

**Gateway Theatre Report to Richmond City Council May 14, 2001**

Delegation: Simon Johnston, Producer/GM (presenter), Robert Turnbull, Chairman

**2000-2001 Year end review**

We have just completed our 16<sup>th</sup> year of operation and my first full year as Producer and General Manager. I am pleased to report that Gateway Theatre is proud to take its place amongst the leading professional theatres in the country. This new level of operation was reached when the Canada Council for the Arts and the BC Arts Council both awarded us with a small operations grant. This represents the first time federal and provincial funders have recognized the Gateway Theatre. It is a small but significant step for us.

This past season we produced four plays on the MainStage and created a New Play Series in the Studio B. This new initiative in the studio has found a new audience and also enhanced the theatre's status as a progressive company eager to embrace new ideas and new forms of theatre.

Our theatre classes, that are open to the public, were offered throughout the year. There was also a special weeklong Spring Break session. And, we are currently planning our July and August Summer Musical Theatre Classes. Approximately 300 children age 8-19 attend these classes each year.

Pacific Piano Competition entered its 7<sup>th</sup> year with 40 contestants from British Columbia.

Gateway Theatre's productions and events took up 130 days of use, leaving the remainder of time for rentals. Last year we had 141 renters. Of these, 13 groups were city affiliates. Total attendance last year was approximately 40,000 patrons.

Last season, a client canceled some rental dates slated for September. Also, sponsorships for Gateway Theatre productions were also lower than expected. These two factors will place pressure on our operational bottom line results.

**Opportunities and Challenges for 2001-2002 season**

**Opportunities:**

- Our strategic plan for 2001 – 2005 (attached) seeks to gradually develop Gateway into a leading theatre in BC with a cultural reach that is truly international in scope. One of the main thrusts of the plan is to create a partnership with a Hong Kong theatre company to produce a Canadian play translated into Cantonese and which will be presented here in Richmond. Such a presentation will be a unique experience that can impact positively with our community on many levels.
- We have created a reasonably priced "Theatre Lovers Package" to entice new subscribers. Additionally, we will target local and area schools to come to our matinees at a special group sales student rate. We plan to give students "talk back" opportunities and we will also provide teachers kits to better prepare students for a Gateway Theatre experience.

- This Christmas our musical will be “Oliver” which will feature local children and actors to maintain our link with the community. Our Summer Musical Theatre classes will be designed to integrate aspects of “Oliver” in the program training.
- The Reena Project is a special presentation featuring area teenagers. They are writing a collective play on the theme of bullying in schools. This unique play scheduled for presentation in September, is an excellent opportunity for a sensitive issue to be given a voice by local teenager actors.
- The Pacific Piano competition will be expanded. Previously, there was only one concert for the winner. This year we will feature a separate concert featuring the second, third and fourth runner ups. Our Website has had a positive affect on the public who use it for general ticket information as well as for registering for the Piano Competition from around the world. We are planning to include participants from outside the province in future years.
- We have reviewed our calendar of events with a view to placing our productions in slots that will release some prime dates for rentals. We also intend to encourage smaller groups to rent Studio B for dance, chamber music and theatre presentations.

#### Challenges:

- Costs of productions continue to rise. These increases can no longer be offset by ticket sales alone. Additionally, we have increased our ticket prices to the limit of what the market will bear. The gap between our operations income and expenses is widening.
- Corporate sponsorship for arts and cultural groups remain soft due to the increased demand from other charities. Arts groups like the Gateway Theatre usually fall to fourth place on a priority list after Hospitals, Education and Sports.
- We will vigorously pursue continued funding from Federal and Provincial Arts Councils.
- We must increase our group sales to schools and bus tour operators.
- We must create new partnerships with non-traditional groups and make cooperative proposals for unique events whose appeal is for a wider region.

#### Conclusion

We have an excellent season of plays suitable for the whole family, our education outreach programs are enviable and we have a progressive strategic plan that embraces our community. But, we must remain cautious of the future and focus our energies and resources on corporate and individual sponsors, on arts grant fundraising opportunities and we must reinvigorate our marketing plans to close the gap between production expenses and box office revenues.

## **Gateway Theatre Summary Plans 2001 - 2005**

### **Mission**

The Richmond Gateway Theatre Society is dedicated to providing the community with opportunities to participate in the performing arts through excellence in programs and services. The community of Richmond entrusts the Richmond Gateway Theatre Society to operate the Gateway Theatre.

### **Challenges for 2000-2005**

- To continue a strong and close link with the community
- To produce plays that offer a different perspective than our competitors
- To sell more tickets
- To develop a new audience which will include young people
- To develop the Gateway Academy for the Performing Arts

### **A Vision**

The Gateway Theatre Society is a gathering place for the community, the performing arts and for the artistic aspirations of a community. As a live theatre company, Gateway will take a leadership role in the development, production and presentation of unique, professional level theatre that recognizes, embraces and reflects a changing community. The theatre remains committed to its roots in existing community outreach programs and will continue to develop and stimulate community participation at a professional level.

### **The Plan**

Our plan will be to provide an opportunity for professional artists and for members of the community to participate in the creation of a unique voice in Canada through the telling of stories for our times through music, dance and the spoken word. The Gateway Theatre seeks to accomplish this mission by implementing the following initiatives to:

- Forge stronger and closer links with the community through outreach programs such as producing a community project every other year and by making the facility more accessible for community events and rentals
- Produce professional level productions that offer a unique perspective of our community, our province and our country
- Sell more tickets through new marketing strategies in the area of group sales and internet sales
- Focus on educational programs & on the development of young audiences
- Develop the Gateway Academy of the Performing Arts for a professional level training for students age 8 and up.

### **Implementation Plans**

#### **2001- 2002**

- February 2001: New ticket pricing and subscription package reform
- May 2001: Explore co productions with theatres in HongKong
- September 2001: The Reena Project written and performed by teenagers
- Fall 2001: Community Project
- October 2001: Main Stage, Studio and TYA series, Piano Competition
- June 2002: Subscription goal: 2500 subscribers
- July 2002: Review plans

**2002-2003**

- Main Stage, New Play Series and TYA series, Piano Competition continue
- Open competition for mural submissions
- Canada Council and BC Arts Council Funding for Operations
- Commission writers for 2005 premiere
- Select an Asian theatre project for development
- Tenders for new studio facility.
- Appoint an Artistic Associate
- Subscription goal: 2600 subscribers
- Review plans

**2003-2004**

- Main Stage, New Play Series, TYA series and Piano Competition continues
- Community Project
- Commission writers for TYA premiere in 2005
- Subscription goal: 2700 subscribers
- Review plans

**2004-2005**

- Main Stage, New Play Series, TYA series and Piano Competition continues
- Start construction of the new studio facility for Gateway Academy of Performing Arts, extra rehearsal/storage space, office space, restaurant. This new structure should include Family Place.
- Subscription goal: 2800 subscribers
- **Strategic Plan Review and Planning for the next five year cycle**

**2005-2006 - 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year**

- Produce the World Premiere of a commissioned play
- Co produce a world premiere play with a theatre company from Asia
- Open the Gateway Academy for the Performing Arts
- Community Project
- Main Stage, New Play Series, TYA series and Piano Competition continue
- Subscription goal: 3000 subscribers