

For those of us with a Song in our Heart



News, Needs, Notes & Nods

SHOW UPDATES

Phantom Tollboth Jr. and Mamma Mia! have been

RESCHEDULED FOR 2021

See Page 2 and 6 for updates

NEW PEOPLE

Find out what your Board of Directors has been up to, meet two new board members, and find out what is on the horizon for the rest of 2020. See Page 5 for details.

WE MET OUR GOAL!

Thank you to all of our show and microphone drive sponsors! See Page 4 for a special thank you.

EVERYTHING CHANGES...

Jessica Solberg Black, Executive Director

Over the past several weeks, everything has changed. Plans upended, schools (and our local theatre performance spaces) closed, productions we have been looking forward to for months – rescheduled to 2021. Creative hopes of our talented youth actors – who braved auditions, were cast, and started read throughs – cancelled. We have grieved, we have questioned, yet we are determined to hold on to the hope of the future.

As artists, we create. It is no surprise to me that one of Ellensburg's community symbols is the phoenix. This town rose from the ashes in 1889. I don't know if a city can have DNA, but it definitely has a character, and shared values. We stick together, we help our neighbors, we adapt but don't quit, we use our god-given creativity to find a way to serve our community, and to help it process through grief. I know this extended time of isolation has been especially tough on theater, where the actual gathering as a like-minded community is "essential" to how we collaborate and create. A painter can create a beautiful work of art in their home studio; a writer or poet can do their best work when alone and free from distractions. But to all of you actors out there, all of you musicians who are part of a band, I see you. Our best work is all about collaboration. It is about working in the same room with others - reacting to intangibles like body language, to build something that is greater than what we could do on our own. To the costumers, set designers, audio and light technicians, props masters and crew – you are just as essential to the final artistic product.

In the last few weeks, I keep coming back to the image of the light bulb. Before you write it off as a trite and overused symbol, consider the "ghost light". A single solitary light on a bare stage, a ghost light has historical roots in theatre. A ghost light is an electric light that is left energized on the stage of a theater when the theater is unoccupied and would otherwise be completely dark. Some argue that its function is to chase away mischievous

Continued on Page 4



CALLING ALL ASPIRING PRODUCERS AND DIRECTORS

Bring us your ideas and we will review proposals with an open mind, and even help first time Producers and Directors to make their way through this incredibly rewarding journey!

We encourage you to review the “job” requirements for producers and/or directors on our website on the Cast & Crew page.

We currently produce four shows per year:

Rising Stars Production. Held in mid to late spring, features our amazing area middle-schoolers in kid friendly versions of some of Broadway's biggest hits! Show selections should be rated G or PG and family friendly. Typically cast with 5th – 8th grade students.

Mainstage Summer Musical. Typically held in July, at the Morgan Performing Arts Center – this production is our largest and gets a lot of community involvement.

Fall Fundraiser. Typically held in late September early October and incorporates a silent auction/fundraising aspect to the evening. We have held this as a cabaret type song evening (Songs & Sweets) but may also consider other options.

Christmas/Winter Production. In odd numbered years we will consider a Christmas production (play or musical), in alternate years we will consider straight plays or small musicals to be performed in January or early February.

MORE DETAILS ON PAGE 6

LETTER OF THANKS

Mia Spencer - VMT Board President

Dear VMT Fans, Patrons and Supporters:

First the VMT Board of Directors would like to thank all of you for your support over the years. As a non-profit organization, we could not have survived for twenty years without all of you, whether you donated money, time, talent or your presence to us.

Second, we have obviously had to change our schedule for the spring and summer. We were very sad to have to cancel the Rising Stars production of “The Phantom Tollbooth” and our mainstage summer production of “Mamma Mia” but we felt it was necessary to move quickly and not take any chances with anyone's health. At this point, it looks like we will be able to present both of these shows in 2021 - something to look forward to next Spring! I was very proud of how well the Directors and staff of each of these shows dealt with the situation; first making great contingency plans in case we were able to move forward, and then when it became apparent that we would not be having public performances or rehearsals, quickly informing everyone.

Currently we are moving forward with plans for our annual Fall Fundraiser, which usually happens in September or October. The Board is working with a couple of different scenarios, depending on where Kittitas county is regarding opening and social distancing.

We are also planning to revisit “Noel” during the Thanksgiving weekend, which was a new venture this past year and was a wonderful way to include some beautiful readings along with song and instrumental music.

Again, I would like to thank you for your interest and patronage. Please feel free to contact us if you have concerns, questions or suggestions for how we might move forward in this difficult time.

Take good care; stay safe and healthy!

*Best,
Mia Spencer, President VMT*

EVERYTHING CHANGES...

Continued from Page 1

spirits; but it is mostly for safety. Aaron Nichols, Executive Director of South Bend Civic Theatre, recently posted on Facebook: "As theatres around the country go dark, I encourage you to focus on the humble ghost light. Created as a tool to keep us safe (from falling off the stage), it has since evolved into a metaphor for theatre's ability to be light in the darkness, understanding in an incomprehensible world."

In the last couple of months, this single solitary light has taken on new meaning for community and regional theatres who have had to close. But the ghost light remains as a hope and promise of return. Light bulbs (and even lighted candles) have been a symbol of innovation, of creativity for generations. "In contrast to the storm cloud that symbolizes double-mindedness and doubt, the light bulb is an answer to the conflict that is usually baffling because you can't believe you didn't think of it before." - Author Unknown

Give theatre people a problem, and we by nature look for creative solutions; we think outside the box, we innovate and adapt. And as artists we are being asked to adapt. VMT is regrouping. Our Board of Directors has had to make tough decisions in the last month, and we are considering what community theatre in Ellensburg can look like for the rest of 2020 and going forward. How do we meet the creative desires of our casts and crew? How do we meet the needs of our audiences and help them to feel comfortable attending future performances? What steps can we take to provide as safe an environment as is possible and be responsive to local health restrictions?

To answer these questions, VMT recently formed a working committee to focus on disaster preparedness. Over the next few months they will be reviewing and revising VMT policies for auditions and rehearsals, cleaning procedures, mitigating health risks for audiences, and cancellation policies in times of crises. We still have our smaller Fall productions planned, and want to be fully prepared.

The VMT Board is also exploring new technologies that would allow us to live stream performances, and even conduct some rehearsals via Zoom. In the short term, it may allow us to "stage" dramatic readings for virtual performance. Prior to shut down we also started using a new platform (Cast98) for auditions that will eliminate all paper audition forms, consolidate schedules for rehearsals, and streamline communication processes for future productions. Technology will likely play a bigger factor in our preparations for future performances, and we will need more volunteers who are skilled in camera work, sound editing and video editing.

VMT is also moving forward with replacing our older microphones. Thanks to the amazing generosity of you, our local patrons, we met our fundraising goal! Thank you to all who contributed (see page 3 for list). We are humbled by your support.

I love this quote from Graham Abbey, who recently co-founded an online theater mentorship platform called "Ghostlight" based in Toronto: "Here's a chance for you to either reinvent yourself or go into territory where you wouldn't go normally," he says. "That's the silver lining of this very strange and difficult moment. There's this time to refocus and reinvent ourselves as theatre makers...Theatre people are creative and hard-working and adaptive," he says. "You'll see innovations in terms of how we can reimagine that live connection. And we love to learn, we love to hone our craft. After this is all over, we'll come back bigger than ever, with more tools in our baskets."

To my fellow creators, innovators, theatre friends, we will keep the light on.

Watch for announcements of new productions and new platforms for theatre! And if you have ideas you think we should consider, or talents that would contribute to our efforts in this new creative reality, please reach out!

Warmly, Jessica Solberg Black, Executive Director

“

“In contrast to the storm cloud that symbolizes double-mindedness and doubt, the light bulb is an answer to the conflict that is usually baffling because you can't believe you didn't think of it before.

- Author Unknown



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mia Spencer, President
Jim Denison, Vice President
Kathleen Beach, Secretary
Patrick Nolan, Treasurer

Directors:

Easton Benson
CharRé Burnum
Mike McCloskey
Hal Ott
Erin Slaughter
Joey Thornton
Kelle Dvorak Vandenberg
Adrienne Zimny

Jessica Solberg Black, Executive Director
valleymusicaltheatre@gmail.com
509-972-6633

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Prop Committee
Jim Denison

Set Committee
Kathleen Beach

Recruitment & Show Solicitation
Hal Ott

Makeup Committee
CharRé Burnum

Costuming Committee
Adrienne Zimny

Budget Committee
Jessica Solberg Black

Disaster Preparedness Committee
Mike McCloskey

GET INVOLVED

Tell us your interests. complete the volunteer form:
valleymusicaltheatre.com/volunteer-form

Donations can be made online:
www.valleymusicaltheatre.com/donate

MEET YOUR NEW VMT BOARD MEMBERS

This past month, VMT welcomed two new board members to our team: Kelle Dvorak Vandenberg and Easton Benston. We thought you might like to meet them as well!

Kelle Dvorak Vandenberg

Kelle has a long-seated passion for theatre. A CWU alumni, who performed in Laughing Horse Summer Stock program, has most recently been involved with Bothell's community and school theater programs.

Kelle has extensive experience in serving at the board, and executive board level for other nonprofits, with an emphasis on development and marketing. She also currently volunteers with Ellensburg Community Radio and Ellensburg Downtown Association, and is owner of One Crow Consulting, a marketing and business development company that works with businesses of all sizes to help them grow.



Kelle is also a published writer and has a creative & fabrication studio that she operates with her husband (Celtic Crow Creative Studio). Their combined focus is on design and construction of masks, puppets, elaborate costume pieces, make-up design and poster design. She and her husband moved back to Ellensburg in 2019, and Kelle is most looking forward to being a part of the world of theatre again and hopefully helping build the next chapter of community theatre in Ellensburg.

Easton Benson

Easton, a recent CWU grad with a BFA in Theatre Performance, brings a wealth of experience not only as an actor and director, but also as a dramaturg and playwright. She earned a prestigious Dramaturgy Fellow from the MFA Dramaturgy Intensive at the Kennedy Center, and has won national awards for her work. During her intensive at the Kennedy Center, Easton was reminded "that there are so many incredible perspectives to explore, yet also within those perspectives there are threads of humanity that unite us together. That, to me, is the wonder of theatre." During Easton's time at Central, she acted and worked backstage on numerous productions, and wrote, directed, and produced an original radio drama, which was featured on the airwaves of Ellensburg Community Radio. Our middle school performers and parents will get to know her in the next year as she is one of the assistant directors for *The Phantom Tollbooth Jr.*



Easton told us, "What excites me the most about joining the VMT board is being able to bring theatre into the community that has become my home over the last four years. The support I experienced in community theatre when I was younger not only helped me get through some really tough experiences, but being involved in a community that was so strong and supportive gave me the courage to pursue and finish a Bachelor's degree in Theatre at Central Washington University. I experienced the same level of community in my four years at Central, so I look forward to bringing those experiences to the greater Ellensburg area."

Help us welcome Kelle and Easton to the VMT Board! If you are interested in getting involved with the VMT Board of Directors, please reach out to Jessica Black, Executive Director at valleymusicaltheatre@gmail.com or by phone at 509-972-6633.

VOICE OF THE VALLEY

For those of us with a Song in our Heart

ACCEPTING PRODUCTION PROPOSALS FOR 2021-2022

WE ARE CURRENTLY CONSIDERING PROPOSALS FOR A JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021 STRAIGHT PLAY.

Due to the coronavirus outbreak our 2020 spring and summer shows were moved to 2021. You may submit show ideas for those slots for the 2022 Season.

We are looking for talented and energetic individuals to take on the roles of Producer or Director for any of these productions. You can submit a show for consideration or just let us know you are interested in Directing or Producing anything and for the right individual we can help find the best fit.

While we are looking for individuals with as much theatre experience as possible, we understand there will be a learning curve for most folks in either of these positions and VMT is here to help.

Preliminary proposals for the 2021 season are due by June 1, 2020. Forms are available on the VMT website from the home page. Please complete the SIMPLE Proposal form, and submit along with a resume of theater experience and return to VMT by email: valleymusicaltheatre@gmail.com. These simple proposals will be reviewed by the show selection committee. If they are interested in your proposal, you will be asked to complete a more detailed proposal with a budget.

STAY CONNECTED

Follow us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/ValleyMusicalTheatre/

Twitter: @VMTEllensburg

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*Save the Dates and
Join the Fun!*



FALL FUNDRAISER

Early October

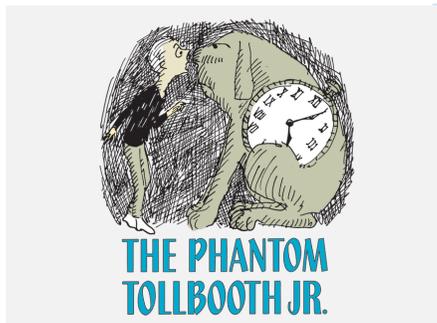
Details TBA
Watch for performance opportunities



NOEL

Saturday, November 28, 2020
7:00 PM

Kickoff the holiday season with familiar holiday music played by professional chamber musicians, and theatrical holiday readings from actors around the region



PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH JR.

Auditions: March 2021

Performances:
May 7 - 16, 2021



MAMMA MIA!

Auditions: April 2021

Performances:
July 8 - 17, 2021

Valley Musical Theatre

PO Box 1551, Ellensburg, WA 98926 | Phone: (509) 972-6633
valleymusicaltheatre@gmail.com | www.valleymusicaltheatre.com