

Theatre Ontario 2014 Annual Report

President's Report

2014 has been an exciting time for Theatre Ontario. We said goodbye to Carol Beauchamp, and welcomed Bruce Pitkin in as our new Executive Director. Mairin Smits had an exciting international offer that just couldn't be turned down and regrettably had to leave us. Cam Lund, our fearless Board President stepped aside. Changes happen, and it is important to remember that with every goodbye there is a hello. We're trying to capitalize on this influx of new energy to revitalize the organization and bring some fresh new ideas to our planning. We've also welcomed new board members along the way, who are lending a wealth of knowledge and experience to the organization.

Entering my term as president mid-way through the year has been an interesting development, and I am certainly learning as I am going. The additional challenges of having a new ED, and a new treasurer has made the past few months a little overwhelming as we all begin to imprint the policies and procedures of the organization. I think it has also been very good for the company to have these new eyes and opinions re-evaluating everything from the financial reports to the programming, to make sure that we are doing everything we can to support the entire theatre community in the best possible way.

As a non-profit arts service organization, we continue to persevere to overcome revenue challenges. While not unexpected or unusual, it still takes a huge amount of resources (staff, volunteers and board) to keep us on a financially even keel. I am very proud of the work that everyone is doing on the strategic plan that will keep us grounded and moving forward for the next 3-5 years. A strategic planning session is always the best way to learn an organization from the basics up.

Theatre Ontario is an organization that I have long admired for their commitment to quality theatre as an enriching part of every community. I am extremely proud to be contributing to that commitment and I have enjoyed working with this Board of Directors to make Theatre Ontario a vital component of theatre across Ontario.

Theatre Ontario's staff continue to make us proud. We ask them to do a lot with relatively little. In every arts organization I deal with, the expenses outpace the revenues and we're always asked to do more with less. This staff does so imaginatively, and without complaint. On behalf of the board, thank you to each and every member of the staff for your tireless commitment and unwavering faith.

The membership is a vital component to Theatre Ontario. Without you, there is no Theatre Ontario. Your feedback, guidance and support is so necessary to everything that we do. We are an arts service organization. That means we are here to serve; serve our members. Please let us know what you want or need from us. We can only know what we know. If there is professional development that you or your group are needing and you haven't seen it on a course list, please ask. If you have a question about your membership, call and talk to one of the staff. If you have any ideas about advocacy for theatre groups in Ontario, email a board member.

On behalf of the entire board and staff, thank you for your membership and support.

Deb Sholdice, President, Board of Directors

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Executive Director's Report

Our contribution and reach...

Theatre Ontario brings together theatre artists, companies and learning organizations to share their artistic pursuits, resources, and best practices, as well as possible opportunities for employment, with a mandate to support all theatrical endeavors, whether professional, community, youth or educational. We help others sustain their life-long participation in the theatrical arts by helping them find the knowledge, skills and resources to further their careers in theatre and/or the success of their theatre companies.

Our programs have strategically propelled theatre artists and creators forward into successful careers. With many of those that we have previously nurtured, now nurturing the next generation. Over 700 theatre artists have benefited from the mentorship and training opportunities gained through PTTP alone. The collective work of past program recipients has also played a significant role in fostering the appreciation and accessibility of the arts across the province and the country. The impact of their contribution to Canadian culture is evident in the communities that have come alive through their projects and the organizations, which have benefitted from their influence. Program participants have gone on to work in regional communities providing training and work opportunities in the arts that had not previously existed. Others have taken on roles that encourage other artists to grow in their practice and present their work across the land. Selected leaders and influencers include, Alicia Palmer and Gideon Arthurs, AD and CEO National Theatre School; Ashlie Corcoran, AD Thousand Islands Playhouse; Ravi Jain, AD Why Not Theatre; Franco Boni, AD The Theatre Centre and many others.

One of our priorities has been to develop stronger connections and relationships with the youth, independent and emerging professional sectors. This will help us in meeting the changing needs of our membership, by evaluating and revitalizing many of our programs and services, in order to increase our outreach with the indie, emerging and university communities.

Looking back...

A strategic review and brand focus, completed in early 2014, allowed us to assess our service programming, with the goal of creating greater value for the members, artists and the theatre organizations that we serve, ensuring that our programs and services remain relevant and vital. The added benefits of this implementation have been: effectively structuring our staff and volunteer time, utilization of our facility to maximum effect, and minimizing additional expenses. We are continuing these assessments on an ongoing basis to ensure that our offerings remain essential.

Our core programs are comprised of the Professional Theatre Training Program (PTTP-funded by the OAC), Youth Theatre Training Program (YTTP-funded by the OAC), Neil Munro Intern Directors Project at the Shaw Festival and Theatre Ontario Festival. We have significantly enriched these highly sought-after programs, by promoting their success stories online and through social media, resulting in increased visibility and attention.

"I find myself in the right environment—I'm in a neighbourhood, a community that gives me confidence, motivation, and courage to practice my Spanish and completely adopt the culture of

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my ancestry and of who I am—a Guatemalan-Canadian". -Joseph Recinos, trained in Producing with Marilo Nunez, 2014.

"The best part about the Professional Theatre Training Program, is I will have the opportunity to assist with developing and executing an outreach program from start to finish. I hope to acquire not only concrete skills like budget building and applying for grants, but also the finer social skills of community development and supporting program participants". -Jasmine Chen trained in Outreach with Marjorie Chan, 2014.

We have continued to increase the professional networking opportunities of the Professional Theatre Training Program Talk-Backs & Mixers, which gives grant recipients a chance to continue their professional development, by sharing their knowledge and skill with the wider community.

"Having a mentor who is comfortable being honest with me has been one of the most valuable aspects of this partnership, and has been a benefit I wouldn't have gotten just setting out on my own and guiding my own learning". -Rachel Penny, trained in Producing with Aislinn Rose, 2014.

The Theatre Ontario Festival 2014 in Sarnia, was one our most successful festivals, with increases in both attendance and sponsorships, resulting a larger than forecast revenue.

Our Workshop Series, designed to be a flexible professional development, creative learning and networking program, was repositioned to focus on two main streams: career and creating. The Career Stream offers Launching Your Career (a single workshop) and Managing Your Career (single and grouped workshops), for starting and sustaining a career in the performing arts. The Creator Stream offers Unleashing Your Inner Entrepreneur (a single workshop) and Artist as Entrepreneur (single and grouped workshops), for learning and developing a self-producer's knowledge and expertise. We monitor workshop interest via online feedback, allowing us to adjust our programming and frequency accordingly. We reach out to collaborate and partner with theatres and arts organizations across the province, to increase delivery beyond the GTA in communities, such as, Barrie, Collingwood, Haliburton, Hamilton, London, North Bay, Ottawa, Peterborough, Waterloo.

We had a remarkable successful conclusion to our Theatre Discussion Forums, a series of group conversations, bringing together artists from theatre groups and organizations in order to identify their challenges, and then begin a dialogue to develop innovative solutions. The forums, begun in 2013, have been facilitated in Kingston, London, Sault Ste Marie, Georgetown, Oshawa, and Merrickville, with 2014 visits to Collingwood, North Bay and Peterborough. Former Executive Director, Carol Beauchamp, delivered a comprehensive report at our 2014 Theatre Ontario Festival in Sarnia, which has provided us the foundation for future Community Theatre Group initiatives.

Theatre Ontario also facilitated the major revitalization and rebranding of the Association of Summer Theatre's Round Ontario (ASTRO), as they became Ontario Summer Theatre (OST). This resulted in a stronger marketing focus, leading to an invigorated networking and promotional strategy.

One of our most significant initiatives this past year was the creation of our volunteer Youth Advisory Committee for developing a strong voice and programming that will engage with the youth community with a province-wide membership and reach. They have developed a strong following with the delivery of a Provincial Youth Forum, Satellite Face-to-Face events and the intergenerational Bridging the Gap workshop.

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Website and Communications: The launch of our new website design, integrating our new branding, was a highlight of our year. The new, mobile-friendly site allowed our web-based communications to show strong growth this year: web sessions up 1.5% over the year and 6.7% in the final quarter; total users up 15.6% over the year; e-Newsletter subscriptions increased by 18.8%; blog views up 16%; Twitter followers up 28%, with engagement at 2.3%; and Facebook likes up 13%, with engagement at 1.5% (which is higher than ASO industry average). This is due, in part, to our enhanced communication strategy of increasing our vocal presence in social media discussions and utilizing image-driven content.

The challenges that we continue to face are the delivery of programs and services to the Ontario theatre community, which are continually relevant, geographically accessible and ever timely.

Looking forward...

For the current year, we are focusing on mentorship, networking, and collaboration. We will continue to add value to our programs by creating partnerships to reach new and diverse audiences, and creating greater networking, learning and collaborative opportunities for our members and the theatre community.

We will continue to cultivate our relationships with Soulpepper, Why Not Theatre, and Work-in-Culture, who significantly impacted this year's programming.

In partnering with Soulpepper Theatre Company, we moved the venue of our Next Generation Showcase to The Young Centre for the Performing Arts. This association has given us the opportunity to offer greater career-building opportunities for the graduating students, such as industry networking parties, resident artist talk-backs to participating students and a theatre trade forum, introducing emerging artist initiatives from local theatre companies. We were also able to leverage that relationship to gain increased participation from Casting Workbook, who are sponsoring the successful delivery of online photo and resume packages for each institution. The Next Generation Showcase Panel Discussions held in the Michael Young Theatre, and it was a lively discussion on The Business of Casting, with a set of panelists with complementary backgrounds – Agent Kish Iqbal, Casting Director Susan Forrest, AD of independent theatre company Why Not Theatre Ravi Jain, and Associate Director at the Shaw Festival Eda Holmes, all moderated by the personable Glenn Holmes from Casting Workbook.

We are continuing our partnership with Why Not Theatre in sponsoring the second annual International Creators Scholarship: which provides training for emerging professional theatre creators at SITI Company in the U.S. This has expanded our outreach and programming to young creators from diverse communities, and provides an opportunity for the successful applicants to develop new skills, then share their learning's with the Ontario theatre community. This has also provided us opportunity to receive matching funding from artsVest Toronto's Sponsorship program.

We will continue collaboration with the Canadian Senior Artist Resource Network (CSARN), to introduce the numerous applicants of the Professional Theatre Training Program (PTTP) to the mentee opportunities that CSARN offers. This has evolved into a sharing of best practices that is influencing and adding great value to our own PTTP Mentorship Seminars and Learning Circles.

The first is an opportunity for PTTP recipients to meet with former PTTP mentors and former PTTP recipients to learn strategies on how to get the most of their valuable mentorship and internship

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experiences. The Learning Circles give mentees an opportunity to share their experiences and learn from each other as they explore new practices and further develop their career.

We will also be collaborating with a number of our member organizations to extend our programming throughout the province, while maximizing our own facilities in Toronto.

We have developed new strategic partnerships: with ArtsBuild Ontario to share technical resources in the delivery of a portion of our Workshop Series as webinars across the province (both live and recorded); with Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) to participate in the development of a greater synergy and cooperation between theatre service organizations; with Playwrights Guild Canada (PGC) to create a greater awareness of Canadian plays and playwrights for Community Theatre groups; and a community partnership with the Small Theatre Administrative Facility (STAF) to administer and co-deliver the Living Wage Producer Training Program.

Our Workshops Series will continue to be a strong programming element for 2015, and we are partnering with Work-in-Culture to share web-based learning and resources for business skills for artists throughout the province. This will give us another opportunity to deliver online learning for our members, and to pool resources for training and events outside the GTA.

To continue our goal to engage a more diverse audience and highlight Theatre Ontario Festival to a younger audience, our committee has engaged Damien Atkins as playwright-in-residence for the Festival held this year in Oshawa.

Our summer theatre intensive courses have been running very successfully for a number of years. These intensives are week long residential courses, facilitated by professional instructors, and generally hosted at a university location. For the 2015 we will be holding the weeklong intensive at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo. The summer intensives are an incredibly valuable source of training for community theatre artists, young artists beginning their career and students of university theatre programs, and we continue to receive rave reviews from attendees and the demand for future courses.

We will connect our mandate of a strong, vibrant and sustainable theatre community for all Ontarians, to our programming and membership, bringing our services to the forefront to show how our activities benefit our membership. Thereby, we will continue:

- to offer solid training programs for our members while increasing the tangible benefits relating to mentorship and networking,
- to ensure that the PTTP and YTTP programs are superbly administered and well utilized, striving to increase the current culture diversity. We will also strive to create greater market awareness of OAC's funding support of the PTTP and YTTP programs,
- to add value to our programs through the help of our new and existing partnerships in retaining and growing the diversity of our audiences. We will create a greater relevancy in our partnerships to remain current and important to newcomers to the market,
- to meet the challenge of serving both the professional and community theatre sectors, since we are in the unique position of serving community theatre, a segment that is not served anywhere else in the province,
- to define our audience, members and non-members, current and future artists, to create opportunities to understand, reach and engage them in their communities.

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Thank you's...

I would like to acknowledge the continued support that we have received from the Ontario Arts Council, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and the Toronto Arts Council, as well as the support of our private sponsors including Sun Life Financial, Culture One, Sheridan College, Randolph Academy for the Performing Arts, Soulepper Theatre Company and Sam Marinucci– thank you! Thanks also to the many theatre companies that provide ticket discounts to members of Theatre Ontario.

To our incredible Board of Directors, I would like to thank our Board President Deb Sholdice for her guidance, and acknowledge the individual members of the Board including: Lily Baird, Mary Jane Boon, Betsy Chaly, Leah Dietrich, Elley-Ray, Ray Jacildo, Eyal Katz, Gil Katz, Helen Landry, Cam Lund, Mark Mooney, George Randolph, Ted Sellers, and Joanne Williams.

Finally, I would like to extend my personal gratitude to the staff of Theatre Ontario for their devotion and generosity. Special thanks to Anne Mooney our Community Theatre Coordinator, Brandon Moore our Communication Coordinator, Rebecca Ballarin our Interim Program Coordinator, Katie Bell our Community Outreach and Training Coordinator, Mohsin Bhujwala our Fundraising Coordinator, Sandra Paquette, Executive Administrative Assistant and Rachel Stableford our Development Coordinator.

Bruce Pitkin, Executive Director

Staff Reports

Rebecca Ballarin, Interim Program Coordinator

I was thrilled to be given the opportunity to join the staff at Theatre Ontario after having such positive experiences working with this organization in different capacities in the past.

I am very excited to be organizing our annual Summer Theatre Intensive; a program that I took part in four years ago. As someone always on the lookout for development and networking opportunities, I am so pleased to be working in a position where I am able to provide such opportunities for others.

I recently oversaw the latest round of the Professional Theatre Training Program and Youth Theatre Training Program grant allocations, and can report that we are funding some very innovative projects, and supporting some very promising artists. With regards to the future of these programs, we were very lucky to have an intern working in the office over the past few months who did some data mining on both the PTP and YTP. We are now better able to show the impact that both of these programs have had, and continue to have, on Ontario's theatre artists and look forward to sharing this information with Board members, jury members, and you, our membership.

Over the past month I have also been working very closely with our Youth Advisory Committee – now in its second year of operation. The committee will be hosting a panel discussion about youth engagement in community-based theatre following the AGM today, are planning a networking event for the summer, and have begun brainstorming and collecting data for an institutional guide which they hope to create; a

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document compiling useful information for high school students wishing to pursue training in any area of theatre arts.

I am really looking forward to the rest of my time in the office, and hope to be able to continue improving the reach and impact of the programs we offer.

Anne Mooney, Community Theatre Coordinator

Theatre Ontario Talent Bank grew with 12 new members in a variety of categories. The Adjudicators had a successful meeting day in September. The Theatre Ontario Adjudicators' Guild has created a mission statement and is working towards creating expectations, standards and feedback forms to assess their work and continue to grow in their craft.

I was privileged to attend Community Theatre Festivals in WODL in Windsor and QUONTA Festival in Sault Ste. Marie and to attend the EODL Awards Brunch in Prince Edward County. Theatre Ontario Festival 2014 was held in Sarnia, hosted by Theatre Sarnia and the Western Ontario Drama League. Audiences were delighted by exceptional performances by Theatre Kent in Chatham, The Curtain Club in Richmond Hill, Gateway Theatre Guild in North Bay and Peterborough Theatre Guild. Adjudications by Bea Quarrie, workshops by Playwright in Person David S. Craig and Bea Quarrie and a culminating Theatre Ontario Forum presented by Carol Beauchamp were well attended. Thank you to Charmaine Jacklin and her Festival team and all the participating groups for a successful and educational Festival.

Mairin Smit and I attended the first SPARC Conference in April in Haliburton. Theatre Ontario presented a panel discussion comprising Community Theatre and Professional Theatre members.

I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to thank all the Staff at Theatre Ontario and the Theatre Ontario Board members, in particular the Community Theatre Committee members who have made my stay at Theatre Ontario so fulfilling. Thank you.

Brandon Moore, Communications Coordinator

In 2014, we continued to see excellent engagement with our members and the community—the benefits of being outward-facing. I remain committed to meaningful, relevant, respectful communications that recognizes the diversity of Ontario's theatre community.

Where comparable performance measurements are available, we saw better engagement in social media than any other arts service organization in the province. But we've also been able to identify areas where we can improve on our engagement.

Our Auditions and ONstage production listings remain among the most popular pages on our website, and we continue to explore opportunities to serve as an online hub for Ontario's theatre community, in spite of the limitations of the tools we use for our website, blog, and membership database. With the introduction of a new strategic plan this year, we can better focus our work.

Thank you for your continuing, positive feedback to improve the value of these channels.

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Katie Bell, Community Outreach and Training Coordinator

Outreach often works both ways. As we reach out, others reach in with questions, requests for resources, and feedback. In my new position as Community Outreach and Training Coordinator, I get to help people make theatre, and I couldn't be more excited.

I will also use and build on the momentum of our workshop series, bringing you sessions that are diverse in format and content. Our webinars reach theatre makers who would otherwise be unable to attend our workshops in person, due to time or distance constraints. Our live workshops (and live webinars) connect you with the right people to give you current and relevant information, answer your questions, and help you build the skills to succeed.

Sandra Paquette, Executive Administrative Assistant

As the Executive Assistant to Bruce Pitkin, the Executive Director; a new position with a new Executive Director, my days are filled with fresh experiences and exciting challenges. I bring a strong history of customer service, administrative organization and an approach of creating a work environment that allows all staff to do what they do best. A strong team foundation is key to streamlining day to day tasks enabling creativity for Theatre Ontario to continue support theatre in communities throughout Ontario.

I offer my strengths in hopes that when my contract is complete, what I have assisted in becomes standard practice and continued growth.

Rachel Stableford, Development Coordinator

I became part of the Theatre Ontario family six months ago, and have learned every day just how unique and passionate the theatre community is in Ontario. I consider all members of Theatre Ontario to be part of this family and hope that our members share the same belief. It is important to me that our members feel that their voice is heard and welcome feedback about all of our services to ensure that they are getting the most of their membership. I love talking to people about how things are going in their theatre community and for them personally. I want to get to know each and every member of our theatre Ontario family, so please give me a call or send an e-mail and introduce yourself!

Learning about each of our members' stories has been so enjoyable and this is why when Brandon Moore, our Communications Coordinator asked me to spotlight our members through Members Profiles on our blog I jumped at the chance. Writing these stories has not only allowed me to learn further about the Ontario theatre community, but a chance to talk in depth with our members and to share their inspirational stories with the whole community. Please, take a moment to read these stories and maybe share one of your own. It is my goal this year to bring the Theatre Ontario family closer together.

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Thank You to Our Valued Donors

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ANONYMOUS (1)

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Jane Carnwath
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Shirley Gibson
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ANONYMOUS (2)

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Thank You to Our Valued Funders

Ontario Arts Council

Toronto Arts Council

Ontario Trillium Foundation (Staging the Future)

Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (Summer Experience)

Thank You to Our Valued Sponsors

Sun Life Financial (Neil Munro Intern Directors Project at the Shaw Festival)

Marinucci & Company (Sandra Tulloch Award for Innovation in Arts and Culture)

Sheridan College (Next Generation Showcase)

Soulpepper Theatre (Next Generation Showcase)

Randolph Academy for the Performing Arts (Next Generation Showcase)

Alumnae Theatre (Maggie Bassett Award)

Culture One (Banners)

Nekison Engineering & Contractors / artsVest Toronto, run by Business for the Arts with the support of Canadian Heritage and the Toronto Arts Council (Independent Theatre Creators International Training Scholarship)

Alliance Fabricating (Festival)