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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

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."

Betsy 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

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