

July 14, 2006

[Salutation] [First] [Second]
[Address 1]
[Address 2]
[City], [Province] [Code]

Dear [Salutation] [Second]:

“A small request, and yet of moment too”
- *Cymbeline, I:6*

Last summer I had an extraordinary experience.

I met a couple who told me they’d been coming to Stratford since the Festival’s very first season. As I lingered to chat with them, the gentleman drew from his pocket a rather dog-eared piece of paper. This he unfolded to reveal a meticulously-kept chart recording every production he and his wife had seen over the past 53 years.

I, of course, had seen many of the same shows, and it astonished me to find that together we recalled some of the very same moments – William Hutt’s powerful Richard II, Christopher Plummer’s magnificent Lear, Martha Henry’s searing performance as Mary in Long Day’s Journey into Night.

And it came to me that this is one of the most magical things about theatre. Even though it is ephemeral, it can provide sudden moments of illumination and wonder – moments that may stay with us forever.

This is why I am so passionate about the Stratford Festival. I believe we all yearn for these special moments, for they enlarge our sense of what it is to be human. And for me, as for this couple with their treasured record of each performance, many of these moments have taken place in the theatre of the Stratford Festival.

Great art has always depended on patronage

I know you have your own reasons for supporting the Festival – for coming back year after year, and for pledging annual financial help through our membership program as well.

In all likelihood, your reasons don’t change much from year to year. Perhaps you’ve brought young people here, and watched them fall under Shakespeare’s spell. Perhaps you love musicals, and appreciate the lavish sets and costumes we create each season.

Or perhaps you’ve experienced your own moments of clarity and grace, and have simply found that coming here refreshes your spirit, and challenges you to think about the things that matter most.

To tell you the truth, our reasons for needing your help don’t change much either. At the bottom line, producing the kind of theatre that delivers these life-changing moments can be prohibitively expensive.

But this is nothing new. Great art, the kind that endures, has always depended on patronage.

So each year we ask you to help – and then we ask you to help *more*. This isn’t easy, but we do it because we believe passionately in a central place for the arts in today’s society. Since you have supported us in the past, we think you probably feel the same way, and I’m writing to ask you to renew your support.

Please renew your commitment to supporting the Stratford Festival

Last year you were kind enough to support us at the [Level] level, with a gift of [Current gift amount]. It would be wonderful if you could increase your support this year by upgrading to the [Next level] level by making a gift of [amount].

Of course we count on your gift to help produce each season's playbill, but you also help with the vital unseen work that strengthens our very foundation – everything from training new actors and artisans to developing new education and outreach programs and expanding our theatrical repertoire.

By moving up to the [level] level, you will help us immeasurably with everything we do to keep the Stratford Festival alive and vibrant. And, of course, you will also receive some very attractive additional benefits.

Please call us today at 1-800-567-1600. You can also renew online at www.stratfordfestival.ca, or simply fill in the form below and send it back to us.

Celebrating our common humanity

I don't know if you feel the same way, but it seems to me our world is growing more complicated. I admit I've occasionally felt overwhelmed by the vast array of information, entertainment, electronic media and just plain "stuff" I'm expected to absorb each day.

And somehow, even though this new interconnected world is supposed to bring us together, I think it actually isolates us, leaving us hungry for true human connection.

Theatre is an antidote to this. An intensely communal art, it slices through this isolation by bringing artists and audiences together in a singular act of sharing. Those moments of magic – fleeting though they be – are magical precisely because we experience them *together*. By doing so we celebrate our common humanity.

You probably know this intuitively, as did my friends with their well-worn record of each performance seen at the Festival. They kept that record not just as a simple souvenir, but because those extraordinary moments of connection made them feel alive, and confirmed we are all part of something greater than the mere sum of our parts.

When you support the Festival you give us the resources we need to continue delivering these special moments. Please give generously.

Sincerely,

Richard Monette, CM. DHum, LLD
Artistic Director

PS: Call us today at 1-800-567-1600 or visit us at www.stratfordfestival.ca to find out about the extra special benefits you'll receive when you upgrade your membership.