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March 2013
They're making big plans for the Rosendale Theatre

Members of the Rosendale Theatre Collective gathered recently in front of the Main Street theater. (Photo submitted)

By ANN GIBBONS

Posted: 02/04/11, 7:12 PM EST | Updated: on 02/04/2011

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LIKE EVERYONE else in the Hudson Valley, members of the Rosendale Theatre Collective are waiting for spring. They're anticipating the vernal equinox, however, not just for spring cleaning, but to make some significant changes to the historic building they purchased not quite two years ago.

"Our primary focus since we purchased the former Rosendale Theatre in late 2009 has been operational," said f-stop fitzgerald, former board president who has been executive director for six months.

Fitzgerald said he stepped down as president to take over running the theater on a daily basis because, "Someone needed to dig in and get the business side done." He said once the news surged through the local community that the historic building was to be sold and used as a warehouse, the Rosendale Theatre Collective formed almost spontaneously.

"It was impossible to imagine the theater missing from Main Street. We asked the owner, the Cacchio family, to give us two weeks," fitzgerald recalled. Within two weeks, the collective had raised $20,000 for a down payment and was able to make a better offer, he said.
Although there are approximately 30-40 members of the collective, Fitzgerald said 10 to 12 people "are here every day doing something that needs to be done."

Since the purchase, the collective has focused on operational improvements that, while not discernible, have vastly improved the movie-going experience.

Fitzgerald said the collective installed a digital projector and a server, with a second one planned, to provide better access to digital programming. He said the collective also installed an eight-speaker surround sound system, so that audiences have both a better picture and better sound when they watch a film.

Fitzgerald said the Reifzen family had made a substantial donation to aid in the purchase of the digital projector and Markertek, a major audio distributor in Saugerties, made a similarly generous donation to offset the cost of the speaker system.

He said that PRG of Highland, made two donations - one to purchase a stage thrust; the second, to purchase a retractable screen.

"The retractable screen is a real asset," Fitzgerald said. "It opens the stage to about 20 feet and will allow us to bring in live theater and bands. We want to bring in more live performances."

The collective recently received a $750 grant from the Ulster County Community Foundation and a $200 donation from the Jewish Federation of Ulster County that have allowed the organization to purchase a modest phone system and a dependable answering machine.

Fitzgerald said the collective is appreciative of donations from the community, noting that they have enabled the organization to improve its efficiency, as well as its digital offerings.

"We're working to improve the efficiency of our operation and plan to invest in another server as well as an uninterruptible power supply that will help us work more efficiently," he said.

The digital improvements have allowed the collective to expand its offerings, including monthly opera from LaScala. Upcoming is a planned performance of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre production of "Hamlet."

But, the collective is remaining faithful to the theater's roots as a movie house. Now showing is "Social Network," and upcoming are "The Fighter" and "True Grit," each of which has been nominated for an Oscar, as well as a selection of shorts that have also been nominated.

"We're working aggressively to show as many Academy Award and Screen Actors Guild-nominated films as we can," Fitzgerald said. Although the theater will continue to show indie and foreign films and documentaries, he said the collective is also planning to show more unique mainstream films.

Although the theater is usually dark on Tuesday, Fitzgerald said the collective has been encouraging community access. He said the Rosendale and Marlinton environmental commissions each presented films, "Gasland" and "Flow," with a discussion following.

"We are interested in sponsoring events with conversation," as well as presenting children's programs, Fitzgerald said.

Now, about those spring projects that are more than dusting the furniture.

"We're going to move the ticket booth outside, so people can buy their tickets on the street during the warmer months," Fitzgerald said.

He said the box office would be moved into the lobby and converted into a concession stand. The collective plans to repaint the lobby.

Like other members of the Rosendale Theatre Collective, board president Brian Mathews, vice president of residential loans for Ulster Savings Bank in Kingston, said the theater was part of his life growing up.

"I grew up and loved the theater. I could not imagine life in Rosendale without it," Mathews said. Like Fitzgerald, he said the collective formed quickly, first as an ad hoc group, then later solidified as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with bylaws, as word spread of the theater's impending sale.

"It was just the germ of an idea, at first," Mathews said. "Then, the efforts of a lot of people pulling resources together" made it happen.

Mathews said the all-volunteer collective is really active by necessity. "Most of the board members also head committees that function daily," he said, explaining that whenever the theater is open a shift leader must be in charge of the volunteers, who may come to take tickets, make popcorn and
"We do operate like a business," Mathews said, noting that the collective has bylaws to observe and has established protocols to operate the theater. Interviewed while Kingston was nearly paralyzed by the mid-week snowstorm, Mathews said the theater would open as scheduled to show "Social Network." "This is show biz and the show must go on," he said, laughing.

Mathews said the board's 2011 goals are to solidify its financial position and increase memberships. He said the capital improvements would be prioritized and completed in phases.

"The building has a lot of charm, including the single screen, which is unusual in today's theaters," Mathews said. He said moving the ticket booth outside was "very retro and very in."

Mathews said the board also would continue to fundraise to retire the debt.

Upcoming: "Made in Dagenham" begins Friday. Based on a true story, "Made in Dagenham," directed by Nigel Cole, portrays a decisive moment when the fight for equal rights and pay was led - unexpectedly - by ordinary working-class women with one foot in the kitchen, one foot on the factory floor, and ears glued to the pop music coming over the radio and telly from far-off London (19 kilometers and a world away).

On Saturday, the theater will be closed for the 8 p.m. presentation of Actors & Writers' "Cream of Shorts," a short film retrospective. In celebration of Actors & Writers' 20th year, the company will present "Cream of Shorts," an evening of vintage gems from its annual Short Play Festivals. Culled from the A&W archives, the selection will feature work by company playwrights Katherine Burger, Mark Chmiel, Sarah Chodoff, Mary Gallagher, Mikhail Horowitz, Adam LeCevre, Nicole Quinn, Laura Shaine, Nina Shengold and David Smilow.


On Feb. 26, at 8 p.m., the Rosendale Theatre will present Michael Monasterio's gospel play, "Sam Cooke Where You Been Baby?"

This show is presented as a fundraiser for Passing the Torch Through the Arts (www.passingthetorchthrougharts.com/index.html), a program dedicated to educating at-risk youth and inspiring social change through theater and the arts.

"Sam Cooke Where You Been Baby?" is a rock 'n' roll/gospel musical based on the short life of the pop singer Sam Cooke, who fused the two traditions into a new sound of soul music. The play is written by Michael Monasterio, who also stars as Cooke in the play. Tickets are $20 at the door and $18 in advance. Students ages 21 and under are admitted free with an accompanying adult.

Further information on the Rosendale Theatre Collective may be obtained by visiting the website at www.rosendaletheatre.org.

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Recommended by
Rosendale Theater group gets $175,000 for renovations

The sign for the Rosendale Theater on Main Street in Rosendale.

By WILLIAM J. KEMBLE

Posted: 03/01/11, 7:38 PM EST | Updated: on 03/01/2011

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ROSENDALE -- Members of the Rosendale Theater Collective on Monday announced they have been approved for a $175,000 state Dormitory Authority grant intended to help fund renovations at the collective's Main Street performing arts center.

The funding is scheduled to be discussed 6:30 p.m. Friday during a pre-reading event at the Big Cheese restaurant next to the theater and comes less than a year after the facility was purchased by a group interested in saving the building.

"We've been spending a lot of time in the last six months learning how to run it all," collective Executive Director Rich "F-Stop" Minisalli said.

"We've got kind of a three-stage plan over about three years," he said. "Those repairs look like they're around the $250,000 mark. So this grant gets us a whole lot closer to accomplishing the things that we want to do."
Collective members credited state Assemblyman Kevin Cahill, D-Kingston, with supporting the application for grant funding.

"The Rosendale Theater holds a special place in the hearts of many of us in this community," Cahill said. "The hard work and tenacity of members of the RTC made our efforts to secure this grant all the more possible. The economic impact of this anchor property to the village and the surrounding communities cannot be overstated. Art is good business."

The event Friday will feature a reading of the screenplay "He Isn't Me," written by Philip Dorling and Ron Nyswander, and is rated R for profanity and sexual situations. Parts will be read by Jason Downs, Turhan Caylak, David Smilow, Adam LeFevre, Nicole Quinn, and Sophia Raab Downs.

Fitzgerald said the collective is developing a schedule for the 275-seat theater that seeks to balance fundraising, professional endeavors, and community development.

"We're setting aside Tuesday nights, which is when the theater is normally closed, for some kind of community events," he said.

"Part of the difficulty is we get so many people and organizations interested it's hard to respond to them all," Fitzgerald said. "We're trying to find some sort of regularity and I think we're making strides in getting there."

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CULTURE

Rosendale Theater hosts open house to show off improvements, woo new volunteers

by FRANCES MARION PLATT on Mar 18, 2013 - 6:30 am

So much has been accomplished by the Rosendale Theatre Collective (RTC) in the past three years, since the community-based group bought out the beloved old tin-ceilinged moviehouse on Main Street, that it’s hard to fathom that it wasn’t all that long ago when rumors were flying that the Rosendale Theatre was in danger of going out of business. In an age when cozy single-screen neighborhood cinemas seem to be on the brink of extinction, the thought of Rosendale’s scrappy survivor being divided up into a glitzy multiplex or turned into condos horrified many local fans of the arts. But because enough of those concerned citizens put their heads, hands and pocketbooks together to do something about it, the story seems to be on its way to a happier ending.

The struggle to keep the Rosendale Theatre alive isn’t over yet, though. “Without volunteers we’re nothing,” says Ann Citron, who was named RTC’s managing director
in September 2012. “We want more people to be involved with the Theatre itself.” Engaging even more of the local community is the goal of an event planned for next Saturday, March 23, kicking off the multi-month celebration of the third anniversary of the purchase and operation of the Rosendale Theatre by the Collective.

The group originally began meeting in January of 2010, and by August of that year had raised enough funds to take over the Cacchio family’s mortgage on the building. Now the group is in the midst of a capital campaign to fund its ongoing renovation of the Theatre, and the Community Open House planned for the 23rd is intended to inform anyone and everyone who’s interested what the plans are for making the space even more attractive, comfortable, welcoming and useful.

If you haven’t visited the historic cinema recently, you’re in for a surprise. Not only was the outstanding $150,000 balance of the purchase price paid off last year, but, thanks largely to a $175,000 capital improvement grant obtained from New York State through Assembly member Kevin Cahill’s office, a great deal of renovation and modernization work has already been accomplished. That famous tin ceiling, whose old flaking paint sometimes used to fall in moviegoers’ laps, has been repainted “a beautiful flat black,” as Citron puts it. A digital projection system has been added to the Theatre’s vintage 35-millimeter projectors, along with Dolby surround sound.

The Theatre now has the capacity for live Internet conferencing through Skype, which makes it much easier to host celebrity question-and-answer sessions or remote panel discussions following a film. And hearing-assist devices with wireless headphones for the hearing-impaired will soon be purchased. “We just upgraded the electrical system,” says Citron. “We’re so happy, because we feel safer, and now we can provide more power for music and lighting.”

Tags: Rosendale, Rosendale Theatre, Rosendale Theatre Collective

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What do you think?
Rosendale Theatre, Rosendale: Renovation and Restoration in 2013

Also starring: The Rosendale Theatre in Rosendale

BY DAVID LEVINE

The Rosendale Theatre, in Rosendale, started life as the Rosendale Casino around the turn of the 20th century. "It was not a gambling casino though, it was more a vaudeville house," says Ann Citron, managing director of the theater.

Now a community-owned not-for-profit theater that includes local luminaries like Melissa Leo and Aidan Quinn on its board of advisors, the 270-seat venue shows movies and has expanded to include live theater and music. To that end, the building has been spruced up with "important cosmetic work," Citron says, including painting and temporary fixes to the box office and concession stand. Phase two will complete the box office, concession, and lobby; restore the façade; make the theater accessible to those with disabilities; renovate the bathrooms; and "beautify the outside, which really needs work," she says, including restoring nonfunctioning windows and adding a new marquee.

The theater is about one-third of the way toward its goal of raising $300,000, Citron says. "We have the architectural plans in place, and as soon as fund-raising reaches a certain point we will start."

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