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for more information, please contact

Lindsay Patton

lindsay@flatrockplayhouse.org

828.693.0731x209

FLAT ROCK PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES

ROCK SOLID CAMPAIGN AND \$118,000 MATCH GIFT

The capital campaign has a goal of \$1.5 million to ensure The State Theatre of North Carolina weathers the storm of COVID-19 and kicks off with a \$118,000 match courtesy of David Leiman.



ROCKSOLID

PRESERVE + IGNITE + REVITALIZE

A Campaign for Flat Rock Playhouse



Flat Rock, NC (February 2, 2021) – Flat Rock Playhouse has launched its capital campaign, Rock Solid, in response to the effects of COVID-19. The campaign aims to

preserve the legacy of the Playhouse, ignite the passion for theatre in the community, and revitalize the arts in Henderson County and beyond. The campaign kicks off with a generous match from David Leiman, meaning donors' contributions will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$118,000.

After beginning their 2020 season in the strongest financial position in over a decade, the Playhouse was forced to go dark in mid-March of last year due to the worldwide pandemic, government restrictions, and industry health standards placed on large performing arts venues. The State Theatre of North Carolina, which relies heavily on ticket revenue, furloughed two-thirds of its staff, and for the first time in its history, was unable to invite summer apprentices and interns to the Rock—a critical component of their core value to educate/mentor future professional artists going back 70+ years. Though unable to offer their intended 2020 season, the Playhouse hosted two virtual fundraisers: ***Apprentices Plugged-In*** and ***Nat Zegree Virtual Cabaret***. They also were able to continue the yearly tradition of the Christmas show, ***A Flat Rock Playhouse Christmas***, as a virtual production filmed throughout Hendersonville and Flat Rock.

With the pandemic and government mandates still impacting live event venues, the Playhouse remains dark for the safety of patrons and artists. With performances on hold, the Playhouse has announced a capital campaign, Rock Solid, to preserve the viability of the State Theatre of North Carolina. Donations to this campaign will help to sustain the Playhouse through the following:

- Maintain and build back the staff as the Playhouse carefully returns to producing;
- Upgrades to technology;
- Management of the historic facilities and grounds;
- Ongoing operational needs; and
- A “rock solid” infrastructure for long-term sustainability.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on arts venues worldwide, and Flat Rock Playhouse is no exception,” says **Lisa K. Bryant**, Producing Artistic Director. “We are proud of the fiscal management and responsible oversight that put us in a position to weather an unexpected year of closure. That said, the strain on our reserves is growing exponentially as the prolonged shutdown prevents us from returning to business as usual in an adequate time frame. With the Rock Solid campaign, we hope that our already generous community will see this unprecedented chapter in our history as a singular moment to rise in support of ensuring the legacy of the theatre and its robust impact economically and culturally to Henderson County, WNC, and the State for decades more to come. Without this timely support, the future of the theatre is in jeopardy—through no fault of its own. There’s really no other way to say it.”

The campaign has already received commitments from 100% of the Board of Trustees and Campaign Committee members totaling nearly \$400,000 which kicks this campaign off with great excitement. Joining Lisa in leading the Rock Solid campaign are Board of Trustees members **Dale “Bird” Bartlett** and **Joseph Laughter**, and Board President

Joseph Ippolito. Board member Joseph Laughter says “Our mission is clear. I would encourage and invite everyone to become a member of the Vagabond Playhouse family. Make a pledge today to our Rock Solid 2021 Campaign.”

The Rock Solid campaign will be led not only by Playhouse leadership but also by a committee of community members committed to preserving professional performing arts, theatre arts education, and the history of the Playhouse. **Dr. Pete and Jan Richards** are co-chairing the Campaign Committee. These community members will be sharing their stories about the importance of the arts and their connection to the Playhouse throughout the duration of the campaign.

To learn more about the Rock Solid campaign, visit flatrockplayhouse.org.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews with the artistic staff and committee members are available upon request.

FLAT ROCK PLAYHOUSE

In 1937, a group of struggling performers, led by Robroy Farquhar, organized themselves as the Vagabond Players. The Vagabonds worked in a variety of places over the course of three years, and in 1940 found themselves in the Blue Ridge region of Western North Carolina. The local and tourist community welcomed them with open arms when they presented their first summer season of plays in a 150-year-old grist mill they converted into The Old Mill Playhouse at Highland Lake. So successful was that summer, they returned in 1941. After WWII, the Vagabond Players reorganized, came back to the region and opened a playhouse in nearby Lake Summit. The Lake Summit Playhouse thrived during the post-war years and soon the Vagabond Players were looking for a larger and permanent home. In 1952, the troupe of performers, and a newly formed board of directors made an offer to buy an 8-acre lot in the Village of Flat Rock. This new home made the Vagabonds “locals” and a rented big top gave birth to Flat Rock Playhouse. As the beautiful Western Carolina region continued to grow, so did the Playhouse and in 1961, by Act of the North Carolina General Assembly, Flat Rock Playhouse was officially designated The State Theatre of North Carolina. What began as a few weeks of summer performances in 1940 is now a nine-month season of plays including Broadway musicals, comedy, drama, and theatre for young audiences.

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