

# VENABLES

## THEATRE



**Annual Report 2022 - 2023**

**Oliver Community Theatre Society**

Report prepared by Leah Foreman – General Manager

# Annual Report

## July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

2022 – 2023 was a remarkable season of diverse programming and a resurgence of performing arts. As the theatre has done in the past, it arrived at a bleak time and came back better than ever.

### Marketing and Ticket Sales

Relationships with advertisers were rekindled in our post-Covid environment, and new outlets were discovered. We began advertising in the Skaha Matters publication which distributes 3300 printed newsletters as well a digital version. We are utilizing a publishing application called SocialBee to maximize efficiency in social posts. Our marketing coordinator seeks out nonprofit rates from advertisers to maximize our dollars. We seek out editorial coverage for our presentations whenever possible. Castanet coverage has improved since the merger with the Times Chronicle.

We did not embark on any side projects this year. The additional staff time and unrealistic expectations made selling tickets for offsite events unappealing.

### Performances and Stats (See appendix 1)

The year began free of any COVID-19 restrictions and with that we saw booking numbers that surpassed pre-covid numbers. Total blocks booked were 187, surpassing last season by 87.

Our local artist series, Venables Alive!, returned for another season with 6 new performances, including spoken word artist Madeline Terbasket with their piece *The Two Spirit Tease*. We also ran another season of the Family Showtime Series. Audience numbers were low for our family series, and we continue to look for new ways to encourage young families to attend.

This year we welcomed almost 16,000 people through our doors. We had almost 3200 cast and crew creating memories. Our volunteers provided 3500 hours of service.

### Board, Staff, Volunteers and Membership

The Board of Directors continued to support and govern the direction of the theatre. The board took on the extremely important task of creating policy documents regarding our commitment to an ethical code of conduct and Equity Diversity and Inclusion.

The board made a few adjustments this year. Gordon Hahn left at the end of last year and Janet Marcotte joined the board.

The South Okanagan Concert Society dissolved at the end of this year and the OCTS has agreed to continue with a concert series similar to what was presented by the Concert Society. Janet, President of the Concert Society, with a position on the OCTS board is a great asset to ensure a smooth transition will be possible.

We expanded our excellent group of volunteers and continue to have a waitlist, making us quite unique as many other organizations struggle to find volunteers. We will likely continue to add to our volunteer roster as we get busier. We had a wonderful volunteer appreciation event, which for the second year was held in June. We had musical bingo, karaoke, lots of food and drink and the evening was greatly enjoyed. All of our volunteers also received a gift as a token of the theatre's appreciation.

The theatre once again hired a summer student through the Canada Summer Jobs program. Jack Newth came on for June and July and he was a great asset to our team. Jack plans continue to work at the theatre on a casual basis.

## **Presentations by the Society**

We continue to curate a robust presentation series. Choosing our own shows allows us to present a diverse range of performers to the community who may not otherwise perform here as a rental. Our presentation series continues to increase with 35 blocks booked this year. We hosted a Residency for the Dancers of Damelahamid during the summer, and they returned in November 2022 to perform their outstanding piece, *Minowin*.

Other highlights include:

- Our very first drag show, *January's a Drag*
- International recording artist *Don Vappie & Jazz Creole*
- Spoken word artist *Shane Koyczan*
- Great Big Sea alum *Sean McCann*
- 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**

Last year's budget was extremely difficult to forecast. We had no certainty that come winter we would not be faced with more closures or restrictions. We were able to remain open and therefore had a financially successful year.

We had the continued support of grants that allowed us to operate at our normal high standard.

We received financial support from various government organizations. We were awarded a Canadian Heritage Reengaging Audiences Fund and this was used to reduce ticket fees while continuing to pay artists fair fees.

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 over the last two years. We used \$16,000 of the remaining \$22,000 and will continue to use the grant in the first part of our 2023/2024 year.

## **Lobby Services**

We have had the opportunity to streamline concession sales with the addition of a Square system for inventory and cash. This has streamlined the operation and decreased wait times for patrons. The concession net revenue for this year was over \$15,000. This is the first year we have been able to get a good idea of how the new Permanent Liquor Licence was a major asset to the operation of the theatre.

## **Community Engagement and School Relations**

Our summer student, Jack, took on the role of Community Engagement Coordinator during the months of June and July. During this time, he created a survey and distributed it to the community. Although most of the respondents were already engaged with the theatre, we learned valuable information regarding demographics, event interests and affordability.

Now that restrictions have lifted, we were able once again to sell tickets for the SOSS musical. This season, the school presented A-Wop Bop A-Loo Bop. The school district continues to utilize the theatre for other assemblies and concerts such as the annual OES Christmas Concert. There are also many community events that continue to utilize the theatre such as the Oliver Ambassador's pageant and the 1000 Flights fundraiser.

The General Manager continues to coordinate 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. With the addition of a Community Engagement Coordinator, we can strengthen our communication and make more impactful and meaningful relationships with our community. 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*

| <b>Rental Category</b>                                 | <b>2014/15</b> | <b>2015/16</b> | <b>2016/17</b> | <b>2017/18</b> | <b>2018/19</b> | <b>2019/2020</b> | <b>2020/2021</b> | <b>2021/2022</b> | <b>2022/2023</b> |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| SD 53<br>“Reserved”                                    | 34             | 39             | 34             | 31             | <b>33</b>      | <b>31</b>        | <b>5</b>         | <b>24</b>        | <b>28</b>        |
| Local users  | 19             | 36             | 33             | 38             | <b>55</b>      | <b>40</b>        | <b>7</b>         | <b>34</b>        | <b>62</b>        |
| Children and<br>Youth                                  | 11             | 16             | 18             | 17             | <b>22</b>      | <b>8</b>         | <b>12</b>        | <b>11</b>        | <b>21</b>        |
| Commercial<br>Renter                                   | 3              | 4              | 7              | 11             | <b>12</b>      | <b>11</b>        | <b>1</b>         | <b>7</b>         | <b>10</b>        |
| Lobby events,<br>and meetings                          | 5              | 26             | 34             | 29             | <b>28</b>      | <b>17</b>        | <b>14</b>        | <b>3</b>         | <b>16</b>        |
| SOSS “Last<br>Minute”<br>Rehearsal and<br>class blocks | 36             | 58             | 31             | 26             | <b>15</b>      | <b>10</b>        | <b>6</b>         | <b>6</b>         | <b>15</b>        |
| FVT<br>Presentations                                   |                |                | 4              | 3              | <b>7</b>       | <b>7</b>         | <b>8</b>         | <b>15</b>        | <b>35</b>        |
| <b>Total blocks<br/>used</b>                           | <b>110</b>     | <b>182</b>     | <b>160</b>     | <b>153</b>     | <b>165</b>     | <b>117</b>       | <b>53</b>        | <b>100</b>       | <b>187</b>       |