

After great 2009, Festival Players look to 2010

SPECIAL TO THE COUNTY WEEKLY NEWS

The dust has yet to settle on Festival Players of Prince Edward County's 2009 Season and already Artistic Director Sarah Phillips has her eyes on next year. But not before reflecting on the successes – critical and financial – of the past few months.

"The buzz this season was extraordinary. Friends telling friends about our work is always the best way to get bums in seats. But this year we had satisfied customers going to extraordinary lengths to spread their excitement about our shows. I'm sure it made a huge difference."

While the final numbers are still being tallied, it's clear that ticket sales were up this year over last. This is especially gratifying in a year where the economic downturn and poor weather wreaked havoc with ticket sales across the entertainment sector.

"The last week of the season always seems to have the largest audiences," says Phillips. "We're not sure if it's a cumulative effect of the marketing or word of mouth or if people who have put off seeing one of our shows realize it's their last chance for another year. Whatever the reason, the final week of Colours in the Storm was a total sell out. It was great to go out with a bang!"

It's an excellent finish for a season that almost didn't happen save two large last-minute donations and the determination and vision of Festival Players' Board of Directors.

"They went out on a limb for us, and I know they couldn't be more pleased with the calibre of work we produced and the audience

response." says Phillips. "However, for all the positive energy we've generated, it's still going to come down to dollars and cents. Work on the next season has already begun. Grant writing, play selection, venue negotiations and so on. Work needs to begin now so that we can continue providing the County with the professional theatre that they are so obviously eager to see. We're still in debt, however, and face a long stretch of time before we begin generating ticket sales again."

To that end, Festival Players is hosting a Square Dance and Pig Roast fundraiser on Friday, September 25, 2009. Mark Henry and Lynne Ellis, owners of Fields on West Lake where the theatre company's admin offices are hosted, have donated the use of their barn for the event. Music will be provided by the riotously entertaining old-time string duo Sheesham and Lotus. The Kingston-based team will also call the square dances, taking beginners and experts alike step by step through the routines. No experience required.

Festival Players staff is contacting local businesses to obtain donated food items to help offset the cost of the event. As a registered charity, they are able to provide charitable tax receipts for in-kind donations of corn, vegetables, roasting equipment, and even for the pig in question. Please contact Anne at 613-399-5677 for details.

Tickets for the event can be purchased by calling Festival Players admin office at 613-399-5677 or emailing info@festivalplayers.ca. Complete event information is available on the website at www.festivalplayers.ca