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Big Changes at the Orinda Theatre By Cathy Tyson

“I’ve been working on this for probably close to five years through various negotiations. We finally have enough of the pieces in place to create the Lamorinda Film and Entertainment Foundation (LFEF),” said Randy Holleschau, President and Executive Founding Director of the new non-profit organization.

“We want to preserve and protect the legacy of the Orinda Theatre for future generations. If we’re successful other Theatre Square business owners will benefit from increased foot traffic.” He continued, “We have a real focus on meeting with representatives from the community to see what kind of entertainment they want. The Orinda Theatre will be all about customer experience.” To that end, there are plans in the works to open up the curtained off section in the front of the building for a wine bar.

Current owner Alan Michaan is very supportive of the change, “This is a unique opportunity for the community to save this incredible artistic treasure. I encourage the people of Orinda to support the Foundation; this irreplaceable landmark is worth preserving. This is the last chance for the theater, if it fails the property owner might turn it into office space.”

A capital campaign will soon be launched for \$4.3 million dollars which includes \$3 million dollars to purchase the real property and \$1.3 million to make renovations. Michaan will be selling the seats and equipment to the Foundation for salvage cost.

LFEF is actively searching for major trusts, foundations, corporations, grants and even wealthy individuals to become, as they put it, “fi-

nancial champions” for the foundation and its mission. Along with a hefty donation comes a naming opportunity, for example, the Lamorinda Weekly Lobby, or the To Be Determined Foundation Theater.

The Foundation’s Board of Directors is comprised of a number of long time Orinda residents with a history of community involvement, Jo Alice Canterbury, Kate Wiley, Laura Abrams, Dave Mayeri, Efi Lubliner, along with Father Mike Russo, a professor of Communications Studies at Saint Mary’s College and Honorary Board Member Kevin Spacey.

Plans for the property include dynamic programming for the Theatre with popular and diverse films, film festival(s), community events and live entertainment. LFEF will continue to operate the theater and plans to promote it as the cornerstone of downtown activity. Preserving it as a historic structure and a regional landmark will not only revitalize the Theatre, but the Foundation believes it will also enhance the economic vitality of the city, via increased sales tax.

Programming changes include a unique mix of films: first run, family oriented, foreign, art film and independent cinema. In addition there will be an emphasis on catering to specific groups like foreign film lovers, seniors, small children, film noir and for the teen and college age set late night cult movies with favorites like The Rocky Horror Picture Show.

For further information, see website, www.lfef.org.