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# Town Hall Theatre Gets Leaner to Preserve its Heritage

By Sophie Braccini



Betsy Streeter and Clive Worsley at Town Hall Theatre  
Photo Sophie Braccini

**B**etsy Streeter is adamant that non-profits need to reduce overhead so most of their funding goes to their mission, not to administrative costs. As the President of the Board of Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette, she is very outspoken about budget stringency. Artistic Director Clive Worsley has his eye on the money as well; and as Lamorinda's unique cultural treasure gets ready to launch its next theatrical season, administrative staff is being reduced and more community members will be asked to pitch in to preserve the legacy of the theater, whether it be volunteering at the bar or donating lumber. "We need to do this right now if we want the Theater to continue for the generations to come," says Streeter.

Since Worsley came on board three years ago, Town Hall's recognition in the Bay Area has grown consistently. "We now get more widespread press coverage before the opening of our shows because we have produced quality shows time and again over the past years," says the Artistic Director, "but that is not enough to guarantee the financial future of the theater."

Cuts had to be made in the administrative and management staff, but that was not easy. "We've had to let go people who had been with us for a long time," says Streeter. And now those tasks have to be taken over by the artistic

staff. "Now I also analyze balance sheets and operating budgets," says Worsley, who is not the only one who took extra responsibility on a voluntary basis.

Board vice-president Tom Stack produces music events at the theatre and has been instrumental in restructuring the theatre's expenses; treasurer Denise Altaffer wrestles with spreadsheets and acts as liaison to the accountant, while simultaneously serving as costumer; board member Kristen Correll is pursuing sponsorships and business partnerships in the community and writing the fundraising plan.

Being accountable to donors is a priority to Streeter and Worsley. "One-third of our budget comes from donations," says Worsley, "with tickets and classes bringing in the rest." According to the Streeter and Worsley, accounting responsibility is the only way to run a non-profit. "Patrons and donors expect most of the money to go toward specific programs and performances," says Streeter, "we've cut about \$100,000 of yearly expense and that's what successful non-profits do - they keep the overhead very low."

Meanwhile, the theater will continue to raise funds; the next fundraising event will be at 8:00 p.m. on August 6 as part of the Town Hall Comedy Series. "The sketch and improv comedy

troop Crisis Hopkins will host a very special evening with some of the greatest talent of Town Hall Kids," says Dennis Markam, lead actor and the theater's public relations manager. "Kids will feature some of the greatest moments from *The Wizard of Oz*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Our Town*, *Disney's 101 Dalmatians*, and more. All proceeds will benefit Town Hall Theatre and Town Hall Kids." (For ticket information go to [www.TownHallTheatre.com](http://www.TownHallTheatre.com).)

While expenses are being reduced and fundraising events are organized, the Board is also asking the community to support their theater in a different way. "We will need volunteers to tend the bar at performances," she said, "and we will also publish a list of needed items that people may be able to donate." Her list includes things such as lumber to construct scenery, art and class material for the kids' class or wine for the bar. The list and calendar for volunteering will soon be online.

"What we are doing today is preserving the heritage for the next generation," says Worsley, "this place is unique; it sustains the spiritual health of the Lamorinda community. As art classes are cut everywhere, it is important that we safeguard the soul of the community."

*Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.*

## business briefs

### First Brunch and Antiques and Lafayette Collectors Choice Antiques

3574 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette



There is something new on the boulevard. Carl and Kathy Himmelman, the owners of Collectors Choice Antiques, have taken over the space formerly occupied by Zeeba to expand their business. They are also creating synergies to develop a special "village street mall" atmosphere with their neighbors, Roy's Garlic Garden

and Zahra Boutique Salon. The first event to celebrate this partnership was on Sunday July 17 with a 'Brunch and Antiques' event. "It was the first time that Roy's was open for brunch," said Carl Himmelman, "we displayed some of our most fun 50's antiques and collectibles, such as antique bicycles and our old gas pump, and we had a lot of fun." Himmelman has been a collector for many years in parallel to his profession as a film producer. His wife Kathy combines her own passion for antiques with a legal job in the city. They owned an antique business in Alameda that grew too big for the space and looked for a new place closer to their home in Walnut Creek.

### News from the three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette

- Business Issues Meeting, Friday, July 22, 8am in the Chamber Conference Room
- Green Committee Open Meeting, Tuesday, July 26, at noon in the Chamber Conference Room

### Moraga

- Hands on Social Marketing and Web Presence Workshop, Wednesday, July 27 6- 9pm at the Saint Mary's computer lab, Garaventa Hall, Rm. 205. Free, for Chamber members only. Space is limited, please, no walk-ins. RSVP by July 20th to [kathenelson@gmail.com](mailto:kathenelson@gmail.com).

### Orinda

- Everyday Heroes Golf Tournament, Monday, July 25, 10:30am-5:30pm at the Orinda Country Club. The Celebrate Everyday Heroes Golf Tournament is hosted by the Orinda Community Foundation. Sign up at [www.everydayheroes.golfreg.com](http://www.everydayheroes.golfreg.com).
- Mark your calendars for 'Orinda Longest Weekend,' starting with Dancing with the Cars" on September 23rd, the Orinda Classic Car Show on September 24th and the 4th annual Orinda Restaurant Tour on September 27th to support Orinda public schools.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com) or call the office 925-377-0977

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