



## Ancaster's Community Musical Theatre Musical Theatre at its Finest

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Mayor Bratina and Members of Council  
Attention: Ms Rose Caterini, City Clerk  
City of Hamilton, 71 Main Street West  
Hamilton ON L8P 4Y5

June 2011

Dear Mayor Bratina and Members of Council

The Old Firehall Arts Centre, situated at 334 Wilson Street East in Ancaster, urgently requires facility expansion to meet the present and future needs of the community. Presently, the Old Firehall is home to Theatre Ancaster (TA) and The Hamilton All Star Jazz Band (HASJB). Both are not for profit organizations, and also registered charities.

The Old Firehall Arts Centre was created in 2004 and refurbished in the former old firehall by HASJB and TA with support from Murray Ferguson, our former councillor, Trillium Foundation grants and private financing by the two organizations. The City of Hamilton retains ownership of the building. The Arts Centre is now home to three jazz bands, a jazz choir, and a variety of musical theatre programs for all ages. It is a rehearsal and teaching space, but is not yet a successful venue for performance because of spatial limitations.

Meetings have been successfully completed with Councillor Lloyd Ferguson and city officials to explore possible expansion. A preliminary meeting with Bill Curran of Thier + Curran Architects has suggested a dynamic expansion to reconfigure the Old Firehall to be a community showcase while meeting heritage and bylaw requirements. The Trillium Foundation has informally indicated support for this venture.

This letter is the result of a formal motion from the Board of Directors asking the City of Hamilton to officially support a development project in partnership with Theatre Ancaster to expand and update the Old Firehall Arts Centre. Theatre Ancaster will take the lead on this project.

Sincerely,

Gord Conroy, President Theatre Ancaster



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### **Motion to Proceed**

**Motion from Theatre Ancaster. A motion to proceed with expansion plans affirmed at the Theatre Ancaster Annual meeting, June 23, 2011.**

**Moved by Al Croxall, Past President of Theatre Ancaster, and seconded by Ralf Hakenberg, Chair of the Creative Committee**

**that the Board of Directors send a letter of intent through Lloyd Ferguson for the proposed expansion of The Old Firehall Arts Centre to Mayor Bratina and Members of Council and to provide whatever specifics are required to move the project forward.**

**CARRIED unanimously.**

### **BACKGROUND OF THEATRE ANCASTER**

Theatre Ancaster's mandate is to provide outstanding, broadly based community musical and theatrical experiences for the citizens of Ancaster and the surrounding community. Last year, more than 7500 patrons enjoyed our main stage shows. Our shows have consistently received high praise from sponsors, audiences and critics.

Theatre Ancaster's purpose is

- to present excellent quality live musical theatre and related attractions;
- to organize support for such events; and
- promote a variety of musical, theatrical and educational experiences among the youth and adults of the community of Ancaster.

Theatre Ancaster was incorporated in 1997 after many years of its founders directing high school musicals as well as community shows under the auspices of the Ancaster Arts Council. In addition to Main Stage Theatrical Productions for the community, TA runs teaching, workshop and camp programs for youth and adults.

In particular, at the Old Firehall, TA runs programs for pre school children and elementary youth from 3 – 13 years, another program for teens, and also for adults and seniors. Some programs are age specific, others are intergenerational. The programs range from summer camps for 3 to 15 year old youth to weekly pre-teen and teen programs during the rest of the year.



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This year six weeks of Theatre Ancaster's youth summer camp programs for Jitterbugs, Juniors, Intermediates and Seniors filled 225 spots within four hours. Double the number wanted the program, and additional quality staff members were available to be hired. With expansion, we can meet the need.

### **Present Youth Programs for Theatre Ancaster at The Old Firehall Arts Centre**

- Summer Camps.....Jitterbugs.....ages 3 to 6.....90 children
- Summer Camps.....Jr, Int, Sr..... ages 7 – 15.....135 youth
- Weekly Programs...Stage 2 Saturdays...ages 7-9.....50 youth
- Weekly Program.....Stage 2: Junior Broadway...ages 10 - 13.....35 youth
- Weekly Program.....Stage 3: The Young Company...ages 14 to 19..20 youth

### **Adult Involvement in Mainstage Productions for Theatre Ancaster**

- 20-30 production leadership positions
- 15-20 musicians for a full Broadway show; 5-10 for a musical review
- 20-40 cast
- 75-100 backstage and front of house volunteers

### **BACKGROUND OF THE HAMILTON ALL STAR JAZZ BAND**

The Hamilton All Star Jazz Band is a world wide ambassador for Hamilton renowned throughout Canada and Europe. For more than 25 years, Dr. Russ Weil has mentored talented young musicians and trained them for a lifetime love of music. The best of the best enjoy careers in music and have won Juno Awards, while hundreds more play for families and friends in their many communities for pleasure and the love of music.

HASJB has been honoured with Gold awards for local and national competitions, scholarships to Boston and Banff, more accolades in the U.S in Ohio and New Hampshire, 4 trips to Europe to play at the prestigious Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, and other famous jazz festivals in Germany, Italy and France.

HASJB represented Canada at Vancouver's Expo and later at the opening of the Juno Beach Centre in Normandy in 2003 where they played a selection of memorable war songs.

Dr. Weil added the Junior Stars (ages 12-15) in 1995 and the Rising Stars (ages 15-19) in 1997, and now has a seamless organization unique in Canada that develops its own talent. In 2008,



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HASJB added a Jazz Choir. They have played for the Prime Minister, the Governor General, the Queen, and of course, Lincoln Alexander.

Hamilton All Star Jazz "Music and Youth Building a Better Community"

### **Present Youth Training Programs for The Hamilton All Star Bands at The Old Firehall**

- Junior Stars...20 members
- Rising Stars...20 members
- All Stars.....20 members
- Jazz Choir.....16 members

From its inception, HASJB has trained more than 600 musicians. It has toured nationally and internationally, and has represented with distinction the City of Hamilton and Canada.

### **LIST OF APPROVED NEEDS FOR OLD FIREHALL EXPANSION PLANS TOP PRIORITY (RANDOM ORDER)**

- **Costume facility space**...everything in one spot with work and storage space...1000 sq ft minimum ( The lower level of St. John's Parish Hall will not be a permanent solution)
- **Multi purpose studio classrooms** 2 for art, prop, studio work and teaching...each classroom 30'x 40' (1200 sq ft) plus 1 classroom required 20'x 30' (600 sq ft)
- **Construction shop (15' x 20') (300 sq ft) with set building area** backing onto it the size of the Ancaster High School stage (30' x 40' x 16' high) (1200 sq ft floor space) with loading doors to outside
- **Expanded performance space** to seat 150-200 (elimination of posts and use of existing stage for added seating)
- **Properly equipped theatre stage (app 15' x 30' x 16'high)** with wings, crossover, dedicated lighting and sound (two story height) with greenroom, dressing room, backstage areas that could double for other uses. Soundproofing for sliding doors, walls and ceilings.
- **Soundproof Rehearsal Space for HASJB** 30'x 40' with 16' ceiling with loading doors to outside
- **Storage Space for HASJB off the Jazz Rehearsal space**...10' x 20' (200 sq ft)
- **Office space** for HASJB and TA with internet capability and programs to meet audio-visual and set design needs.
- **Kitchen area set-up** as required for LCBO licensing



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- **Exhibition space in expanded lobby and foyer** for public meetings, teaching and seminars.
- **Sufficient storage for supplies, tables, chairs, sound and lighting equipment etc** adjacent to teaching, lobby, performance room and stage areas
- **Added Washroom facilities** as required.

**Note: All items received a 100% approval rating as top priorities for expansion with the exception of costume storage which received a 90% approval rating.**