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Clive Worsley Reflects on Two Years at Town Hall Theater

By Sophie Braccini



Clive Worsley taking a break at Chow Photo Sophie Braccini

Clive Worsley is celebrating the end of his second season as Artistic Director of the Town Hall Theater (THT) while preparing for his third year. "I have been very happy with the quality of the work on the main stage," says Worsley, "we've had challenges, ups and downs, such as the tough economy and the flood that damaged the theater. But in spite of it all we've been continuing to build a company and we've prepared a great mix for the coming season." Worsley and his team have also launched a serious fund raising effort to "Stop the Leak" in the theater's general fund that was caused by the flood.

When he was hired two years ago, Worsley knew that his challenge would be to improve the quality of productions while appealing to the Lamorinda community. He drew on his network of Bay Area directors, designers and actors to get the level of talent that Lafayette deserves, while keeping some of the familiar faces that have served the venue so well. "Programming in Lafayette you have to pay more attention to the people we are playing for," says Worsley, "There's not really an audience for experimental theater here as there would be in San Francisco; the audience needs to have some familiarity with the story or the author." Worsley believes that the public can be reassured there will be quality theater, but it takes something recognizable to get them in the door. For example last

year's Art, by Yasmina Reza, was an excellent production with actors that delivered superior theater, but the box office results were disappointing.

That does not mean that Worsley will be content to play it safe next season. "We are proposing a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde adaptation that is unique and very theatrical." says Worsley, "We will have Scrooge again because everyone likes it and we love to make people happy, then we will offer The Glass Menagerie, directed by Susannah Martin who also directed 'The Importance Of Being Earnest'; and finally, Twelfth Night."

There are many more programs and events that make THT a local treasure, which Worsley has been working on. "Last November, the director of the children's program resigned and I took it over." says Worsley, "We limited the number of kids so we could pay more attention to individual young actors, and we focused the teaching on skills and stage work." Worsley believes that theater should be part of the whole education; it teaches team work, appreciation of differences, self respect and builds confidence. "For me, working with children is part of serving the greater good," he adds.

Worsley also needs to raise much needed funds to "Stop the Leak." "We have to eliminate the debt that we contracted in the aftermath of the flood," says Worsley, "we need 1000 people to give \$100. This historical building is part of the heritage of Lafayette, it was built in 1914 and became a theater in 1944, it was used for town meeting and community dances. We want to keep it for the generations to come." For more information go to www.townhalltheatre.com

Before its fall season starts, THT will offer opportunities for summer entertainment, including a Comedy Series that THT will present with Crisis Hopkins. The kick-off sessions will see Crisis Hopkins hosting Johnny Steele and Richard Stockton as they present "Boomer Born" on July 23d. The next day, Crisis Hopkins will host SF-based comedy troupe PianoFight. On September 10th and 11th, comedian Will Durst will bring his internationally known political satire to Lafayette.

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