

Rheem Theatre: The Community Mobilizes

By Sophie Braccini



Two Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School students baked for two days to raise money for the theater. Photo provided

Thanks to strong community support, as of last week the Rheem Theatre was well on its way to raising the money necessary to order the lift it needs to re-open the upper floor theaters and be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, according to Derek Zemrak of the California Independent Film Festival Association which operates the theater.

Support for this unique recreation venue was swift. In the span of two weeks, individuals, businesses and organizations have raised thousands of dollars.

"Individuals have been writing big checks," said Zemrak. Neighborhood Computer gave \$1,000, the Zemrak family gave \$2,500 and Moraga resident Cliff Dochterman, who is the town's representative to the County Council on Aging, gave \$1,000. "You can't ask people to donate if you do not do it yourself," he said.

Dochterman started a campaign he calls "Let's Give Moraga a Lift" and is soliciting residents, businesses and service clubs, such as the Rotary. "The theater is a major recreation facility for Moraga," added Dochter-

man. It was a letter by Dochterman pinpointing the lack of access to the upper floor that led Zemrak to close the non-accessible floors. Dochterman wants to be part of the solution because he believes this kind of effort underscores the unique quality of the Moraga community.

An example of this was a bake sale organized by two Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School students, Kellen Kvech and Ally Scarpitti, who baked for two days and set up a table at the corner of Arroyo and Sullivan Drive Jan. 20 to raise money for the lift.

"Ally and I went into the theater to get my mom some popcorn and found out all the upstairs theaters were closed due to the elevator lift," said Kvech. "We saw the donation box and how much money people were donating and I decided it would be a good idea to have a bake sale. It's so nice to have a place locally where kids can be with their friends. Some of my favorite memories are with my cousins and I watching movies in the theater and waking my Grandma up during the movie."

"I have been going there since I

was little and don't want to see it close down again," added Scarpitti. The two friends baked soft pretzels and cup cakes and raised \$170 the first weekend. They plan another sale next weekend.

On Jan. 18 Shelby's restaurant in Orinda gave 15 percent of the night's revenue to the theater. "We were immediately supportive of the Rheem when we heard about the issue," said Carlos Rangel, owner of Shelby's. "As small business owners we know the challenge that ADA compliance can pose and we wanted to show solidarity."

Patrons from both Moraga and Orinda crowded the Theatre Square restaurant that night, resulting in a check for \$1,000 made to the theater. Shelby's is also supporting the 'Oscar Night' at the Rheem by supplying dinner for the Feb. 24 event.

A fundraising shred event is scheduled at the 5A Rent-A-Space parking lot at Moraga Road from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Feb 16. "We are partnering with Peggy Hall of Hall of Taxes and Grant Stubblefield of Neighborhood Computers who will also be volunteering," said 5A manager Brad Noggle. "Donations are \$5 per bankers' box for paper shredding and additional donations are welcome." Noggle hopes to raise between \$2,000 and \$5,000 on the day of the event.

And the Moraga Art Gallery asked artist members to create unique six-by-six inch pieces that will be raffled. Raffle tickets are \$20 for five, and all the proceeds

will go to the theater.

Zemrak continues to focus on the long-term future of the Rheem. There are additional needs coming up for the theater: one bathroom needs to be brought to ADA compliance, and two more digital projectors have to be purchased.

"If we have the right attitude and hold the vision, we will do it," said Edy Schwartz, Chamber of Commerce liaison to the Lamorinda The-

atres. Zemrak is also engaged in negotiations with property owner Mike Puri because, although the lease does not end for another year, he wants to have a long-term contract to plan for the future.

"The Orinda Theatre is doing very well and so did the Rheem until we had to close the upstairs, better than they had done in more than 10 years," said Zemrak. "I'm reasonably optimistic for the future."



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Orinda Community Church to Host World Renowned Theologian and Author

By Laurie Snyder

"I, the fiery life of divine wisdom, I ignite the beauty of the plains, I sparkle the waters, I burn in the sun, and the moon, and the stars." – Hildegard of Bingen

"Has there ever been a time in human history or the history of the planet when illumination, light, and wisdom, were needed more than now? Can anyone be better equipped to lead us than the neglected one, St. Hildegard, who in fact defines the ultimate act of illumination as compassion?" asks Matthew Fox in his book, "Illuminations of Hildegard of Bingen."

A beloved theologian and internationally recognized expert on Christian mysticism, Fox will bring his acclaimed abilities to illumine and inspire to Lamorinda when he teaches at the Orinda Community Church Sunday, Feb. 10 in events that are sure to attract participants from across the Bay Area.

Fox is revered by many for igniting the embers that sparked their spiritual journeys through writings such as "One River, Many Wells: Wisdom Springing from Global Faiths," "Meditations with Meister Eckhart," and "Hildegard of Bingen's Book of Divine Works with Letters and Songs."

His most recent book, "Hildegard of Bingen, A Saint for Our Times: Unleashing Her Power in the 21st Century," has been released to mark the canonization of this Benedictine abbess. During her lifetime (1098-1179), Hildegard rose above the patriarchal culture to become a healer, scientist and composer, as well as a much sought after counselor by the highest ranking of male church leaders. She likened herself to the David who brought down Goliath.

Fox is a modern day version of David himself. A former Dominican priest and summa cum laude graduate of the Institut Catholique de Paris with a doctorate in the History and Theology of Spirituality, he once took on Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) in an attempt to stop the dissolution of the Creation Spirituality Institute at Oakland's Holy Names College. He continues to spar with the current pope and other spiritual leaders across the globe, challenging them with his thinking, activism, and writing. Books such as his "Christian Mystics: 365 Readings and Meditations" have become popular with many of diverse faiths who engage in meditation and other forms of contemplative practice.

OCC event attendees will reflect on the theme, "In what language will our children and grandchildren pray?" Fox will lead the liturgical service and dance, which will begin at 10 a.m. in the main sanctuary. Lunch will then be served in OCC's Fellowship Hall prior to the workshop with Fox from noon to 2 p.m. Church leaders are asking each workshop participant for a \$20 donation (\$30 for families or \$5 for students) to help defray expenses; however, no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

It is anticipated that seating will fill up quickly. To reserve your space, call (925) 254-4906. For more information about Matthew Fox, visit his web site: www.matthewfox.org.

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