
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 26, 2007
File No.: 0230-20
To: City Manager
From: Lorna Gunn
Cultural Services Manager
Subject: Sunshine Theatre Company

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT City Council approve a \$40,000 grant to be allocated from Cultural Services budget to Sunshine Theatre Company to present professional theatre in 2007/2008.

BACKGROUND:

On January 29th, 2007 Sunshine Theatre Company announced a change in their operational structure from producing professional theatre to only providing presentations of professional theatre created by other professional theatre companies. The cost of producing productions is cost prohibitive without funding support from all levels of government.

Sunshine Theatre Company has been a part of the cultural fabric of our city for 30 years and throughout its history we have enjoyed numerous professional theatre performances, both productions and presentations, coupled with many financial challenges.

Last year, in light of continuing funding shortfalls, the door was opened to create a new management structure between Kelowna Visual and Performing Arts Centre Society and Sunshine Theatre Society. Due diligence creating the model was conducted with professional advice received from lawyers, chartered accountants, board members and all funding partners. The go ahead by both Board of Directors supporting the new model was given and came into effect on May 1st, 2006 and currently another season of professional theatre is being presented.

Moving forward, a detailed review of the past years operations was conducted and while all parties were hopeful that federal operational funding from Canada Council would come through, it did not. Hence, a new direction of "presentations only" has been taken in order to ensure the continuance of professional theatre as part of the cultural offering in Kelowna.

As City Council is aware there have been recent changes to the Kelowna Arts Foundation grant adjudication and Cultural Services have taken on the task of creating a peer review jury to adjudicate and make recommendations to Council regarding grants to professional organizations.

Timing of the operational changes of Sunshine Theatre Company and the new application deadlines did not allow Sunshine Theatre Society to apply through the new peer review jury process. Council should note however that a similar evaluation process has assisted staff in bringing forward this recommendation.

Artistic evaluation and the recommendation of plays for the upcoming presentation season have come from individuals well versed in the discipline of theatre presentation including Artistic Director David Mann as well as Sunshine Theatre's Advisory committee.

Financial projections using conservative revenue projections and solid expense figures have been reviewed with independent advice from Todd Sanderson Chartered Accountants. Presenting professional theatre verses producing professional theatre creates a dramatically different structure and one with stable anticipated costs.

Budget projections include repayment of the \$50,000 loan to the City of Kelowna from Sunshine Theatre over a three year time frame. Without this new presentation model moving forward, Council could reasonably expect that the loan would not be repaid as Sunshine Theatre Society would not continue to operate.

Again, Council should be aware that this grant request is for the 2007/2008 season and will come out of 2007 Cultural Services budget from funding formerly allocated to the Kelowna Arts Foundation. We anticipate the grant to be a one time request.

The management and operating agreement for the Rotary Centre for the Arts is up for renewal in December 2007. To prepare for the renewal of the agreement, the Kelowna and Visual Performing Arts Centre Society anticipate returning to council to discuss ongoing operating support for programming similar to the current agreements in place with the Kelowna Art Gallery Society and the Kelowna Museums Society.

Sunshine Theatre Society is currently operated through a management agreement with KVPACS. Both STS and KVPACS agree that in future years this annual funding should be directed through the RCA Management and Operating agreement to support programming. Proceeds from presentations will strengthen the RCA, and will increase the number of performances and accessibility for the community.

Both the Kelowna Visual and Performing Arts Centre Society and the Sunshine Theatre Society Board of Directors share in City Council's desire to ensure professional cultural vitality within Kelowna's Cultural District. The continued presentation of professional theatre will not only support the economic and capital investment that City Council has provided, in addition, professional theatre will add vibrancy to the cultural offerings our residents and visitors currently enjoy.

Submitted by:

L. Gunn
Cultural Services Manager

Approved for Inclusion:



[the department director initials here]

Cc David Graham – Recreation, Parks and Cultural Services
Keith Grayston – Finance Dept.

Sunshine Theatre Society Information regarding 2007/2008 Presentations

Community Initiatives

Student Matinees are offered for each show in the season. The price is only \$5 per student. Utilizing the synergy of the RCA Education program, STS was able to offer a student matinee to each of the 3 productions and 3 presentations in the 2006- 2007 season. A corporate sponsor, RBC Foundation was found to make this happen. And, to ensure that no one is left behind, schools may apply to the RCA's Rising Star Fund for fee assistance. More than 600 students from grades 2-12 attended #14 and summer of my Amazing Luck was filled to Capacity with Grades 6-12. Pith captured the attention of the younger grades, with over 200 in attendance.

It is our goal to be able to offer student matinees to each of the 4 presentations in the 2007-2008 seasons. This goal can be accomplished with the continued support of RBC Foundation and the availability of the tour schedules of the great shows we will be presenting.

Marketing Activity

The season subscription campaign begins in April of each year, during the last show of this season. The order form will be handed to each person in attendance at the April Show, and will be mailed in early June. Each ticket holder will be telephoned before June 30. It is expected that the majority of the 856 subscribers will renew by June 30, 2007. Early bird subscriptions will be offered at \$80 for 4 shows. After June 30 the price increases to \$100, and single ticket will be \$30 for adults, \$15 students. Each show will be advertised individually in print closer to the show dates.

Our marketing plan is extensive and involves all forms of regional media. The most important marketing piece is our season brochure, as it is almost completely responsible for all subscription revenue.

Artistic Direction and Programming Goals

The 2006 – 2007 season was developed by Artistic Director David Mann. Our 2007- 2008 season was also developed by David Mann, coupled with input from our theatre advisory committee, which is made up of theatre professionals from our community.

Sunshine Theatre Company has a responsibility under its mandate to present high quality professional theatre and to showcase Canadian talent to the people of the Okanagan.

The presentation program provides an opportunity for our audience to take part in a broad range of performing arts experiences. Our objective is providing exposure for Canadian talent from outside this area. The shows are chosen with our audience in mind and by our Artistic Director. They represent a wide range of artistic visions, aesthetics and perspectives, opening a wider window on the world of performing arts for our audience.

By providing such a varied selection, we fulfill the mission to be the leading force for the advancement of theatre in Kelowna and the surrounding area through high quality professional presentations. Our hope is that exposure to such a range of experiences will inspire Kelowna audiences to support more diverse performing arts programming, and perhaps to get involved in it.

The artists involved are definitely part of the equation as well. Our objectives in bringing diverse professional theatre to this region include being a part of a nationwide network of presenting companies that allow Canadian touring companies to thrive. Within the discipline of Canadian theatre there are a large number of companies that produce work that is unique to them, and not easily reproduced by other companies. Presentation programs allow those highly individual voices to be heard across the country, and support them in their continuing creative work.

For our audiences, the objectives of this programming include providing education about professional theatre, and providing a more varied menu of that activity than would otherwise be available. Kelowna is expanding and growing up. However, the City is not nearly at the stage yet where it can support enough professional arts organizations to provide a rich diversity of artistic experiences without resorting to bringing in artists from outside

the region. Sunshine has been a primary presenter here for thirty years; no one else is actively programming such things as touring theatrical productions.

People here want cultural entertainment; they support both professional and non-professional performing arts groups by attending throughout the year. One vital objective of presenting high quality touring shows is to allow the audience to have a choice to see professional work without traveling to Vancouver or Calgary.

For our local audience, presentation of touring artists provides a window on a wider world of performing arts, and furthers their awareness of what professional quality performance is. The more that we present in Kelowna, the greater the number and diversity of ideas and artistic styles our audience is exposed to.

For local artists, the chance to see high quality performances by touring groups is both inspirational and instructive. Kelowna is still a place where the definition of *professional* as it applies to the arts is a bit fuzzy. The more we present high quality professional performances here, the more people come to appreciate the real difference that dedication to the professional pursuit of one's craft makes.

Plans for the 2008-2009 Season

A new Artistic Director will be appointed prior to development of the 2008-2009 season. In the meantime, our Theatre Advisory Committee will become increasingly more active in evaluating our artistic direction. The Theatre advisory committee was formed as part of the development of the management agreement with KVPACS to lend support and direction to the Sunshine Board and Artistic Director. This committee is comprised of the Board Chair, several long-time Board members and community members with theatre expertise. This body is asked to provide advice in areas of programming, marketing, fundraising, and building community relationships and profile. This committee currently consists of:

Clara Hare-Equity Actress

Neil Facey-Artistic Director Viva Musica and High School Drama Teacher

Grace Young, former board member Sunshine Theatre

Erika Burress, former Board Member

Joan Panton-founder of Sunshine Theatre Society

Other professional resources currently available to Sunshine Theatre include the staff of the Rotary Centre for the Arts who include:

Don Keith- Drama Teacher of 30 years who holds a masters in Theatre and has extensive experience directing plays

Cody Stadel, our Technical Director

Danielle Dickson our Communications Coordinator who holds a BFA

Shirley Dreja-experienced bookkeeper

Shelly Vida, Publicist

Tracie Ward, Executive Director of the Rotary Centre for the Arts.

Sunshine Theatre 2007/2008 Season

1. COOKIN' AT THE COOKERY, Arts Club Musical, Vancouver
November 6, 2007 (1 performance at Kelowna Community Theatre)

Welcome to The Cookery, the famed Manhattan nightclub, featuring the legendary Miss Alberta Hunter! A musical revue in the tradition of *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Cookin' at the Cookery* blends blues with biography, following the spellbinding adventures of the celebrated African-American songstress. From humble beginnings in Memphis to stardom in 1920s Chicago, the cradle of jazz, Hunter performed for royalty and presidents before capping off her career at The Cookery. Come celebrate the determination and triumph of Alberta Hunter in this uplifting and humorous musical.

2. SEXY LAUNDRY, Shadow Theatre Comedy, Edmonton
November 20-24, 2007 (6 performances at RCA, Mary Irwin Theatre)

Where do you find the fire after 25 years? Armed with a copy of *Sex for Dummies*, Alice and Henry check into a trendy hotel with a mission to jumpstart their 25-year marriage. Time has taken its toll; kids, stress, and gravity have all had a detrimental effect. This once-loving couple has hit their fifties and the marriage blahs. Will Alice and Henry survive the test of their relationship...or even this weekend? *Sexy Laundry* challenges our preconceptions of mid-life and comfortable relationships in a funny, compassionate, and thoughtful way.

3. FAMOUS PUPPET DEATH SCENES, Old Trout Puppet Workshop, Calgary
February 5-9, 2008 (6 public performances, plus one student matinee at RCA, Mary Irwin Theatre)

The Old Trouts and their consistently inventive approach to puppetry promise nothing less than a cure for your fear of death. Through a collection of famous scenes culled from the absolute best puppet shows in history, *Famous Puppet Death Scenes* is an original and often hilarious meditation on our final destiny. We always know the puppets are headed for disaster, but the Trouts keep things fresh with unexpected twists throughout. There's pleasure in the dizzying variety of puppetry techniques on display as The Old Trouts explore the manner of mortality.

4. THE SWINGIN' SISTERS CLUB, Nightingale Productions, Edmonton
April 15-19, 2008 (6 public performances, plus one student matinee at RCA, Mary Irwin Theatre)

It's the 1940's and the men are at war. 3 dames shake things up with some of the most engaging music of our time. Set in a club on the plains of western Canada, you'll hear the amazing hits that held the spirits high during the Second World War as well as some wonderful home-grown music that'll make you smell the lavender and wheat as if it is growing right beside you. Recapturing the powerful memories that moved the world during WWII, *The Swingin' Sisters Club* is a warm-hearted tribute to those who worked, entertained and even baked apple pies to keep the homefront alive!