



## **LONDON COMMUNITY PLAYERS**

### ***HISTORY OF LONDON COMMUNITY PLAYERS***

#### **1973**

London Little Theatre, considered by some "the last great amateur theatre group in Canada" presented its last amateur production. Its home, the Grand Theatre, was becoming run down and the group seemed to be anchored by the same few dozen regulars. With waning interest and declining membership, the decision was made to transform the theatre into a professional house under the aegis of Heinar Filler.

#### **1974**

September 23rd - Missing the opportunity to perform, members of several amateur theatre groups in the area including former members of L.L.T. amalgamated to fill the need for a place for Londoners to "play a part" as they put together live theatre presentations, making use of the considerable talents developed within the community.

A small, 99-seat theatre at 36 York Street was rented from Ted Haggis. The new group mounted dozens of productions in the new space, adopting the name London Community Players when denied permission to resurrect the London Little Theatre name.

#### **1974-1978**

Presenting 6 shows per annum including no fewer than 35 new Canadian productions, many written by L.C.P. members, London Community Players began to thrive.

#### **1978**

London Community Players incorporated under Letters Patent.

#### **1981**

L.C.P.'s bank balance healthy enough to permit purchase of the theatre at 36 York.

#### **1982**

Careful management and increasing public support of its productions permit L.C.P. to retire its mortgages and burn them in a ceremony at the theatre.

#### **1988**

Theatre at 36 York officially renamed the London Community Playhouse.

## **1990**

Increasing audience size leads to a crossroad. L.C.P. commissioned a redesign of the theatre to provide more up-to-date facilities and an expanded capacity which would accommodate approximately 200 patrons. When L.C.P. board member David Long suggested purchasing the then-vacant Park Theatre redesign plan was eventually abandoned. Some members expressed concern that the overhead involved in buying and running the Park/Palace might force the group to spend most of its energy serving the building rather than the public.

After lengthy and occasionally heated debate, a quorum of the membership approved purchase of the empty and decaying building at 710 Dundas Street.

## **1990/1991**

Purchase of the building and renovations to it estimated at one million dollars, but eventually ran over by a quarter-million dollars. In the end, the old cinema was reconditioned, with the addition of a stage and an orchestra pit (the latter partially funded by London Musical Theatre). The purchase and renovations were financed by Provincial and Municipal grants, Foundation, Corporate and individual donations, plus L.C.P. funds.

## **1991**

City of London designates the front entrance and lobby of the Palace Theatre as a Heritage Property amid hopes that the new theatre with all its bustle and creativity might signal a rebirth of the "village" just east of Adelaide. July 17th - The Park reverts to its original name, The Palace, and London Community Players reopens the theatre with a production of Allan Stratton's play "Bingo." The new theatre features 357 seats in 15 rows in fully air-conditioned building with accessibility for the handicapped. Work begins on conversion of the store on the West side of the theatre into office and meeting space, while the store on the East side will be transformed into a Rehearsal Hall.

## **1994**

L.C.P. hosts Western Ontario Drama League Festival at The Palace.

## **1995/1996**

L.C.P. patrons are offered reserved seating.

## **1997**

Air conditioning system replaced and upgraded. Grant received from Ontario Hydro to upgrade theatre lighting system. L.C.P.'s production of Horton Foote's play "The Trip to Bountiful" sweeps awards and wins Western Ontario Drama League 1997 Festival, picking up several additional awards at the Theatre Ontario Festival.

## **1998/1999**

To mark its 25th Anniversary Season, London Community Players restored the theatre façade as closely as possible to its original 1929 appearance.

## **2001**

Final touches put on new façade and research begun on upgrading remaining exterior and interior portions of theatre.