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Theatre Orangeville?s president discusses artistic director leaving role

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Theatre Orangeville's artistic director David Nairn is leaving his position at the end of the 2024-25 season.

In a conversation with Randy Ugolini, President of Theatre Orangeville's Board of Directors, he told the Citizen, ?David and I have been have dancing around the topic of him stepping down for a few years. Then, about a year ago, the executive met with him twice and then, we brought Sharyn [Ayliffe, Theatre Orangeville's Executive Director] into the mix. This is unchartered water,? he admitted, adding, ?but we have such a good team and that he hasn't gone anywhere is a blessing.?

Ugolini commented that David Nairn has been in the theatre world all his life and that ?this is the best possible scene for moving on. It is a shock but not necessarily a surprise; at some point, he was bound to give up the chair. We're doing this on his terms.?

Ugolini hesitated to try to express how the theatre's board members are feeling, admitting they are not delighted. A new artistic director can be exciting but it's a shift.

First and foremost, is the relief that Mr. Nairn is staying on as artistic director, in fact, until the end of the 2024-25 season, which wraps up in May 2025.

Meanwhile, the search for a new artistic director is on. Once that person is found and engaged, Mr. Nairn will continue in the role of artistic director emeritus for another year, as a mentor to the new artistic director, as well as engaging in his own projects within the community.

Having all that in mind, the question is what sort of person do the Board members feel will fill Theatre Orangeville's artistic director's bill?

During Mr. Nairn's tenure in the role, he expanded it from a narrow summer theatre to a theatre with a full season's playbill that is immersed in the community, participating in functions and events even outside the theatre's usual scope. Many programs exist, which were primarily created by him and TOV's tremendous team. Some are unique to Theatre Orangeville.

?This is difficult,? Mr. Ugolini agreed. ?But we're really happy at the alternatives for the Board. Fortunately, the artistic director is not going to come out of my mind,? he added.

There is an application process, for the position that demands that sort of dedicated approach.

Mr. Ugolini said, ?To do justice to the job here, the candidate must move here.?

He continued to say there are no preconceived notions but a long-term commitment is required.

?We haven't really talked more than broad strokes,? he said. ?A person who is community-minded, caring about the needs of the community and not just Orangeville.

?A person with the vision and creativity to maintain and keep it growing. This application is open to all applicants but we're thinking of the theatre.

?We want the best candidate for the role and to anticipate would be deleterious to the process and the company. You'd be crazy to go into this process about specifics. We have to keep our biases to the side.?

Insisting, he made the point there is too much at risk to have any preconceived ideas about who should be in the role. Ugolini is sure their search is going to attract a lot of great candidates because this such a great theatre.

?I don't have much experience in hiring but we have a good chance. David is clear he is here. That gives us a lot assurance,? he said.