

The Grinder Standard

The monthly newsletter for the Members, Sponsors, Media Partners, Cultural Allies, Patrons and Friends of Grinder Productions and its affiliated companies

October 2008



- "It's a sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me, sock-it-to-me very very interesting cuckoo Laugh-in world!"

One short month, and so much has happened. Since September 1st we've closed the summer season (and paid all the bills!), opened and closed the hilarious **Rowan and Martin's Laugh-in** at the Fergus Grand Theatre, put not one, not two, but three shows into rehearsal, created another show from scratch to bring to the stage this December, revised the blog, website and other online locales to better represent the company, cleaned up the rehearsal hall, been introduced to the new box office software at the Grand, launched the Grinder Card, been approached to have another go at an improv workshop in Elora this winter, and been informed that our services will no longer be required for the Agatha Christie Revival Showcase.

That, and the world's greatest girlfriend and I may have just stumbled upon the best idea to ever hit this company....

Playing this month at Grinder

At the Elora Centre for the Arts:

"Art"

A comedy

By Yasmina Reza,
Translated by
Christopher Hampton
October 3rd, 8pm
October 4th, 2 & 8pm

A Bench in the Sun

A geriatric comedy

By Ron Clark

October 23rd and 24th
at , 8pm October 25th
at 2 & 8pm

Call 519-780-7593
for tickets, or get
them at the Elora
Centre for the Arts

At the Fergus Grand Theatre:

The Innocents

A thriller

By William Archibald,
based on *A turn of the screw*, by Henry James
October 23rd and 24th
at 8pm, October 25th
at 2pm and 8pm

Call 519-787-1981
for tickets

Introducing the Grinder Card

I'd like to introduce you to something new here at Grinder, a way for us to thank our most loyal, supportive patrons. It's called the Grinder Card.

The Grinder Card works just like a season ticket, but instead of being tied to a specific venue or series of shows it is tied only to you. Your \$100 card is good for ten admissions to any Grinder show, in any venue, at any time. You only come to the shows you want, when you want, where you want. Come alone and use one admission, or bring a date and use two, it's up to you.

The Grinder Card. It's fast, easy and even makes a great gift. Get yours by calling 519-780-7593, via e-mail at grinder@grinderproductions.org, or better yet, just see me after any show and I'll sell you one on the spot!

The Innocents – October 23rd, 24th and 25th

Just in time for Hallowe'en, we've got an old-fashioned ghost story for you, about a lovely young governess, Miss Giddens, who comes to a country estate in the late 1800's to see to the instruction of two precocious, possessed children, who are haunted by the spirits of a pair of seedy house servants, who have corrupted the souls of The Innocents. It is up to Miss Giddens to free them of these terrors, and save their immortal souls, no matter what the cost to her or to them.

Based on *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James this play features some stellar performances from a mix of Grinder veterans and rookies, and many a good fright, with a plot that will keep you guessing until the last moments of the play. The show will run October 23rd, 24th and 25th at 8pm, with a 2pm matinee on the 25th as well. Tickets are now on sale at the Fergus Grand Theatre box office, available by calling 519-787-1981.

A Bench in the Sun – October 23rd, 24th & 25th

For those of you who may not be interested in the harrowing prospects of a ghost story, we have another show about some people who aren't dead. In fact, they are decidedly full of life – and love.

It's ***A Bench in the Sun***, a play about three seniors living in a retirement home. There's Burt, the curmudgeonly accountant with no regard to fashion who's got a score to settle... with Harold, the dandy-ish "man-about-town" who can barely stand but still comes out of his room every morning looking to impress. In between them comes Adrienne, the former actress, once very famous, still very beautiful, and instantly irresistible to both of the men.

This is a charming, funny play that will keep audiences of all ages giggling, opening October 23rd at the Elora Centre for the Arts and running the 23rd, 24th and 25th at 8pm, with a 2pm matinee on the 25th. Tickets available by calling 519-780-7593, or visiting the ECA.

Poverty Anonymous – Call for actors

In my ongoing quest for profitability, I've decided to write a play about poverty.

I have inserted it into our fall season, as the December show at the Elora Centre for the Arts, rather than the royalty project we had originally penciled in there.

The show is called ***Poverty Anonymous***, and its set up just like any other "anonymous" meeting, except the people you will meet there are all guilty of the crime of poverty. Led by their wealthy, tenacious, ex-poor-person moderator June, this motley crew of losers, lowlifes, and ne'er do wells tries to put their pasts behind them, and assert once and for all the PA motto:

“There is no greater force on Heaven or on Earth than the Almighty Dollar.”

Join them, as they recite the Poverty Anonymous pledge before every meeting:

***I am broke, and that's not 'oke,
Being a bum is very dumb,
I am a jerk until I go to work,
But cash in hand will make me grand.***

I'm looking for several women to help me out in this show. I can make room for pretty much anyone who's willing to come to the rehearsals and learn their lines, so please e-mail me at grinder@grinderproductions.org if you are female, over the age of 15, and would like to be in this show.

Sarcasm... gotta love it.

New Ticketing System Coming to the Fergus Grand Theatre - Now we need some box office Volunteers!

I'm pleased to announce that the Fergus Grand Theatre is in the midst of a transformation to the 21st century. After years of quiet diplomacy, the powers that be have seen fit to allow the theatre its own internet connection. (Leafs fans, you can start planning the Stanley Cup parade now - Hell HAS frozen over!) This, in turn, has paved the way for the introduction of a new, more comprehensive box office and theatre management system, one that will provide users groups like Grinder Productions with a whole host of new resources.

First and foremost, the new system will allow users the freedom to pay by any method they choose - we can now process debit cards and credit cards. It also means that we can now take a payment over the phone when someone calls in to make a reservation - no more unpaid no-shows. This system is fully web-based, so patrons can browse shows and purchase tickets online from the Fergus Grand Theatre website (or through the Grinder site - we'll be linking directly), anytime and anywhere they like. They can even print their tickets at home.

This also will serve to better promote shows online - we can link directly from say, our Facebook page, to the box office, for seamless access to the purchasing process. Since our shows at the Fergus Grand are generally reserved seating, patrons can select exactly the seat they want. There's even a very cool feature where you can click on any given seat and get a snapshot of exactly what your view of the stage will be from that seat!

The program itself has some built-in marketing tools that will allow the Fergus Grand Theatre to complement our online marketing campaign with its own, thus getting the word out to a greater number of people. And since it's a "one-stop shop" for every company that uses the theatre, patrons who come to the site to buy other shows will also be able to view information and purchase tickets to Grinder shows as well.

Not available right away, though coming soon, will be the ability to purchase gift certificates online, as well as ways in which you can make donations to the theatre or a certain theatre company. The system is also set up to handle subscription sales, so this should mean that you will be able to use your "Grinder Card" to buy tickets as well, but I'm not sure on the logistics of that at this time.

Down the road, there is the possibility for this program to be expanded to other venues - we could be using it to sell our tickets for the Ennotville and Belwood summer seasons, thus allowing us to offer a level of professionalism in these venues we couldn't dream of providing on its own.

Of course, it's not all roses - there will be increased costs involved. Those "box office charges" that I mentioned above are significant, but even they have some benefits built in.

The Front of House fee, the per-patron seat charge already being collected by the Fergus Grand Theatre Volunteers, will fall under the new system, so a portion of every ticket sold will still be going towards the purchase of new technical equipment for the theatre, as well as other items that will improve the theatre's day-to-day operations.

Another portion of the box office charges will go towards a Capital

Replacement Fund, investing in the long-term future viability of the building. Anyone who knows the age and condition of the building will know that a capital fund is a long-overdue necessity, and one that I, along with everyone else who donated to the last capital improvement fund (the one set-up by the building's former tenants and has absolutely no connection whatsoever with this one), will be watching very, very closely to ensure that money is well spent.

Those fees, and the actual cost of operating and maintaining the system itself will be, I believe, a fair price to pay. The theatre should be able to use this program to offer top-notch customer service, comprehensive online marketing, and detailed, accurate attendance information. And on the off-hand chance they don't do those things, we can now better hold the theatre to task for it, since we are paying for it directly.

The end result for Grinder Productions and, indeed, for all the groups who rent the Fergus Grand, should be should more bums in seats, as well as a more viable theatre building now and in the years ahead.

Now here's where you come in. The theatre is looking for 10 to 15 people who are willing to become box office volunteers and be trained on this program. Volunteers would be asked to work a shift about once every two weeks during the new regular box office hours of 11am - 2pm, Tuesday through Saturday. In addition, there would also be the opportunity for two-hour stints during actual events (get there 90 minutes before curtain to open the box office an hour before curtain, and to stay and deal with latecomers, then cash out 30 minutes after curtain), so this might be an option for you if you're not available during the day. Volunteers would receive full training in the new system (tentatively scheduled for the last week of October) and begin working the box office as of November 1st.

I'd love to see as many Grinder members a possible become volunteers in this new system. If we're going to be using it in our summer venues down the road we're going to need people who know the system ourselves, and not just yours truly (who will be signing up for the training just like anyone else, by the way).

Interested persons should contact Alan Argue, the Operations Manager at the Fergus Grand Theatre, for more information, or to sign up. Alan is available by phone at 519-787-1981 or now, finally, via email at AArgue@centrewellington.ca.