

# Festival Players deserves support

Saturday nights attendance for the story about legendary Canadian artist Tom Thompson's last years - Colours in the Storm - could have been better - it should have been better. There were empty seats for a show in spite of rave reviews offered by everyone who has seen it.

We are sponsors of the Festival Players not because we can afford to support them but rather because we truly believe we can't afford not to support them.

Yes we have wonderful local theatre with committed and talented local thespians ...but so do so many communities across Ontario - Canada for that matter. And, if we are going to use theatre to attract tourists in the way Stratford, Blythe and the Shaw do it, we need to compete on their stage so to speak - to show theatre goes something that isn't available in their own towns and communities.

The Festival Theatre Players of Prince Edward do just that. Their shows are populated with the best the County has to offer coupled with the best Canada has to offer as well. Read the season's program.

Study the resumes of the talented actors, directors, staging crews and musicians, and you will realize we have college and university professors, television and major stage actors, even the Musical Director from the 90th Anniversary Vimy Ridge Memorial held in Vimy France in our midst!

John Burns a very fine theatre person in his own right, had a vision of bringing the very best of theatre to Prince Edward County years ago and for the past three seasons his vision has been delivered - this year in 3 distinctive Canadian plays.

Many people 'get' what Festival Players of Prince Edward are trying to do and what has been John's

vision. Look at the list of sponsors and benefactors who have put forward large sums of money and very significant resources to see each successive season unfold. We believe they know that a truly dynamic tourist based economy needs a broad variety of competitive first class attractions to compete with the very best tourist destinations in Canada.

Yes, we know we, arguably, already have the best beaches, the best unsullied rural landscapes, farm produce, 5 star restaurants, phenomenal artists and artisans and wines which are distinguishing themselves on the national and international stage...but we need a bit more of the best - to attract and retain tourists - as they are among our strongest hopes for a sustainable future in the County.

So it is The Festival Players, through sheer tenacity, some luck and a few key last minute pledges who have been able to deliver a powerfully competitive 2009 season - which is now down to its last show. But you still have the chance to see theatre good enough to cause a group of Torontonians (and we all know how jaded they are) who after seeing Saturday's show exclaimed amazement at the quality of the show they had just seen and incredulity that the place wasn't filled to the rafters. Festival Theatre Players have stepped up to the challenge - they have created theatre which meets the standards we need to compete.

We would like to think its our collective responsibility to simply get out and see the shows - come see what is possible when people dream large ambitious dreams - where the best is on stage conveniently, incredibly right here in Prince Edward County.

Call their box office today at 613.471.1991 while you still can.

**Mark Henry and Lynne Ellis**