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Town Hall Theatre Flood Aftermath

By Cathy Tyson



Lobby stairs Photo provided

Although 1,000 gallons of water gushing from the second story of a 94-year-old building is never a good thing, it could have been much worse. Coming right in the middle of spring break, much of the Town Hall Theatre staff was out of town. Lamorinda resident Denise Murphy happened to be driving home that April Fool's evening when she noticed water flowing out the front door. Luckily at that point the malfunctioning sprinkler had been running for less than an hour.

"To our amazement, the stage and the production room were dry," said Dennis Erokkan, Board President, so only one performance of "The Odd Couple" was cancelled. Just days before the flood, Director of Education, Janice Peacock had negotiated with Butler-Conti Dodge to use a portion of their space for off-site classes, due to their increasing popularity. The building owner generously gave Town Hall Theatre the rest of the space to use as a temporary home for rehearsals and storage after hearing of the water damage. Finally the one computer that was spared contained all of their important back-up data.

The big white tent on the side of the building is the new interim lobby during the expected three to five months of construction and a temporary wall was put up so that the bathrooms and lift are now available for patrons to use.

"This theatre is a gem and with help from our community, it will come back stronger than before," said Amy Goodheart, Board Member and Fundraiser. "I get a little gushy every time I say how proud I am of everyone at the theatre and the tremendous effort they made. Our new artistic director, Clive Worsley worked tirelessly for 48 hours and coordinated with Service Masters to dry us out, Dennis Markham and Emily Garcia figured out how to make an outdoor box office work without any electricity or internet connection and our teen helpers were swabbing down the porta-potties before guests arrived for the show."

The final bit of good news is a fundraising gala was already in the works, scheduled for May 16. Because they usually function with a very tight budget, coming up with a \$5,000 insurance deductible will be challenging, along with other costs that Eroken expects could add up to \$25,000. At least the fundraiser couldn't have come at a better time. For more information go to www.thtc.org.

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