

## Report of the President of the Board of Directors

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

This past season saw the Belfry return to the stage after an interruption of live performances caused by the global pandemic. It was a remarkably positive and affirming feeling to once again see actors on the stage and patrons in the audience.

The season chosen by our Artistic Director, Michael Shamata was well received by an audience that had clearly missed the opportunity to be in the theatre experiencing live performances. One of our productions, *Little Red Warrior and His Lawyer*, was subsequently presented in Vancouver and will be presented this season at both Theatre Calgary and the National Arts Centre.

While we were committed to live performance this past season it was not without significant challenges. Covid 19 protocols, attendance restrictions and evolving public health requirements meant that rehearsing, promoting and presenting each production involved considerable thought and innovation. I would like to acknowledge the staff at the Belfry for the remarkable work in getting this season to the stage.

We also recognized that not all of our audience was comfortable in returning to the theatre while the risk of Covid 19 infection remained. For this reason we continued to live stream our productions. While this may not be the ideal way of viewing theatre it did allow us to make the season available to all patrons until they felt comfortable in returning to the theatre. It is our intention to continue live streaming again the year.

The Belfry has been fortunate over the past decade to be led by two of Canada's most experienced and talented theatrical professionals, Artistic Director, Michael Shamata and Executive Director, Ivan Habel. Michael and Ivan have provided the Belfry with remarkable leadership and have been an exceptional team. In September, however, Ivan informed the Board that this would be his last season at the Belfry and that he wished to move on to another challenge, that of leading the Caravan Farm Theatre in developing its new facilities. Ivan's departure is a loss to the Belfry and the Board would like to acknowledge his incredible contribution to the Belfry over the past decade.

To find Ivan's replacement the Board established a search committee and advertised the position nationally. After a very thorough and comprehensive process the committee recommended to the Board that Isaac Thomas be offered the position. This recommendation was unanimously approved by the Board.

Isaac comes to us from Native Earth Performing Arts in Toronto where he also worked for Young People's Theatre. Isaac joined the Belfry in mid-June and he and Michael are now working intensely on the new season. We are very fortunate to have recruited Isaac and, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to welcome him to the Belfry family.

Despite the challenges of the past few years there is much to celebrate. The support of our patrons, both businesses and individuals has been remarkable. This generosity will not be forgotten.

I would also like to recognize the support of our government partners over the past year. They have made an essential financial contribution to the Belfry at a time when box office revenue was extremely limited while expenses continued. We would not be in a stable financial position without this and we are genuinely grateful.

I would also like to thank the Directors of the Society who continue to provide advice, support, direction and oversight as the theatre emerges from the challenges presented by the pandemic. I would particularly like to thank long term directors who are leaving the Board this year – Gloria Bach, Sheila Elworthy and Joan Peggs. All have provided thoughtful and consistent counsel to the organization for many years. On behalf of the Belfry, thank you.

I would also like to thank the Directors who served on the search committee for the new Executive Director – Gloria Back, Cathi Charles Wherry, Joan McArthur Blair and Sheila Elworthy. This was an extremely intensive and time consuming process. It was a pleasure to work with these individuals and see their commitment to reaching a thorough, fair and justifiable decision.

The Belfry has emerged from the worst of the pandemic in a sound financial position. Much of the credit for this must go to the Federal and Provincial governments who have provided essential, pandemic related, financial aid. This assistance will not be available for the coming year.

Subscription revenue is essential to the Belfry's ability to remain financially stable. Given the challenges of the past three years subscriptions and, therefore, subscription revenues have, understandably, fallen.

This combination of circumstances puts the Theatre in a difficult position for the coming year. While the direct challenges presented by the pandemic abate, its residual effects continue. In the coming year we must regain the subscription revenue lost as a result of the pandemic. This is our challenge but I also ask the assistance of the entire Belfry community. Please subscribe. Please mention the Belfry to your friends and family.

The coming year will have its challenges but with the support of the Belfry family they will be managed.

Thank you.

Richard Brownsey

President

