



Vincent Gale (Jon) and Sara Canning (Annie) in *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes* by Hannah Moscovitch  
Photo by Emily Cooper / Shawn Kerwin - Set & Costume Designer / Leigh Ann Vardy - Lighting Designer

# Belfry Theatre

## 2021 Annual Report

## **President of the Board of Director's Annual 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

## **Treasurer's Annual Report 2021**

Another difficult year is behind us, and we eagerly anticipate a return to live performances this fall. Operating results presented are for the 13-month period ended June 30/21 as we changed our fiscal year end to June 30<sup>th</sup> during the year.

Despite the absence of live performances our operating results were positive with net earnings of just over \$215,000 compared to \$152,000 in the prior year. We had positive cash flow of just over \$397,000 compared to just \$38,000 in 2020. Public funding included CEWS funding of \$595,000 compared to \$132,000 last year and total public funding was \$1,722,000, an increase of \$617,000 over the \$1,105,000 we received in 2020.

Our balance sheet remains strong with working capital of almost \$684,000 compared to \$407,000 in the prior year. Total fund balances improved to \$2,698,000 this year, compared to \$2,483,000 in 2020.

Planning and forecasting are now a continuous activity as we adjust to the ebb and flow of the pandemic while anticipating a planned resumption of performances in the fall of 2021.

This is my final report as your treasurer, it has been a pleasure to work with the Board over the last 11 years and our staff have been exemplary especially in the last two years of the pandemic. I will continue my support as a patron knowing that the Belfry is in great hands and I wish for the continued success of one of the best live theatre companies in Canada.

Respectfully submitted,  
Robert Thomson, CPA, CA

## Artistic Director's Annual Report 2021

To say it's been a challenging year is an understatement. However, in the midst of all the challenges—I am proud of what we have accomplished.

Between September and December, we created a series of online programming that included:

- two interviews: one with former Artistic Directors and one with the playwright of *Serving Elizabeth*
- two “Flame” storytelling events hosted by Deborah Williams and Michelle Poirier Brown: one with members of our local IBPoC community and one with BC theatre designers
- play readings of:
  - Two Rooms* by Mansel Robinson
  - East of Berlin* by Hannah Moscovitch
  - Bluebirds* by Vern Thiessen
  - A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens.

In January, we produced our 2021 SPARK Festival online, which included:

- a rebroadcast of Musical Stage Company's filmed concert *Uncovered*.
- Jo Leslie's new play *Trajectory of Desire*
- a mixed bill of June Yeo's film *Ship*;
  - a segment of Andrew Barrett's dance theatre piece *the soft spaces*;
  - a portion of Rick Waines new play *HIV in My Day*
- a reading of Ellery Lamm's new play *Summer Bucket List*.

In the Spring, we presented three films:

- our own film of *BEING HERE: The Refugee Project*, created by Joel Bernbaum from interviews he conducted from Halifax to Victoria

- a rebroadcast of the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre’s filmed production of *The (Post) Mistress*, with book, music, and lyrics by Tomson Highway
- our own film of a staged reading of John Murrell’s play *Taking Shakespeare*.

We maintained our audience engagement activities for the film of *BEING HERE*, creating a B4Play talk show, an online edition of our Upstage Magazine, a Talk Back question and answer session with the actors, playwright and director, and an Afterplay conversation between audience members.

The Creator’s Circle, a new initiative begun just prior to the pandemic, in which a dozen local playwrights and theatre-makers meet together and share their work, facilitated and dramaturged by Governor General’s Award-winning playwright Kevin Kerr, continued online without interruption.

We created a new initiative, IGNITE!, which paired artists previously unknown to each other, and provided them with “seed” money to bounce ideas around and hopefully create new theatrical material. One of these projects—June Yeo’s film *Ship*, just won the award for BEST DANCE, ART, or MUSIC FILM at the London International Monthly Film Festival. Another of these projects is now being developed through a residency at Dance Victoria.

We maintained our connection with the Theatre Department at UVic, designing and implementing a series of talks with leading artists from across the country, including:

- Maiko Yamamoto
- Cole Alvis
- James Sanders
- Nina Lee Aquino
- Peter Hinton
- Donna Michelle St. Bernard

- Shawn Kerwin

And, finally, the Belfry spearheaded an Arts Leadership Training Program for future IBPoC arts leaders. This project brought together a number of organizations here and beyond, including:

- The Belfry Theatre
- The Canadian College of Performing Arts
- Common Weal Community Arts (Regina)
- Electric Company Theatre (Vancouver)
- Newworld Theatre (Vancouver)
- Pacific Opera Victoria
- Persephone Theatre (Saskatoon)
- University of Regina, Faculty of Media, Arts and Performance
- University of Victoria, Faculty of Fine Arts
- Victoria Conservatory of Music
- Victoria Symphony

The program began with a series of online conversations, held during July and August 2021, with leading IBPoC artists, including:

- Philip Akin
- Nina Lee Aquino
- Jennifer Brewin
- Hari Krishnan
- Omari Newton
- Risa Payant
- Yasmine Kundal
- Anita Rochon
- Walter Quan
- Stephen White



- Adrienne Wong
- Ravi Jain

The ten participants, selected from the 23 applicants by Philip Akin, Yvette Nolan and Nina Lee Aquino, will go on to three-month paid internships with one of the member arts organizations, beginning in January 2022.

Of necessity, we have learned new skills, new ways of collaborating, and strategies for survival. It is my hope that as we move ahead, we will take these skills, and return—not to normal—but to a new and enhanced normal—creating great theatre within our walls—and beyond our walls.

Michael Shamata  
Artistic Director

## **Executive Director's Annual Report 2021**

We have emerged from another pandemic year – a full year this time. While it was particularly challenging on an artistic and morale front, the generosity of our patrons, the extraordinary assistance of all our governments and the hard work of the staff have eased us through this period of challenge. Our patrons, volunteers and staff have given the Belfry an exceptional gift of resilience and stamina to weather whatever storms may lie ahead.

While we are not yet through the storm of the pandemic, we will continue to adapt to engage artists, bring outstanding programming to our audiences and continue to build relationships with our evolving community. We are all anxiously awaiting the return of audiences to our beautiful Belfry Theatre.

With the financial assistance of our donors and sponsors, and despite the challenge of creating in ways unfamiliar to us, we engaged 46 professional actors and designers this past season, providing gainful earnings during a period of hardship for all freelance artists.

Support from the provincial and federal governments were instrumental in ensuring that we kept all our staff gainfully employed throughout the past year. Government support from all levels of government was also instrumental in ensuring we could continue to produce and present exciting theatre virtually for our loyal audiences.

While the Belfry has challenges ahead to recover from almost two seasons of absent in-person productions, we are emerging stronger and more resolved to continue to be the very best in contemporary theatre, for Victoria and in the country. We also remain resolved to form meaningful and lasting relationships with the Indigenous peoples of this territory and all this nation. And we remain

resolved to reflect the changing demographics of our community in our work and people.

Our successes in weathering the challenges of the past 18 months, comes down to you, as members, audiences, sponsors, government supporters and the entire South Island community. Our financial and human resources are strong, and ready to secure many future years of activity and growth.

In closing I must once again thank the staff for their extraordinary adaptability throughout the past year. I would also like to offer my sincere gratitude to the Board for the support they have provided me through-out these times of uncertainty, and to Michael for his artistic footwork in constantly shifting programming to keep in touch with you our audiences,

Ivan Habel  
Executive Director