going effort to raise funds for the BC Children’s Hospital and The South Okanagan Children’s Charity Sunshine Fund.

In February, the Society invited artists and photographers from SOSS and the community in to sketch and photograph the company class held by Ballet Kelowna before the evening performance. In April, a demonstration and conversation on Flamenco style dancing was held the afternoon before the Flamenco Rosario performance. Both events, hosted by board members, were well attended and received by the community.

Tuc el Nuit Elementary came in with Missoula Children’s Theatre to perform “Jack and the Beanstalk” in September, and Oliver Elementary performed both a Christmas show and the musical “Peter Pan” in the spring. SOSS presented four performances of the high-school musical “Rock of Ages” in March. SOSS has also brought back the tradition of frequent “Showcase Assemblies” that are hosted by students and highlight all areas of student projects, activities and achievements.

Financial Management

The Society registered for GST and received rebates for the previous three years. Moving forward, input tax credit claims are now completed at the end of each quarter.

An increase in earned income from rentals and ticket sales combined with the GST rebate from the previous three years created a surplus that allowed the Society to put aside a reserve for the liquor license application and make a contribution to the Adopt A Seat fund for future technical purchases.

Building Improvements

One project that is underway is the enhancement of the atmosphere in the lobby, with the intent of making it a more inviting place to socialize and linger. To accomplish this, four additional pot lights were installed to improve the lighting in front of the concession, and 12 bar tables and 32 bar stools were purchased to go in the downstairs lobby area and the wings of the mezzanine. Plans are also in place for the concession to be re-configured and painted.

Drinking fountains with bottle fillers were installed in the lobby and dressing room with the intent to reduce the amount of purchased bottled water use and to provide cold water in the dressing room. Future improvements will see one of the washrooms in the dressing room converted into a shower.

Looking Forward

A sub-lease for the theatre was received from the Regional District and the total occupancy of the lobby has been reassessed and updated in preparation for the application for a permanent liquor license. This application will be submitted to the Town of Oliver for approval before being sent to the BC Liquor & Cannabis Regulation Branch. If approved, the Society will be taking over all operations of the alcohol and concession sales.

The Society's presentations for this upcoming season are Ballet Kelowna, returning to perform "A Streetcar Named Desire" in the fall, and RubberBand Dance from Montreal bringing "Vic's Mix" in the spring. "The Comic Strippers" will appear in May.

In addition, a new series of four shows for children will start this fall. First up is Fred Penner in October, followed by comedian Alex Zerbe in January, DuffleBag Theatre in February, and Axe Capoeira in May. This series realizes a goal held by the society since its inception.

Report prepared by:

Deb Martin, Theatre Manager

Tom Szalay, President, Board of Directors

Wendy Newman, Past President