



October, 2011

Ms. Joanne Wallace
230 Erie St
Stratford, ON N5A 2M8

Passing the Torch: A Special Appeal to Support New Growth at Shaw

Dear Ms. Wallace:

You will have guessed I'm writing to ask for a donation, but let me begin by thanking you for your ongoing Membership support and past gifts.

For all of us in the Ensemble, it is enormously moving to know of your gifts, and your steadfast belief in the work we do. Thank you!

Now, to the point. As you probably know, the Shaw Festival is much more than a summer theatre festival. Over the past 50 years you've helped us become a place unique in North America – one that champions the worlds of thought and language and ideas, and explores the questions at the root of our modern world.

Now, as we enter our second half-century, we are moving into a world dominated more by technology than by language and storytelling. We're also moving further away from those epic events explored in the plays of our mandate – two world wars, a great depression, industrialisation, the birth of Socialism and so on.



A new generation of artists and audiences needs you

This doesn't mean our work is becoming less relevant. If anything, I believe it is becoming more so! But what it does mean is young people and new audiences need extra help accessing the world we explore at The Shaw. Thus, in order to keep this work vibrant and alive, we must invest in reaching out to new artists and new audiences.

We have a three-fold plan to do this – but we need your help. By making a gift beyond your regular Membership support to our "Passing the Torch" appeal, you can invest in any of three key programming areas: Education and Outreach, New Play Development, or the production of plays we like to call "Rediscovered Gems."



Education and Outreach – opening new hearts and minds to the “World of Ideas”

Let me give you an example of how our Education and Outreach programming is already opening young hearts and minds. For many years I’ve been part of an internal project called “Manners of the Mandate,” created to teach young actors about the manners and social customs of our mandate period, 1856-1950.

Recently, when we began noticing high-school students arriving at our theatres without a real understanding of this time period or its social issues, we thought “why not offer them this program?”

So we did, and I must tell you – it’s been utterly transformative. I’ve seen gawky teenage boys discard their sneakers and ball caps to don top hats and tails, and newly gowned and bustled young ladies abandon Facebook and Twitter to engage in thoughtful conversation about politics and society.

As they learned about the world of formal manners – why they mattered then and matter still – their imaginations came alive, and they began to understand that consideration for one another is the bedrock of civil society. This, as you know, is the entry point for much of the work we explore at The Shaw.

You can help reach hundreds of eager students and teachers

Right now we can only offer this program to a small number of schools. But with your help we can expand, making this and other educational programs available to many eager students and teachers.

Your gift will also support a wide variety of other courses and workshops, such as our 10-week theatre-school program for grade-school and high-school students, summer theatre camp for teens and much more.

New plays and adaptations – life-blood of the future

You can also play a role in creating new work when you support New Play Development at The Shaw. This program does everything from commissioning new plays to bringing new works all the way from first reading to full production. It is an enormous commitment, but one we know will help reach out to new artists and audiences.

Without this program there would have been no *Maria Severa* – a brilliant new work that played to sold-out houses after being in development for four years. Nor would there have been a sparkling new adaptation of *The President*, such as last year’s smash hit, adapted by Toronto-based playwright Morwyn Brebner.

This program also funded Michael Healey’s new adaptation of Shaw’s *On the Rocks*, commissioned especially for our 50th season. This glorious new adaptation brought an otherwise difficult-to-produce story alive for both new audiences and old friends.

Our New Play Development program sits on a very firm foundation, but needs money to continue and grow. For instance, right now we could have many more new works in development, had we the funds to do so. Your gift will be a true investment in The Shaw’s future, and a legacy for new generations of artists and audiences.



Help rediscover worthy gems of the past

Finally, you may choose to support the programming strand that brings “rediscovered” plays back to life.

Without this program, the works of lost British playwright Harley Granville-Barker might have languished forever in a dusty archive. Instead, his entire canon was resurrected by The Shaw in the mid-1990s, and is now being revived all over the English-speaking world.

Similarly, exciting works by neglected female playwrights, such as Githa Sowerby and Lady Gregory, are now being unearthed by Artistic Director Jackie Maxwell, and celebrated by critics and audiences alike.

We believe this programming is vital to our growth, for it provides fresh ways to view the questions explored by our mandate. It also captures the entire spirit of the Shaw Festival itself; by choosing to champion these neglected but still powerful works, we re-commit ourselves to the intellectual vigour that gave birth to them in the first place.

Your help today can make these programs happen!

All these programs, vital as they are, cannot be sustained by ticket sales and Membership gifts alone. Without your help, they will never reach their full potential. Please make a gift today to keep The Shaw strong – and help new audiences engage with this work as eagerly as you do today.

You can make your gift easily by filling out and returning the enclosed form. Or, put your gift to work even more quickly by calling 1-800-511-7429, or donating online at shawfest.com/specialappeal.

Great art has always relied on visionary leaders, like you

If there’s anything I’ve learned in 23 seasons at Shaw, it’s this: great art – the kind that provokes thought and touches both mind and spirit – has always relied on visionary donors. And in this most collaborative of art forms, the part you play, dear friend, is just as important as any other.

Please give generously, so we can all play our parts for a new generation.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharry Flett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large loop at the end of the name.

Sharry Flett, Ensemble Member

PS: Please don't wait. Send your cheque today and help “pass the torch” to a new generation of artists and audiences!