

## First Steering Committee Meeting

As reported by John Collins.

We met, and it was good. Yes folks, the first meeting of our nascent little group was held on Sunday. In attendance were:

John Collins (me)  
Nancy Kenny  
Sterling Lynch  
Geoff McBride  
Linda Culbert  
Mary Ellis

A small but dedicated contingent, just enough to spark a lively and productive discussion around such questions as "Who are we?" "What are we trying to do?" "What is the need?" "Who feels the need?" "What exists?" and many other similar issues. We spoke about our mission, we discussed where our mandate comes from, who we serve, etc.

Because our representation was light, we didn't make a lot of decisions, but did explore several areas. We determined that we need to do two things off the bat:

1. Put forward a draft mission statement to potential members (that is, potential member companies and individual members) to gain buy in. Frankly, folks, if what we choose to do isn't specifically serving the explicit needs of members, we should be doing something else. So we will first attempt to identify all potential members, then reach out for mission acceptance, buy-in, and willingness to participate. That last one's important. Our initiatives will require not just consumption by member companies, but participation by and input from them, on a very regular basis.
2. Conduct an audit/survey of member companies and members to get a handle on existing resources. By that we mean the people, places, and things members use to create theatre. Websites, audition/rehearsal spaces, processes and procedures, lists...we will be more explicit when it comes time, but we want to capture the current view of the world from as many eyes as we can in order to centralize that view for our entire membership.

Next steps? We need to determine member companies, and key individual members (folks perhaps not associated with a company explicitly, but a mover and/or shaker nonetheless). We need to establish one dedicated contact person for each member company. To that end, if you represent a professional or semi-professional theatrical company in the Ottawa region, stand up and be counted. Please email me directly at [jd.collins@rogers.com](mailto:jd.collins@rogers.com) indicating the company you represent, your position with the company, and your contact info. If you are an individual and have key insights or contributions, we want to count you too. Don't worry about \*not\* being counted, though...everyone in our community will be given an opportunity to join at a member level once we have a critical mass of information and resources to share.

There are lots and lots more things we need to do, and we've identified a bunch of them...but I'm not telling you. If there's one thing I know it's not bite too big. Let's start with figuring out who's playing at the top levels. We'll then communicate what we think we're supposed to be doing to that group, and take it from there.

We are also working on cleaning up this space, figuring out the best way to use it going forward, and lovely stuff like that. Sterling is working on that. If you're a PBWorks guru (Kris?), perhaps offer him a few tips.

Oh, and we'll have to construct a more formal Steering Committee over the next short while. At the moment, we're the folks who showed up, but I'd like to be a bit more proactive. It cannot (should not) contain more than 10 people, and a few of the folks who attended Sunday are probably feeling a bit attached. We need other suggestions/volunteers for members, keeping in mind that there are likely 5 or 6 available spots, and we want to populate the Committee with members who have influence, desire, and the ability to get things done, secure resources, make it happen. No watchers, and I'd really love to limit the cynics. :^)

Phew. Okay, do you remember what we need you to do? It's up there, under "Next steps."

## **Meeting #2**

After an extensive and helpful email discussion, the current members of the ad-hoc steering committee are meeting to discuss a number of issues raised in the course of that discussion.

## **Meeting Topic:**

- **The Steering Committee, Function & Purpose**

## **Attendees:**

- Sterling Lynch
- John Collins
- Nancy Kenny
- Mary Ellis

## **Time/Date/Location:**

7PM, Sunday, September 6, McMillan offices, Market

## **Agenda**

- What is the function / aim of this steering committee?
- Who do we serve?
- What needs are we serving?
- Who should be on it? How big should it be?
- Time commitment? Job description?
- To name or not to name?
- Uptake / Buy-in. Who have we contacted? Who have we not contacted?
- Feedback / thoughts on the workspace

## **Minutes/Notes**

- As a group in its infancy, but with a mandate that is intended to serve a broad audience, we felt it important to meet to ensure that we are on a road that will move toward meeting the needs identified in the Backyard Theatre Conference, the inciting event for the creation of our group. To that end, we:
  - Determined that our constituents are those in the business of creating professional theatre in the Ottawa region (including those that provide services to that group).

We confirmed our mandate (created at our first meeting): "*To assist in the growth of the professional theatre community in the Ottawa region*" and again resolved that our first priority (and first mission statement) toward that mandate would be to "*foster communication and resource sharing among the professional theatre companies and practitioners in the Ottawa region.*"

- Resolved to be inclusive of community theatres in company listings and performance schedules, while distinguishing such listings and performances as community-based.
- Resolved to work toward creating a resource that is accessible and useful to both our professional Anglophone and Francophone communities. While that doesn't mean a bilingual resource off the bat, it means including listings for French theatre (companies, performances, participants) in the region, and enabling the participants in the wiki community (everybody) to create alternate language versions of all content on the resource (French versions of English copy, and vice-versa).
- Finalized a structure and proposed makeup for our initial committees: a Steering Committee of 7 members, and one or more Advisory Committees. The initial Advisory Committee will be broad-based and non-specific, with open membership. From that, more specific ACs will no doubt spring. We also discussed membership on the Steering Committee, and resolved to finalize membership within the next few days. A final roster will be posted on this site.
- Settled on a name. Welcome to the **Ottawa Theatre Network**, folks.
- Finalized our initial communication to the world, and resolved to get it out to everybody in that world. The final text is included below. Feel free to copy it and paste it wherever you think it might make sense.

# Ottawa Professional Theatre Needs Your Help

## The Ottawa Theatre Network is Born

The recent Backyard Theatre Conference hosted by GCTC—professional theatre companies and participants coming together to discuss issues and needs—was a great success and fostered several initiatives. One of the most exciting is the birth of a new group intended to address some of the more pressing issues raised at that meeting: The Ottawa Theatre Network.

## Mission: Possible

The Ottawa Theatre Network has a simply stated (but perhaps not simply executed) mission:

*“To assist in the growth of the professional theatre community in the Ottawa region.”*

To make that mission more bite-sized, we have taken on as our first priority and set of tasks the following sub-mission:

- *“Foster communications and resource sharing among the professional theatre companies and practitioners in the Ottawa region.”*

We have follow-up sub-missions in mind once we get a good handle on this first one. But this first one will take all of our attention for a while.

## **So What Are We Doing?**

We are primarily collectors. We intend to aggregate content from (or identify and link to) existing resources and create a few new resources that will help folks find what and who they need to create and communicate about professional theatre in our region. That will include, but not be limited to:

- Web sites
- Blogs
- Newsletters
- People (artists, crew, volunteers, mentors)
- Companies and contacts
- Performance spaces
- Rehearsal spaces
- Costumes/Props resources
- Performance schedules
- Workshops/seminars
- Discussion forums
- Services forums

## **So What Can You Do?**

You need to get in the loop. For us to foster effective communications, we have to be sure everybody who needs to be is in the conversation. If you work in professional theatre in Ottawa, you have a quick task. Here is your simple, three-step process:

1. If you haven't already, go to <http://ottawatheatre.pbworks.com> and request membership.
2. Once you're in, add yourself as an individual (whether you are associated with a company or not) at this page: <http://ottawatheatre.pbworks.com/The-Ottawa-Theatre-Directory>
3. If you also administer a professional or semi-professional theatrical company in the Ottawa region, we'll ask you to visit another page and check your listing. Add yourself as contact person and include your contact info. Here's the page: <http://ottawatheatre.pbworks.com/Theatre-Companies-in-Ottawa>

That's it for now.

## **Then What?**

In the coming weeks, we will be reaching out to you to undertake an audit to determine resources that exist, and the value of those resources. We'll ask you where you rehearse, where you perform, where you get your props, and other questions like those that will give us the information we need to share with others in the community. We'll then start the systems and processes for information flow (auditions, performances, workshops, etc.), enabling us to keep our central resource up-to-date and relevant.

There are many pages on the PBWorks site that may apply to you. While you're there, have a look around. It's a "wiki" site (like [Wikipedia](#)), which means that its value is content from everybody, including you. If you see a page you can contribute to...contribute to it!

## **Don't Wait**

You'll forget. Go to those pages now, fill in your info, and we'll be in touch soon!

Thanks,

The Ottawa Theatre Network Steering Committee

p.s. If you'd like to get more involved right away -- if you feel you have resources or services that might help us communicate effectively by whatever means reasonable -- please get in contact with a member of the Steering Committee. We will, in the next short while, need help in the form of things. If you can help, please join the site and contact us. Your help will be greatly appreciated and it will be a great benefit to professional theatre in Ottawa.

# Action Items

- Distribute the initial communication ("Ottawa Professional Theatre Needs Your Help") as widely as possible to help ensure we are able to reach as many potential members as possible. Blogs, Facebook pages, email, noticeboards, etc.
- Encourage people to join. Let them know you're behind it, and it's important.
- Play on this site and offer suggestions for improvement. Or improve it yourself. It's a wiki, after all.

## Meeting #3

# Meeting Topic: The Path Ahead

## Attendees:

- John Collins
- Mary Ellis
- Patrick Gauthier
- Nancy Kenny
- Lisa L'Heureux
- Sterling Lynch
- Geoff McBride

## Time/Date/Location:

16:30, Sunday, September 20th, meet corner of Sussex and George outside Chapters, walk to McMillan Offices

## Agenda (proposed)

- Meet and greet new SC members
- Where we are at: totals, who from the community isn't signed up, communication channels we've overlooked.
- Momentum: ideas on how to encourage use of the workspace, on how to keep people excited about OTN
- Time-line for the future: set approximate goals.
- Finances: Who, how, where, when?
- Other issues / topics?

## Notes

- We identified communications channels we have yet not used.
- We need to communicate regularly with our members.
- We should create a branded communication piece.
- We should organize a social night (s) and / or fundraising event (s).
- We agreed PBworks site is not terribly user friendly (will look into alternatives)
- We need to buy URL(s) (including French equivalents)
- Discussed how we can broaden awareness in French community.

- Discussed / brainstormed how we can create value for our membership.
- Agreed we should set and announce a timeline, and clear benchmarks very soon.
- Patrick reported that the GCTC is “very gung ho” to help out.

## **Action Items**

- Buy URL(s) (JC)
- Create branded newsletter template (JC)
- Identify sites that can be used as inspiration for OTN (all)
- Investigate grant possibilities (Pat)
- Investigate French theatre contacts (Lisa)
- Investigate GCTC events upon which to piggyback our social / fundraising events (Pat)
- Poll members regarding direction of OTN (Sterling, All)
- Brainstorm ways to create value for membership (all)
- Set up a Steering Committee group for private comms (Sterling)

## Meeting #4

# Attendees:

- Patrick Gauthier
- Nancy Kenny
- Lisa L'Heureux
- Sterling Lynch
- Geoff McBride
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# Time/Date/Location:

8:30 AM, October 14th, 2009, GCTC Boardroom

# Discussed

- For the time being, due to limited resources, OTN communications will be in English primarily and include French when feasible. Our long-term goal is to be a bilingual.
- A survey will be prepared and distributed to membership and other Ottawa Theatre stakeholders. The aim of the survey is to determine which services are most in demand.
- In addition to the Workspace, OTN will launch a temporary wordpress site to facilitate communication with our membership and the wider community.
- The SC is committed to launching a polished and user-friendly website which will “... assist in the growth of the professional theatre community in the Ottawa region” by fostering “... communications and resource sharing among the professional theatre companies and practitioners in the Ottawa region.” The choice of services to be provided on the site and the OTN will be guided by survey.
- The steering committee will continue to function in an ad hoc fashion, with members taking on duties and responsibilities as required.
- Pat takes on the general duties of treasurer.
- We will organize a casual "meet and great" social event to coincide with our effort to survey the membership.
- Still no further word on the Arts Summit

# Action Items

- Nancy and Geoff will design and draft survey and it will be distributed no later than October 30th.
- Sterling will buy URLs, launch Wordpress site, and coordinate next phase of communications.
- Patrick to investigate possible venue for event
- Sterling will contact Dewar's office, once Wordpress site is up and running.

## **Meeting #5**

### **Attendees:**

- John Collins
- Ann Connors
- Mary Ellis
- Lisa L'Heureux
- Sterling Lynch
- Geoff McBride

### **Time/Date/Location:**

1:30PM, November 7th, 2009, Chez Connor

### **Agenda**

- Meet and greet.
- Update on blog, Twitter, Facebook, and Aviva Fund Campaign
- Survey / distribution strategy / social event.
- fund / grants
- Steering Committee membership / time commitment
- Logos
- Outreach / Advisory Committee / Community Buy-In

### **Discussed**

- Ann expressed her support for OTN and intends to help as much as her schedule and responsibilities at Magnetic North permit.
- As of noon, Nov. 7th, 2009, our workspace has 173 members, the blog received 952 page views, our Facebook group has 168 members, and our Twitter account has 48 followers and is included on 4 lists. Our Aviva funding proposal had 485 votes, has received support locally, nationally, and internationally and – most notably -- was endorsed by the Ottawa Citizen editorial board in a Nov. 6th Op-Ed piece.

- As of noon, Nov. 7th, 2009, 48 on-line surveys had been completed. It is decided to target up-coming theatre events with hardcopy version of the survey and URL information for the on-line survey. A simple meet and greet survey night will be organized at a pub.
- Research on grants indicates that funding agencies are unlikely to fund an organization like OTN, generally-speaking, however, specific projects within OTN's mandate are very likely to receive funding if i) a strong application is written ii) a wide and representative sample of Ottawa theatre companies explicitly support our efforts (e.g. with letters of support).
- It is decided that by the time of our next meeting we will be in a position to set a regular meeting date and have a clear idea how much time steering Committee members will be expected to contribute.
- It is agreed a greater effort must be made to involve as many stakeholder and theatre companies as possible. It is agreed that a formal Advisory Committee should be launched (members would be expected to meet four times a year and be available for ad hoc consultation).
- A formal outreach program will be launched in the New Year, after determining which project or projects -- based on our analysis of the survey results -- we will pursue. Canada Council funding will be pursued.
- The preferred OTN logo is identified. Suggestions for improvements flagged.

## Action Items

- John will coordinate the creation of a branded email template to be used for future communications to membership and the final refinements on OTN logo.
- Ann will identify people to contact at organizations with similar mandates in other cities.

- Lisa and Sterling will contact event organizers about survey distribution.
- Sterling will find a meeting place for social to be held first week of December.
- All: brainstorm on who outside the theatre community could be included on the advisory committee
- All: be in a position to set a regular meeting data and assess availability for steering committee duties.

## **Meeting #6**

### **Attendees:**

- Patrick Gauthier
- Nancy Kenny
- Lisa L'Heureux
- Sterling Lynch
- Geoff McBride

### **Time/Date/Location:**

730PM, December 15th, 2009, Chez McBride

### **Agenda**

- Survey Update
- Timeline and priorities for New Year
- Email Newsletter, Progress

### **Discussed**

- 65 on-line surveys complete. 1 paper survey complete. Survey to close December 23rd.
- Sterling showed John's mock-up of OTN's branded email newsletter. All agree: looks fabulous. Mailchimp looks like an ideal (and free) service.
- Plans and priorities discussed; plan outlined (see below).

### **Action Items**

- Close survey, analyze results, publish analysis.
- Identify a precise and grant-worthy communications-focused project.

- Determine responsibilities / time commitment required for steering committee. Reevaluate organizational structure.
- Identify and apply for a grant(s)
- Launch outreach.
- Launch project by Jan / Feb.

## Meeting #7

# Attendees:

- Lisa L'Heureux
- Sterling Lynch
- Geoff McBride

# Time/Date/Location:

730PM, Feb 17th 2010, Chez McBride

# Agenda

- Given the survey results, what are we going to do?
- Who is going to do it?
- How?
- When?

# Discussed

- Based on the survey results, there are two broad needs the OTN can serve: Internal Communications (amongst practitioners) and External communications (audience development).
- OTN will continue to facilitate internal communications with its i) email newsletter ii) blog iii) wiki. The main communications tool will be the newsletter. It will eventually include: audition notices, job postings, volunteer opportunities, calendar of events.

- For external communications, the OTN will produce a quarterly calendar of events modeled on the Mayfair theatre's newsletter / circular and distribute it in the Ottawa area. There will also be a corresponding website.
- After determining relevant costs and creating a mock-up, we will seek funding and stakeholder support for the quarterly calendar. We intend to secure enough funding to pay someone to oversee the production and distribution of the calendar and manage the newsletter.

## **Action Items**

- The Steering Committee will be reduced to five persons, specific titles, duties, and responsibilities will be assigned.
- A wider advisory board will be struck.
- Geoff will meet with Mayfair contact to determine numbers.
- Once we have the numbers, we will meet with stakeholders & and talk with funding agencies.
- Our next newsletter will formally announce the Quarterly project.