

## **President of the Board of Directors Report 2021**

It is my great honour to provide the annual report of the President of the Belfry Theatre.

The past season was a continuation of the challenges presented by the global pandemic. In the early fall of last year it became clear that we would be unable to present the full season that Michael and Ivan had planned. This was the second consecutive season where our plans and public health requirements were totally incompatible.

The options that we faced were to suspend programming or to create a digital presence in an attempt to stay connected with our audience. In choosing the latter we recognized there would be considerable challenges. The process of mounting a production for the stage is fundamentally different than the process of filming and broadcasting. Not only does film require additional skills it needs sophisticated technical equipment that we did not have, but had to acquire. In the end we were able to mount twenty-one digital programs ranging from relatively simple play readings to fully produced theatrical productions. A further production was rehearsed, filmed and edited and is being presented this month.

We fully recognize that the magic of theatre is in the theatre and not on a television screen. However, we believed it essential to produce what we could under very difficult circumstances.

The year did provide us the opportunity of making some capital improvements to the theatre that we would have been unable to undertake if a full season had been produced. Renovations to the dressing rooms and actor's washrooms were completed and a backstage elevator was installed. These changes will not be noticed by the public, but they are essential improvements to the facility.

Despite this being a difficult year there is much to celebrate. The support of our patrons, both businesses and individuals has been remarkable. The generosity of the Belfry family will not be forgotten.

I must also recognize the support of our government partners over the past year. They have made an essential financial contribution to the Belfry at a time where revenue disappeared but expenses continued. We would not be in a stable financial position without this support and we are genuinely grateful.

The Belfry is also fortunate to be led by two talented and seasoned theatrical professionals, our Artistic Director, Michael Shamata and our Executive Director, Ivan Habel. Between them they have guided the Belfry through a remarkably difficult year and have kept the organization positive and focused on a future that sees the Belfry developing and producing innovative

theatre. Michael and Ivan are supported by a remarkable staff. These individuals have responded to uncertainty with unmatched professionalism.

I would also like to thank the Directors of the Society who continue to provide advice, support, direction and oversight as the theatre responds to the myriad of challenges presented by the pandemic. I particularly like to thank two long term directors who are leaving the Board this year- Robert Thomson and Ross Woodland. Both Rob and Ross have provided thoughtful and consistent counsel to the organization for many years. On behalf of the Belfry, thank you.

The final paragraph of my previous annual report read, "The past year has been difficult and it is unclear when some sense of normalcy will return. The Belfry will, however, manage this crisis. In its' almost fifty years the Belfry has survived many challenges. It will survive this one and it will prosper."

These words are as relevant today as they were a year ago.

Thank you.

Richard Brownsey

Board President