



MEDIA RELEASE

August 18, 2017

ONSTAGE AND BACKSTAGE THEATRE PROFESSIONALS SWAP PERSPECTIVES DURING STRATFORD-BASED TRAINING

Stratford, Ontario – Giving young theatre professionals a more complete view of what it takes to mount an effective and compelling theatre production was the goal of a two-week “Onstage meets Backstage” training initiative wrapping up in Stratford today. Stratford’s Off the Wall theatre production group and Theatre Ontario’s summer training program joined forces to give their students insights about the “other side” of the theatre.

Funding from both the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) and RT04 (Ontario’s regional tourism funder), allowed the two organizations to learn under the same roof for two weeks in Stratford’s historic Factory 163. Friday was the last day of the program for the summer, and so local MPP Randy Pettapiece and Rena Spevack Orr, Chair of OTF’s local Grant Review Team were on hand to officially congratulate Off the Wall on the work it’s doing with the \$14,100 Seed grant it received from OTF to provide youth with mentorship opportunities.

“Theatre and the arts are so important to our area,” said Perth-Wellington MPP Randy Pettapiece. “I want to congratulate Off the Wall for their outstanding work, and I’m very pleased that their leadership in the theatre production arts is being recognized. This initiative is great news for the next generation of theatre and youth in our community.”

While both theatre organizations offered their standard summer programming, students had opportunities to look at theatre from a different angle. They also tapped into what’s happening on the various stages of the Stratford Festival and met with a variety of experts from the broader theatre community.

“What happens onstage and backstage are interdependent and merge to create quality theatre experiences for our patrons,” said Bruce Pitkin, Theatre Ontario’s Executive Director. “This next generation of emerging actors, playwrights and directors need to understand and integrate onstage and backstage considerations as they develop their plays and performances.”

“It has been so exciting to watch these artists share and explore together,” said Off the Wall, Stratford Artists Alliance board chair, Michele Boniface “We are hoping that this exchange will become an annual occurrence and a catalyst for ongoing collaborations between those who tread the boards and the people who set the stage.”

“Prior to last week I was very nervous about directing my first community theatre production, now I am counting down the days until auditions,” said Scott Fitzgerald, a Theatre Ontario participant. “In addition to learning with some other beginning directors, we also had opportunities to come together with Off the Wall and learn with them. Being able to hear them speak to the back stage experiences provided me with even more insight as to what goes into the production of a play.”

By combining Off the Wall’s extensive workshops in all things behind-the-scenes – set assembly and decoration, prop building and mask making – with Theatre Ontario’s immersive acting, directing and playwriting courses, the two organizations hope to create the foundation for a hub for theatre practice in Ontario. Off the Wall and Theatre Ontario participants, and instructors, have shared their daily activities and viewpoints each day via various social media channels.

As an agency of the Government of Ontario, the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is one of Canada’s largest granting foundations. With a budget of over \$136 million, OTF awards grants to some 1,000 projects every year to build healthy and vibrant Ontario communities. www.otf.ca

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Bruce Pitkin, Executive Director
Theatre Ontario
416-408-4556 x 11
bruce@theatreontario.org

Michele Boniface, Chair
Off The Wall Stratford Artists Alliance
(519) 275-2554
admin@stratfordoffthewall.com

Websites:

<http://www.theatreontario.org/>
<http://theatreontario.blogspot.ca/>
<https://www.stratfordoffthewall.com/>

Facebook:

[Off the Wall, Stratford Artists Alliance](#)
[Theatre Ontario](#)

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Offthewallstrat
Theatre_ontario

Off The Wall is located at Factory163 at 163 King street, Stratford , Ontario, Canada
For general inquires e-mail info@stratfordoffthewall.com or by phone 519-275-2554