

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2023 – 2024 will be a year to remember for many reasons.

We had an exceptionally strong mainstage season. Tickets and subscriptions hit new post-pandemic highs. In the midst of it all we dealt with Covid and other unforeseen cancellations during *As Above*. And eventually the show went on! The response to all of our shows exceeded expectations.

Pay What You Want (PWYW) continues to surprise me. We continue to offer tickets and subscriptions at any price point our patrons choose. This makes our work the most affordable theatre in town, and given the quality of our work, I would argue the most value for anyone's money in this country. Many choose to pay above our suggested price in acknowledgement both of the work we do, and the benefit PWYW offers to all in our community. I have read deeply moving statements from those who use it, and from those who choose to support the model. Its success is unique to Victoria and the Belfry. We remain committed to the model as I can see no other practical method to ensure complete financial accessibility. More importantly, PWYW is an investment in our future audiences as well as being our investment in the community to ensure the arts can be an integral part of our lives.

We continue to support the broader arts community. We offer free or subsidized theatre rentals, throw in staff support for our event rentals, and younger artists and administrators consult with our senior staff. New work development is continual through commissions, dramaturgy, as well as writing and production workshops. Many of the next generation of artists, stage managers, assistants, and technicians get invaluable experience at the Belfry.

Alison and Michael have addressed *The Runner*. I echo their thoughts. I will only add that Michael and I firmly stand by our decisions. Given the heightened feelings around the global situation, we recognized that presenting it would only have deepened rifts within our community. That would have served no useful purpose to Victoria. Our art seeks to unite.

We bid farewell to our director of finance, Patricia O'Brien, who after forty years at the Belfry is retiring. She is an institution within the Belfry. She has an enormous breadth of knowledge, but more than that, a keen, critical eye, and an incisive mind with wonderfully creative solutions to all of our issues. Plus, of course, her deeply irreverent sense of humour is so refreshing. We will all miss her tremendously.

I thank the Board for their support and their appreciation of the subtleties and nuances of organizational management. My heartfelt thanks to the staff who, through this entire year, remained committed to the work and to the organization. It is their dedication and perseverance that lifts the Belfry. I particularly thank Michael who remained open to all perspectives, is willing to challenge me, and is equally willing to be challenged. This would have been a very hard year without our completely open conversations. This year has profoundly strengthened our partnership.

Above all, I thank our audiences, donors, partners, and volunteers, who remained steadfast supporters of the Belfry. This year's success is a testament to you. Let us build on it!

Isaac Thomas