ROYAL & McPHERSON

FY 2021: ANNUAL REPORT

The Royal and McPherson Theatres Society manages the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse on behalf of their civic owners and citizens of the region, cultivating a vibrant cultural hub for our community and creating theatrical experiences of the highest professional standards.



ROYAL THEATRE



McPHERSON PLAYHOUSE

MISSION STATEMENT

Enriching the quality of life in the region, through a sustainable and relevant performing arts centre.

VISION STATEMENT

To be the integral hub for performing arts of the region, recognized for diverse and valued performances, professional standards, and historic spaces.

BOARD PRESIDENT REPORT

On behalf of the board of directors, it is my pleasure to present the 2021 Royal and McPherson Theatres Society (RMTS) annual report. 2021 was a year of resiliency for the organization as we continued to navigate the uncertainty of COVID-19 and prepared to raise the curtains and welcome the community back to the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse.

While the theatres remained closed for public performances at the beginning of the year, the RMTS maintained strong financial stewardship, utilizing all available government relief and resiliency programs. Our dedicated team of professionals ensured the continuation of critical operations, support for clients needs, communication with the community, and undertook maintenance and capital projects of these much-loved venues. Additionally, the team conducted thorough planning and preparation to ensure that the theatres were ready to reopen when it was safe to do so.

In 2021, the McPherson Playhouse acquired new state-of-the art streaming equipment and specialized lighting through the Arts Infrastructure Program from the Province of B.C. by way of the B.C. Arts Council. Both theatres are now able to broadcast and record performances.

I would like to thank the Federal Government, Victoria Foundation, City of Victoria, District of Oak Bay, District of Saanich, Capital Regional District (CRD), Jägermeister in partnership with the Canadian Live Music Association Relief Fund, individual donors, and the Province of B.C. by way of the B.C. Arts Council for their continued support of live arts and entertainment. On October 25, 2021, we received the news that we had been waiting for when public health officials announced that the theatres could reopen to full capacity with safety measures. Less than two weeks later, on November 5, the McPherson Playhouse re-opened for its first performance since the start of the pandemic. On November 13, the Royal Theatre held its first public performance. In the last two months of 2021, the RMTS welcomed back over 60 staff members and over 21,000 audience members to 33 different events at the theatres. In December, public health orders changed again and reduced theatre capacity to 50%. The RMTS continued to work with event organizers to reschedule and support performances that were able to move ahead at 50% capacity.

Last year, the CRD appointed two new board members with diverse experience and expertise. Welcome Marilyn Palmer and Marcus Handman to the board.

Thank you to the artists, clients, and audiences for their continued enthusiasm and celebration of arts and entertainment in the region. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to my fellow board members and the RMTS staff for their hard work and commitment to ensuring that we can safely gather once again to experience unforgettable live arts and entertainment.



Christopher Devlin
Board President



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

In 2021 we tackled several capital projects designed to enhance our operational capacity and position us for the future. We relaunched the RMTS website to communicate more meaningfully with patrons and potential clients and to better integrate the purchase path of our ticketing system. We moved to a more reliable payroll system with improved accounting integration and direct web-based access for employees. Thanks to funding from Victoria, Saanich and Oak Bay and a grant from the BC Arts Council we can now livestream events beyond the Royal Theatre and the McPherson Playhouse. Two seismic engineering studies began and work continued on the Expansion of the Royal Theatre Feasibility Study.

2021 was a second year of ploughing through recurring cycles of client discussions, taking shows off sale, rebooking them and then putting them back on sale… maintaining an ongoing holding pattern of supporting client needs while keeping the dream alive for patrons. With each potential announcement from the Public Health Office we confronted implications and reasoned our way to updated policies, practices and communications. Every major pandemic change necessitated reanalysis as we imagined how scenarios might affect our financial position. The pandemic's crazy making hit each team member differently as we alternated between office and home office, depending on Public Health Orders.

Part way through the year we began preparing to reopen the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse. Dormant systems were reconfigured and restored. Suspended services were reactivated. There was restocking, rehiring, retraining… all carefully coordinated to avoid triggering a premature exit from vital government support programs. In November we successfully reopened the theatres and had nearly two full event filled months at 100 percent audience capacity! Despite the subsequent Omicron setback, the hard work had been done and we have now sprung back with confidence.

Our recovery continues. We have learned lessons and expanded our capacity. Financial performance has exceeded our forecasts and our finances are intact. Our analysis, planning and hard work have been validated. Our calculated risk-taking has been vindicated. The theatres are once again fully operational. 2022 will be very busy. We must now work our way through the snowball effect of events continually booked forward during the pandemic.

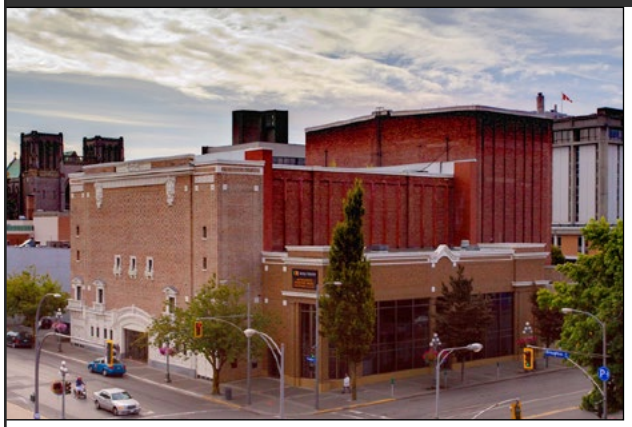
Many have helped us. I am grateful to our four levels of government: our three municipal participants (Oak Bay, Saanich and Victoria), the Capital Regional District, the Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada. We are grateful for the support of the Victoria Foundation. Sincere thanks to our clients and patrons who are our raison d'être and our inspiration.
Thanks to the RMTS board of directors for many hours of board and committee work in governing our society. Special recognition goes to our Treasurer Marley Gibbons whose support is unwavering, and to President Christopher Devlin whose efforts are unceasing and as prudent or bold as the situation demands. Most specially, I must express gratitude to my colleagues. We have prevailed. We continue to serve our community as the stewards and operators of the McPherson Playhouse and the Royal Theatre.



Franz Lehrbass
Executive Director



WELCOME TO THE THEATRES



ROYAL THEATRE



MCPHERSON PLAYHOUSE



ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

The Royal and McPherson Theatres Society acknowledges that the Royal Theatre, McPherson Playhouse and Administration Office are on the ancestral, traditional and unceded territories of the Lekwungen peoples, now known as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

THE PEOPLE, THE PLACE, THE EXPERIENCE

For over four decades, the Royal and McPherson Theatres Society (RMTS) has managed the theatres on behalf of their civic owners and, by extension, the region's citizens, visitors and community. The RMTS manages all aspects of the theatres, including the administration, production, box office, front of house, and historic building maintenance, in order to facilitate 75 diverse companies using the theatres annually, including 45 local arts, culture and entertainment organizations. The RMTS also administers service to over 200,000 patrons annually, setting the stage for an exceptional customer service experience, from ticket purchase through to the final curtain.

The RMTS provides the care and expertise to operate and maintain the historic Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse. Both theatres are in their second century serving the Capital Region as the premier performing arts venues and play an integral role in enriching the cultural life of the community. We are proud of the diverse and valued performances that grace the stages of the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse.

OUR TEAM

ROYAL AND MCPHERSON THEATRES SOCIETY STAFF

The RMTS is comprised of a team of experienced, knowledgeable and dedicated arts professionals who manage all aspects of the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse. Our staff takes pride in cultivating a vibrant cultural hub for our community.

The RMTS works closely with the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees & Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts (IATSE) Local 168, who represent all RMTS employees outside of the Administration Office.

The RMTS is comprised of the following hard-working, dedicated full-time employees:

Jackie Adamthwaite *Front of House Manager*

Karen Ainey *Manager of Information and Digital Technologies*

Hilary Britton-Foster *Assistant Technical Director*

Warren Busby *Assistant Technical Director*

Derek Cooper *Box Office Administrator*

Nancy Downer *Finance Manager*

Sheelagh Drever *Payroll, Human Resources*

Tom Heemskerk *Assistant Technical Director*

Ainslee Jessiman *Programming and Communications*

Franz Lehrbass *Executive Director*

Darcy Lipsey *Digital Content and Client Settlements*

Blair Morris *Technical Director*

Mandy Niddrie *Manager of Client Services*

Melissa O'Shea *Box Office Manager*

Cameron Stewart *Assistant Technical Director*

Kathleen Stewart *Custodial Supervisor*

THANK YOU: **The Royal and McPherson Theatres Society extends a thank you to the City of Victoria for providing a permissive tax exemption for the McPherson Playhouse.**

OUR TEAM

The RMTS is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors consisting of Municipal Councillors, Elected Directors and CRD Appointed Directors. The Board works to maintain, preserve and further develop the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse by providing governance and strategic oversight of the organization's resources.

2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Christopher Devlin, *President*
Tom Burley, *Vice President*
Marley Gibbons, *Treasurer*
Judy Scott, *Secretary*
Lorne DeLarge, *Past President*
Ian Alexander
Councillor Stephen Andrew
Councillor Hazel Braithwaite
Heather Burns
Marcus Handman
Iain Hooey
Nathan Lampard
Marilyn Palmer
Councillor Ned Taylor

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Royal & McPherson Theatres Society, previously known as the McPherson Foundation, has been the steward of the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse on behalf of their civic owners and the citizens of the region for over 44 years.
- In regular years, as a registered, not-for-profit charity, 85% of RMTS revenues are earned from theatre operations. The Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse receive municipal operating grants that cover 15% of the operating costs.
- During regular operations, the Society facilitates the use of approximately 75 groups per year and over 200,000 patrons annually.
- We are in the business of bringing people together at the historic Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse. These venues have served the community for over 100 years, providing a home for the Capital Region to gather and experience unforgettable local and touring arts and entertainment.

ROYAL THEATRE



The elegant 1416-seat Royal Theatre has graced the skyline of the Capital Region since 1913 and serves as Vancouver Island's largest premier venue for the performing arts. While preserving its original Rococo/Renaissance Revival style décor, the Royal Theatre elegantly fuses 19th century architecture with 21st century technology, enabling it to host a variety of arts and entertainment options, from Broadway tours to drag shows, dance to comedy, opera to jazz and symphony to rock concerts.

The Royal Theatre became a site of national historic significance in 1987. It was officially designated a National Historic Site of Canada on May 12, 1988. In 1990, the Royal Theatre received a commemorative plaque from the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

ROYAL THEATRE	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total Box Office Ticket Sales	$4,356,416	$6,848,933	$1,614,912	$826,586
Total Tickets Issued	113,959	144,496	30,160	22,029
Total Performances	120	148	27	19

MCPHERSON PLAYHOUSE



Located in the heart of Old Town Victoria, the McPherson Playhouse has been the home of intimate theatre in Victoria since opening in 1914 as part of the Pantages chain of theatres found across North America. Evolving from its vaudevillian roots, the McPherson hosts a variety of professional, community and amateur events throughout the year.

The 772-seat theatre continues to be one of the most impeccably maintained and finest examples of theatres from its era still standing in Canada today.

The McPherson Playhouse was granted a heritage designation on October 25, 1995.

MCPHERSON PLAYHOUSE	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total Box Office Ticket Sales	$1,438,520	$1,588,698	$167,016	$186,984
Total Tickets Issued	50,533	56,460	5,414	4,882
Total Performances	102	107	11	9

OPERATING IMPACTS

In 2021, the Royal and McPherson Theatres Society continued to be dramatically impacted by the ongoing closure of the theatres due to the enduring global COVID-19 pandemic, forcing us to make complex, arduous decisions and implement significant changes in order to maintain financial stability.

The cancellation of all live events and performances at the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse from March 2020 through October 2021, and the subsequent loss of earned revenue, resulted in the following:

- 93% of remaining full-time employees continued with reduced compensation through the Work-Sharing program.
- Continued to receive federal government subsidies and programs resulting in support from:
  - Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS)
  - Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS)
  - Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Program (THRP) - Wage Subsidy
  - Tourism and Hospitality Recovery Program (THRP) - Rent Subsidy
- Continued to pursue grant and foundation applications.
- Continued fundraising campaign.
- Paused many expenditures to maximize cost savings and continued to eliminate discretionary expenditures.
- The Society transferred funds from the McPherson Playhouse Operating Reserve Fund and the Royal Theatre Operating Reserve Fund to meet ongoing operational requirements during the pandemic.

WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE CONTINUED SUPPORT FROM OUR MUNICIPAL FUNDING PARTNERS

The Royal Theatre receives a $100,000 operating grant contributed by Oak Bay, Saanich and Victoria.

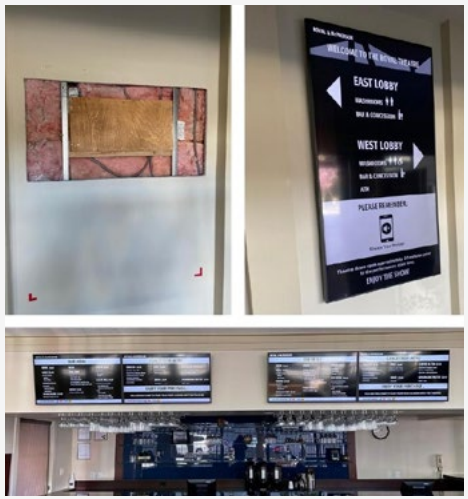
The McPherson Playhouse receives a $350,000 operating grant from the City of Victoria.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

As the uncertainty of when we could begin to raise the curtain on live performances continued to loom over the Society, our team continued to adapt and focused priority on theatre maintenance, upgrades and capital projects. Below is an overview of a few of the projects our team undertook in 2021 in the ongoing effort to dramatically improve the experience at the theatres.

ROYAL THEATRE

- Completed Building Envelope Study on the condition of the building exterior.
- Renovation of green room and dressing rooms.
- Renovation and replacement of audience chamber task lighting, upgrading to LED (phase 1 completed).
- Installed new hardware to increase building and washroom accessibility and reduce touch points.
- Replaced water fountains and installed additional touchless water bottle filling stations throughout the theatre.
- Installed new fully automated and sealed soundproof doors between the lobby and audience chamber.
- Installed new directional and digital signage to improve safety, access, audience flow and crowd management.



DIGITAL SIGNAGE



TOUCHLESS WATER FILLING STATIONS



AUTOMATED AUDIENCE DOORS



DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

CAPITAL PROJECTS

MCPHERSON PLAYHOUSE

- Completed Building Envelope Study on the condition of the building exterior.
- Renovation and replacement of audience chamber task lighting, upgrading to LED (phase 1 completed).
- Installed new hardware to increase building and washroom accessibility and reduce touch points.
- Installation of state-of-the-art livestreaming equipment.



TOUCHLESS ACCESSIBLE DOORS


CHAMBER TASK LIGHTING UPGRADES



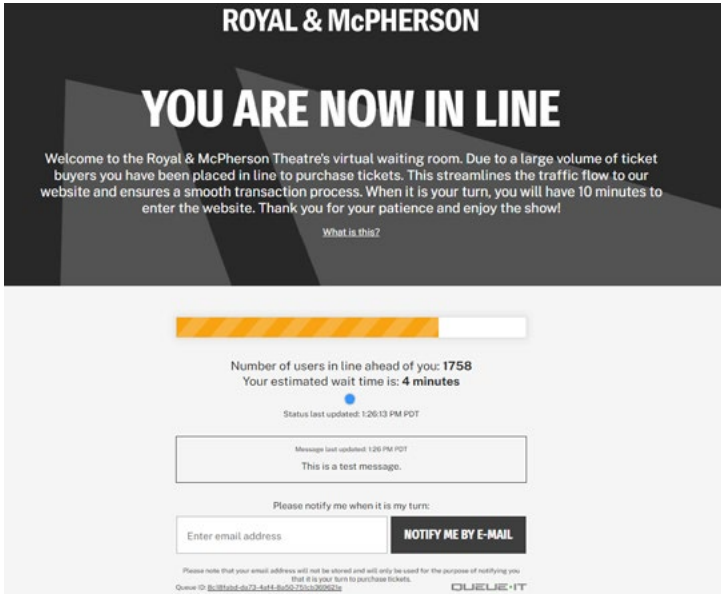
LIVESTREAMING EQUIPMENT

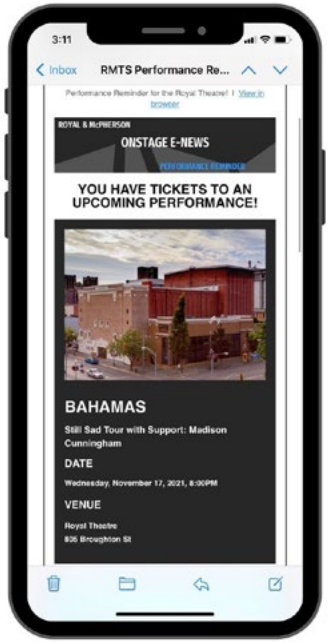
CAPITAL FUNDS: **Capital project funds to maintain and upgrade the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse cannot be used for operational needs and are held and maintained by the Capital Regional District. RMTS also contributes to capital projects for the theatres, supplementing them through earned revenue.**

TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES

NEW WEBSITE SUCCESFULLY LAUNCHES IN MARCH

The goal of the project was to implement a new and flexible content management system with shared session capabilities with an updated and streamlined purchase path. We partnered with Adage Technologies and Tessitura to accomplish our goals and the resulting site is exactly what we were looking for. The website is very flexible and allows us to update content quickly and visually, which has been a real bonus during the pandemic! Additionally, we have been able to offer digital content behind a paywall, streamlined high volume on sales with our new waiting room partner Queue-It, mobile ticket delivery and online subscription sales. The web team has been thrilled with the new technology and the flexibility that the content management system has to offer.





LIVESTREAMING EQUIPMENT

The RMTS received funding from the Province of B.C.and B.C. Arts Council through their Arts Infrastructure Program to acquire state of the art streaming equipment and specialized lighting for the McPherson Playhouse. This valuable engagement tool allows clients to broadcast and record performances, creating a new opportunity for them to enhance the patron experience by offering virtual streaming content on their digital platforms.



CUSTOMER PERFORMANCE REMINDERS

The RMTS introduced pre-show performance reminder emails in order to effectively communicate directly with audiences the essential information prior to attending the theatres, highlighting as much detail as possible in advance to ensure patrons get the most out of their visit to the theatres.

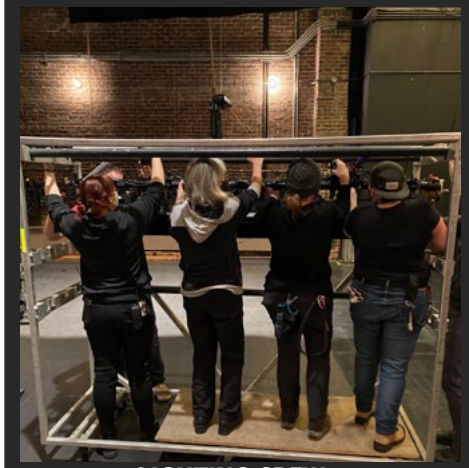
REOPENING THE THEATRES

PLANNING FOR THE REOPENING OF THE THEATRES BEGAN IN THE SUMMER OF 2021

From the end of March 2020 until the fall of 2021, six full-time employees were laid off and over 170 casual employees remained unscheduled to work due to the forced closure of the theatres by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, by June 2021, reopening planning was underway and operations were resuming in each department.

2021 began with our team of 14 theatre professionals, however, by the end of the year staff were regularly being recalled and hired, raising RMTS staff levels to 18 full-time and 90 casual employees.

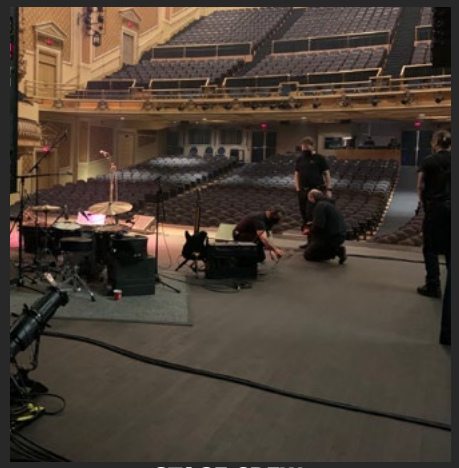
WELCOMING STAFF BACK



LIGHTING CREW



USHERS



STAGE CREW



BARTENDERS

TOTAL EMPLOYMENT INCOME:

2018	2019	2020	2021
$2,351,000	$2,494,000	$1,537,000	$1,206,000

LIVE PERFORMANCES RETURN

WELCOMING THE COMMUNITY BACK

Theatre bookings were filling up for the fall of 2021 and at long last our box office was able to reopen in June. Shows were regularly going on sale and reopening planning dominated the summer months. We were cautiously optimistic about the return of live entertainment in the fall of 2021 after 19 months of cancellations, postponements and rescheduling performances.

Health and safety was our top priority during this process. With regularly changing provincial mandates around event gatherings amid an enduring pandemic, we recognized that it would be imperative for us to directly communicate with staff, clients and audiences the essential information needed to safely return to the theatres by providing as much detail as possible in advance about current venue protocols.

Finally, on October 25, 2021, the day arrived when the province completely lifted capacity restrictions for venues. Two weeks later, on November 5, 2021, we officially reopened the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse to full capacity. The stage and theatre doors reopened, the curtains were raised, and the audiences returned. In the final two months of 2021, we welcomed over 21,000 audience members to 33 different events, and ended the year with over 90 recalled and newly hired employees.

Although we were only able to operate at full capacity for six weeks until we were once again restricted to a 50% capacity on December 22, 2021, we certainly managed to stage a lot of arts and entertainment during that time.



AUDIENCE ARRIVING AT THE MCPHERSON



AUDIENCE AT THE ROYAL | VICTORIA MUSIC SCENE



AUDIENCE ARRIVING AT THE ROYAL

OPERATING HIGHLIGHTS

In 2021, the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse housed a variety of events. At the Royal, the Victoria Symphony had four recording sessions and Pacific Opera Victoria rehearsed and filmed a performance on stage. Bones of Crows film shoot took place, as did the Super Fan film screening. At the McPherson, a weeklong violin workshop was held and the Downtown Victoria Business Association hosted four receptions in the lobby during Lights of Wonder in Centennial Square. Finally, in partnership with Dance Victoria, a virtual Nutcracker was hosted through our website and was streamed in 1000 households in December.

ROYAL THEATRE: 19 PERFORMANCES

PIGS: Canada's Pink Floyd, City and Colour, Bahamas, Eddie Izzard, Ron James, Canada's Best Karate, Naden Band Christmas Concert, USS, Jon and Roy Holiday Special, Victoria Symphony's Christmas Pops, The Tenors, O Christmas Tea, Ballet Victoria's The Gift



BAHAMAS



NADEN BAND CHRISTMAS CONCERT



THE TENORS



USS

MCPHERSON PLAYHOUSE: 9 PERFORMANCES

Lunch at Allen's, Ocie Elliott, Mark Atkinson Trio and Michael Kaeshammer, Alex Cuba, Cowboy Junkies, Cat and Nat, Home for the Holidays, The Wonderheads



LUNCH AT ALLEN'S



OCIE ELLIOTT | PHOTO: DARREN HO MEDIA



THE WONDERHEADS



ALEX CUBA

SUPPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY



VICTORIA FOUNDATION

The Victoria Foundation generously granted the RMTS $30,000 from their Community Recovery Program in the summer of 2021, financially contributing to our general operating funds in response to the social and economic impacts COVID-19 has had on our organization. This grant has been an instrumental support to the society by helping us retain staff to manage the Society and theatres; continue with the operations and maintenance of these valuable historic venues; maintain ongoing services and support to the local arts community; and proceed with planned projects vital to ensuring a relatively quick and effective recovery.

VICTORIA FOUNDATION

JÄGERMEISTER CANADA AND THE CANADIAN LIVE MUSIC ASSOCIATION RELIEF FUND

In partnership with the Canadian Live Music Association, the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse each received a $1,000 *Jägermeister x #ForTheLoveOfLIVE* relief grant given to live music venues heavily impacted by COVID-19 restrictions who faced a long road to recovery.

THANK YOU, SUPPORTERS!

The Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse play a vital role in the arts and culture industry in our region. The support we have received from the community has allowed us to take care of these important historic venues during the global pandemic that brought such devastation to the live performing arts industry. The collaborative partnership between venues, clients, performers and audiences means that supporting your local theatres in turn supports the ecosystem of the arts, culture and entertainment community within your region.

LOCAL PRESENTERS

Proudly supporting local organizations, the Royal and McPherson Theatres Society facilitates and prioritizes the use of the Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse for the following non-profit groups. To learn more about each of these organizations and how they enrich the cultural life of the community, please use the image links below!

Allegro
Ballet Victoria
bostondance
Canadian College of Performing Arts
Community Living Victoria
Dance Unlimited
Dance Victoria – The World's Best Dance
dansko studios
Kaleidoscope Theatre for Young People
Opera Pacific Opera Victoria
Passion & Performance Arts Inc.
Pearson College UWC
Raino Dance
Royal Roads University
The Salvation Army
Shawnigan Lake School
Shriners Variety Show
St. Michaels University School
VIATEC BETA
Victoria Academy of Ballet
Victoria Flamenco Festival
The Victoria Jazz Society
VOS celebrating 75 years – Musical Theatre Community Impact
Victoria Symphony – Christian Kluxen, Music Director
WonderHeads

As we embark on 2022, we look forward to welcoming audiences, clients, performers and our entire team of staff back into the theatres to showcase the best arts and entertainment has to offer. Our business is to bring people together, connecting artists and audiences to share the wonder of live performance!

the
ROYAL & McPHERSON
theatres society

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