

Province supports Theatre Aurora's efforts to raise the roof



When it comes to live entertainment, blowing the roof of the place is often considered a good thing ? but not so much when it comes to theatres, the Canadian winter, and having a place for patrons to stay dry while watching a good show.

Last week, as Theatre Aurora wrapped up its production of *Murder on the Orient Express*, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP stepped up on stage to announce the venerable local theatre company has been awarded a \$143,000 Capital Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) to help shoulder the cost of crucial roof renovations.

?Theatre Aurora is a cultural cornerstone, fostering connections in the community by providing a vibrant platform for artistic expression,? said Parsa in a statement. ?Through the Ontario Trillium Foundation's 2023 Capital Grant stream, Theatre Aurora will be able to pursue infrastructure repairs to upkeep the building's functionality. Theatre Aurora is one of the pillars of our community, and this Capital Grant will support them in continuing to serve the people in a vibrant and inclusive environment.?

The presentation was also attended by Mayor Tom Mrakas, OTF representative Janice McGurran, and Barbara Jones, a director at Theatre Aurora who stressed the importance of having a new roof.

?The Ontario Trillium Foundation's support has been instrumental to our growth and our ability to serve the community,? said Jones in a statement. ?With a new roof over our heads, we can assure our audiences and performers that Theatre Aurora is not just a place to witness the performing arts but a safe and secure home for creativity to flourish.?

Speaking to *The Auroran* following the presentation, Jones said work on the new roof is expected to get underway this month and will replace a series of patchwork repairs that, over the years, have only gone so far.

?It got to the point where we were having major leaks not only into our lobby, which we don't want any longer, and since last year we had all the ceilings replaced. But it was also leaking right down into the basement into the props room,? she said. ?When we went to see if we could get it fixed again, we needed the whole thing done. It is going to be a major undertaking. We have the air conditioning units and things on the roof which were put in after the roof was built and I think we're going to need major equipment to remove those pieces, take them off before they can actually do the work itself. However, it is necessary and needed, and we are pleased to get so much money through the Trillium Grant to get this done.

?With the help of the grant we had last year, we were able to put in our accessible washroom and new flooring which went throughout all the washrooms on the main floor so it was one surface easily accessible to everyone and we also put in new lighting

and new ceiling in the lobby which helped immensely for the lighting effects and anyone who did have a bit of a vision problem coming in. We want to maintain the building's structure and infrastructure and that's what this grant will help us with.?

Jones added it was hoped the roof work will be complete by the time Theatre Aurora wraps its 2023-2024 season with Ernest Thompson's play, *On Golden Pond*, which will run on select dates and times April 19 - 27.

In between, however, the stage will be haunted in the best possible way when *Blithe Spirit*, the classic comedy by Noel Coward, opens on February 29, running through March 9.

Additional upcoming presentations will include *Winter Wonderland*, a drag extravaganza hosted by the Haus of Deveraux on February 3 from 8 - 11 p.m., and *Mind Bender's Magical Mystery Tour*, a Family Day presentation on February 19 at 2 p.m.

For more information on Theatre Aurora and its upcoming shows, including ticket information, visit theatreaurora.com or call 905-727-3669.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter