

VENABLES

THEATRE



Annual Report 2021 - 2022

Oliver Community Theatre Society

Report prepared by Leah Foreman – General Manager

Annual Report

July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022

We triumphantly navigated through another year of COVID-19 restrictions. Despite the ups and downs that were faced, it was a highly successful year.

Marketing and Ticket Sales

We presented many shows this year. Some were more successful than others which seemed to align with other events happening throughout the province.

New marketing efforts including reaching out to the schools to advertise our shows as well as hosting a table at the Oliver Arts Council Open House.

We embarked on a new side project this year, selling tickets to events outside of the theatre. The first of these events was the Osoyoos Spring Festival as well as the 2021 Festival of the Grape. The Festival of the Grape was cancelled due to the pandemic regulations. This has been a learning experience working within the systems we have in place. We will continue to find out if this is a revenue stream we wish to continue pursuing.

Performances and Stats (See appendix 1)

The year began with some restrictions and a lot of uncertainty as to what the months ahead would bring. We saw restrictions and vaccine requirements ebb and flow with the larger numbers of cases, but spring brought a light at the end of the tunnel.

This spring was definitely one of the busiest times we have seen. We were continuing to present the artists that we had contracted before and during the Pandemic. The theatre renters began to return including commercial and local presenters. The influx of events taking place also saw our patrons begin to return.

Two dance schools from up the valley, which used our theatre when others were closed, returned for rehearsals. They loved our venue so much they were willing to make the journey back. The Dance Studio in Oliver took advantage of our reduced local rates and added two additional public dance events.

Even with some restrictions in place, we welcomed over 10,000 people through our doors. We had almost 900 cast and crew creating memories. Our volunteers provided 2500 hours of service.

Board, Staff, Volunteers and Membership

The board decided that they needed to pivot the way that they were operating. A shift from a working board to a governance board had created a gap that needed to be filled. There was a strategic planning session held to conceptualize how to become a more effective board. The session was successful, and the board is on the right track to being more effective, and involved.

The make up of the board saw a few changes. The last founding member of the board, Wendy Newman, came to the end of her term. Don Brogan joined our board and jumped in as Treasurer. Tara Hovanes left the board in the middle of the year for personal reasons.

We have a fantastic group of volunteers who have stuck with us throughout these trying times. Due to the restrictions around Christmas, we moved our volunteer appreciation to late June. It was a huge success, and many attendees are hoping we continue to hold it at this time of the year in the future. We onboarded new volunteers this year and will begin a new volunteer waitlist for next year.

In preparation to be the box office for the 2021 Festival of the Grape, we hired a ticketing lead position. Elaina Mauro came on to take on this role and when the festival was cancelled, she stayed with us as a box office assistant.

With an extremely busy spring, the OCTS hired a summer student through the Canada Summer Jobs program. Cameron Miller came on for May and June and he was a great asset to our team. Cameron continues to work with us on a casual basis. We plan to take advantage of grant funding to utilize this position in future years.

Presentations by the Society

We knew that due to the regulations we would see less renters this year. The theatre took this opportunity to program more shows, and a total of 17 events were presented by the theatre. Many of these events had been scheduled and rescheduled throughout the Pandemic, including acts from our Venables Alive! series. We also presented 4 shows for families. The artists and audiences all appreciated our commitment to keeping the arts alive in our community within the guidelines laid out for us.

Highlights included:

- Grammy Award Winner Alex Cuba.
- Storyteller Shayna Jones from Kaslo.
- The breathtaking contemporary dance piece *Ying Yun* by Wen Wei Dance.
- Elliot Brood, an alternative country act out of Ontario. It was amazing to see how many people came out to this show that had never been to this theatre before.
- Our evening of female comedians called *Anything You Can Do* was so well received and something that we will continue to present in the future.

And many others.

Financial Management

We had a great year financially. The continued support of the grants we received allowed us to book shows and pay deposits to artists, knowing that we could weather the storm if we needed to cancel or postpone. With an extremely busy May and June, we ended up exceeding our budgeted revenue. The funds received allowed us to plan and pivot while supporting artists and community groups.

We received financial support from various government organizations. The Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy continued for the first part of the year. We were awarded a Canadian Heritage Recovery Fund for Arts Presentation Organizations in the amount of \$24,000 that was to go towards operational funding.

The resiliency grant that was awarded to us from the Town of Oliver in the 2020/2021 fiscal year was a huge help to our local renters. We used \$10,000 of the \$32,000 and will continue to use the grant in the year or two that follows.

Lobby Services

We continue to allow drinks in seats, and this has proven to be successful. We have seen an increase in liquor sales and our volunteers are still handling everything very well.

Community Engagement and School Relations

As we begin to open up, we are engaging more with community members. We have also been planning projects with the Oliver and Osoyoos Arts councils.

We have continued to work with the schools on a number of different assemblies and performances. This year, the OCTS did not provide services for the SOSS musical. The school was under different pandemic regulations than the OCTS. The school did not feel that they could ask audience members for proof of vaccination whereas all events still required proof of vaccination. The OCTS did not feel that our staff and volunteers should be made to be in the theatre with

unvaccinated people and therefore the OCTS made the space available to the high school but did not provide any services. The School District understood our stance and no animosity was created in this situation.

The General Manager has been coordinating with theatres from around the Okanagan Kootenay region to plan tours. This is cost effective not only for the theatres, but also for the artists. There are lots of discussions about different ways for successful community engagement and in-depth information on grants.

Looking Forward

This year was proof of the resilience of everyone involved in the theatre. From board, staff and volunteers to patrons and artists. We can progress for the next few years knowing that there is little we cannot overcome. The desire of the community is there to support us in the years to come.

Next year we plan to strengthen our ties to the local communities by providing more opportunities for engagement. We will continue to support local artists and bring in professional artists to the community.

OCTS Annual Report

Appendix 1 – Theatre Usage chart

Please note that from the end of our 2019/2020 fiscal year to 2021/2022 we were faced with closures and restrictions due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Rental Category	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
SD 53 "Reserved"	34	39	34	31	33	31	5	24
Local users	19	36	33	38	55	40	7	34
Children and Youth	11	16	18	17	22	8	12	11
Commercial Renter	3	4	7	11	12	11	1	7
Lobby events, tours and meetings	5	26	34	29	28	17	14	3
SOSS "Last Minute" Rehearsal and class blocks	36	58	31	26	15	10	6	6
FVT Presentations			4	3	7	7	8	15
Total blocks used	110	182	160	153	165	117	53	100