

Theatre Orangeville puts community support in the Spotlight

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Theatre Orangeville is putting a fresh spin on its annual fundraising event this year, bringing supporters together for an afternoon of entertainment, food and fundraising at Hockley Valley Resort.

The fundraiser takes place on Nov. 15, beginning at 12 p.m., with lunch to be served at 1 p.m.

Rebranded as Spotlight, the event will take place as a Sunday luncheon rather than the traditional Saturday evening gathering, offering attendees a new way to support the local theatre while celebrating the community partners, volunteers and donors who help sustain it.

Laura Austin, chair of the Theatre Orangeville Board of Directors, said this year's event will feature performances from leadership at Theatre Orangeville and its Young Company

"It's a fun experience all around," she said. "We rebranded it to be something memorable, with top-notch entertainment from Stratford. Our own artistic director Jennifer will be performing in a duet. Of course, Young Company is coming in. They performed 'Into the Woods' this year, and they also did 'Baskerville'."

One of the highlights will be a planned flash mob with the Young Company, but more details will be saved for the actual event.

The event's layout has also been redesigned with a new, center-focused floor plan with a dance floor in the middle of the tables to encourage socializing and bring attendees closer together, with the central dance floor serving as the focal point.

"We reached out to the Headwaters Foundation because they had a huge success with their event, and they were very generous to share what they had," Austin said. "They offered to come and give us some ideas on how they were so successful, and they used this floor plan. We like it because it's more connected, engaging, inclusive – that's why people come out to our events."

The Spotlight theme will focus on Broadway and the performing arts, with red, gold and black decorations complementing the occasion. Guests can also expect a meal prepared by Hockley Valley Resort, a longstanding community partner.

Fundraising opportunities will include silent auction items, a raffle featuring three prize baskets, a heads-or-tails game and a golden ticket offering the winner their choice of a live auction item. Prizes include WestJet tickets and a necklace valued at \$3,300 from Gallery Gemma. Organizers are also introducing 50 mystery bags, each priced at \$50 and expected to contain items worth up to \$100.

The event also aims to recognize the local businesses and individuals who have supported Theatre Orangeville over the years, including BookLore, Bluebird Cafe, Greystones and Adamo Estate Winery, who will be providing drinks for the evening.

The changes come as Theatre Orangeville works toward long-term financial sustainability following a challenging period. Austin said community support has been particularly important, with staff, volunteers and local organizations continuing to stand behind the theatre.

Spotlight also appears to be attracting a new audience, with approximately 40 per cent of ticket purchasers attending for the first time. Organizers hope the Sunday afternoon format will appeal to people who prefer not to travel or attend events late in the evening.

For Austin, the fundraiser represents more than an opportunity to raise money. Theatre Orangeville's productions centre on Canadian stories, playwrights and performers, while its local staff and volunteers help maintain a strong connection between the stage and the community.

"Our five main stage productions are Canadian stories," she said. "They're written by Canadian playwrights. They're acted by Canadian actors. The staff is all local. They're all Orangeville residents or volunteers who have supported our theatre for years and years. We're all Canadian, and we are so blessed to be able to witness these authentic stories on our stage."

Through Spotlight, the theatre hopes to celebrate those connections while raising support for the future of local arts and culture.

For more information and tickets, go to: theatreorangeville.ca/show/spotlight