

Gateway Theatre

Annual Report to the Richmond City Council, June 24, 2002
Delegation: Robert Turnbull, Chairman, Simon Johnston, Producer/GM (presenter)

Gateway Theatre, bringing performing arts excellence to the community.

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.

Our Vision

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. We remain committed to our roots in existing community outreach programs and will continue to develop and stimulate community participation at a professional level.

Our mandate and vision is expressed through four main programs:

- Live, professional theatre on the Main Stage and Studio Series
- The Pacific Piano Competition, now going into its ninth year
- The Gateway Academy that offers theatre classes for ages 8-19
- The Rental program to City of Richmond affiliates and others who wish to use the facility for events and meetings

Common to all four areas is our inclusive Volunteer Program where members of the community participate in a variety of duties.

2001-2002 Year-end review

We have just completed Gateway's 18th year of operation. In last year's report I submitted a five-year strategic plan for the period 2001-2005.

The overall thrust of this plan is to:

- Continue a strong and close link with the community through our programs and services
- Produce plays which offer a different perspective within the professional theatre sector and with a culturally diverse focus
- Sell more tickets
- Develop the Gateway Academy for the Performing Arts.

We have just completed Year 1 of this plan. The specific goals for this past year (2001-2002) were to:

1. Produce a Main Stage Series, a Studio Series and a Piano Competition
2. Implement a new ticket pricing and marketing plan
3. Explore co-productions with theatres in Hongkong
4. Sponsor the “Reena Project” written and performed by Richmond youth on the subject of bullying in schools
5. Include a Community Project in the Christmas MainStage slot
6. Achieve a goal of 2400 subscribers for 2001-2002 season of plays
7. Review of plans of the current year and for the upcoming year

Goals	Achievements 2001-2002
#1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ 4 MainStage and 2 Studio productions: 3 World Premieres □ National media coverage for our culturally diverse programming □ 3 Jessie nominations: Best Play, Best Design, Best Supporting Actor □ Studio Series over 80% sold on subscription, four sold out evenings □ Pacific Piano Competition went from regional to international
#2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Marketing focused in Richmond and surrounding suburbs. A new subscription package for week one of the run found a new audience □ Total attendance was 25,128 up from 22,447 the previous year □ 63% of subscribers are from Richmond
#3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Exploratory trip to Hongkong in May of last year sponsored by the Canada Council to meet with four local theatre companies
#4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ 70 Richmond youth auditioned for 10 roles in a collective creation performed on several sites exploring the subject of bullying
#5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Musical “Oliver” had a cast of 45 local children and adults
#6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Achieved 2350 subscribers and increased single ticket attendance
#7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ A Board Focus Day was held to review the five year plan □ Board/Staff Workshop was held to review administrative practices

The Gateway Academy classes continue to thrive under the guidance of our staff of professional actors, directors and teachers. This year round program has an enrolment of 300 youth from age 8-19 who learn performance techniques as well as interpersonal skills, teamwork, communication and the value of creativity.

In the **Rentals** programs, the facility was used 541 times of which 281 uses were for Gateway Theatre and 260 uses were for community rentals. Of this last category, 12 groups were City Affiliates. In all, 44,769 patrons came through our door, up from 40,000 in the previous year.

Volunteers participated in a variety of lobby assignments including ushering, coat check and bar duties. There were 153 volunteers up from 149 last year. They gave 8,378 hours of service, which amounts to over \$70,000 worth of labor.

Challenges for the future

A nervous and brittle economy impacted last year's box office revenues, which fell 15% short of budget. This shortfall has contributed to an increase of our accumulated deficit. The Board of Directors and Staff have struck a committee to create a recovery plan, portions of which will be implemented immediately. New fundraising initiatives remain an important challenge for our future. Box Office revenues offset 73% of production expenses. This figure is well within industry standards in Canada. The remainder of revenues must be raised through sponsorships and arts grants.

Gateway's overall attendance for our productions increased this year by 7% over the previous year. This increase is part of our strategy to lower subscription package prices to attract more sales and the results were very positive. In comparison to other arts groups in the Lower Mainland, the Gateway is doing very well. But, due to ever increasing costs, we must do better. We will implement new audience development and target marketing initiatives in Richmond and the surrounding area to increase awareness and therefore box office revenues.

Keeping current clients and developing new renters is also a challenge due to rising costs in Gateway's unionized environment. Clients may be driven to use non-union facilities that offer competitive rates.

Volunteer recruitment and training to replace retiring volunteers will also be an important aspect of future planning initiatives.

To answer these challenges, our Board and Staff have started a wide-ranging financial and operational review and will implement a comprehensive plan that will begin in September 2002.

Conclusion

Year one of the five-year strategic plan has thrust Gateway to a new level of leadership in the Performing Arts. At present our subscription renewals and fundraising pledges are in advance of this time last year. These results indicate a positive season ahead as we continue developing theatre programs and audiences. Additionally, we have a dynamic board and staff prepared to accept the challenges ahead. With growing community support and corporate partnerships, Gateway will continue as a vital part of Richmond's vision to be the most appealing, livable and well-managed community in Canada.

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