

## A 'F-ABBA-lous' evening at the Village Playhouse Gala



By Mike Riley

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Tweed and Company held a Gala evening at the Bancroft Village Playhouse to raise money for maintenance and renovations on April 27. Featuring the talents of Canada's ABBAmania, the night also had a pass around dinner provided by the Granite and a live auction put on by Paul Switzer from Switzer Auctions. Overall, the gala evening raised about \$10,000 toward procuring new curtains for the Playhouse stage. Tim Porter, artistic director at Tweed and Company, told Bancroft This Week on April 25 that preparations were going great and they're lucky to have a playhouse committee who does most of the organizing for the gala. 'It's made up of eight local residents who love the playhouse. The Granite, the restaurant supplying the food, is geared up and ready to go. They're supplying meal and a specialty cocktail, and using their own servers and bartenders. We've got a ton of auction items that are impressive value. It's going to be a riveting auction for sure!' he says. Porter said people can expect to have a lot of fun all while supporting the playhouse. 'There will be a live auction, passed around cocktail dinner, delicious drinks, time to chat with community members, and then of course, the live auction will be awesome. There's stuff for family, groups of friends, everyone. And then, ABBAmania is going to be unreal. The whole night is going to be fantastic!' he says. Porter says they connected with ABBAmania again after trying to get them to come last year. 'We saw them at the Festivals and Events Ontario awards, where we were named one of the top 100 FEO in the province, and then we shot them a follow-up email and they were in!' he says. Rob Cressman with Major Talent Inc. says that Porter reached out to them through their website and they were able to come up with a mutually workable date. 'It's been a long time since we played Bancroft, but always great to be part of the theatre experience anywhere and it's an arts fundraiser, so all the better. This is the 50th anniversary of the release of Waterloo and our cast is thrilled to be able to do their part in keeping the Abba dream alive. The show is a lot of fun and we are looking forward to a great event,' he says. Porter says that in advance of the event, they wanted to keep some of the auction items a secret, but some of them include a week of family camp at a nearby camp that has a \$1,000 value, a money tree with approximately \$1,000 in gift cards, a couple of high-end pieces of art, a women's night out and a men's night in, just to name a few. Porter says people are so excited about the gala. 'We're lucky to have such an amazing and supportive community here in Bancroft and people love the playhouse. And who doesn't love ABBA?' he says. As of April 25, they'd sold around 120 tickets and they're hoping to raise over \$10,000 from the night's festivities, according to Porter. 'We aim to keep our tickets low and accessible, that's a huge priority for us. So, it's through events like this that let us do maintenance things, renovations, do the things that are on top of producing the incredible shows we produce. It really is for the playhouse itself,' he says. On the night of the gala, everyone was having an amazing time, conversing and having food and drinks provided by The Granite and enjoying the live auction hosted by Paul Switzer from Switzer Auctions. Overall, the auction raised \$3,000 toward the fundraising goal, according to Porter. Before ABBAmania hit the stage, Porter thanked everyone for

coming and thanked all the staff and volunteers for all their hard work getting the gala together and all they do year-round. Saying that Tweed & Co. took over operations of the Playhouse two years ago, he outlined why the gala and funds raised were so important. "It's been an incredible journey already with increased productions year after year with ticket sales doubling each season over the last two years. This community has constantly shown up for us since day one and we're so excited to continue growing, improving and celebrating with you. So, thank you again. This season, the Bancroft Village Playhouse will host more concerts, more theatre shows, more community events, more special events, more youth programs and more patrons than ever before, with all three of our summer shows selling faster than ever," he says. Porter told the audience that they were doing renovations to bring the Playhouse up to professional standards, and the next big-ticket item were the stage curtains, which would cost \$16,000. "So please, bid lots, drink lots and make donations. Tonight, celebrate all that the Bancroft Village Playhouse is, has been and can be," he says. The crowd was ecstatic as Canada's own ABBAmania hit the stage, singing and dancing along to all of ABBA's greatest hits, including "Waterloo," "Fernando," "Money, Money, Money," "Knowing Me, Knowing You" (for which they brought up audience member Alex to help out with the chorus) and for the big encore, "Dancing Queen." The rapturous applause was almost deafening and everyone obviously had a fantastic ABBA time. Porter told Bancroft This Week on April 29 that the evening was great and everything went amazingly well. "We think we raised around \$10,000. It was awesome," he says. "It went really well."