



BACKSTAGE AT THE Valentine Theatre

SUMMER 2020

OUR MISSION

The Toledo Cultural Arts Center, a non profit organization, produces and provides cultural and performing arts experiences for diverse audiences of all ages, to enhance the quality of the cultural and economic life of the City of Toledo, Lucas County, Northwestern Ohio and Southeast Michigan.

OUR HISTORY

The historic Valentine Theatre opened its doors on Christmas Day in 1895 and is currently a 901-seat facility operated by the Toledo Cultural Arts Center, Inc. Following a 21-year effort by the Board of Trustees and the community, the newly renovated theatre was reopened on October 9, 1999. Since then, more than a million people have attended international, national and regional presentations, weddings and events.

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ValentineTheatre.com

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CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

When the Valentine Theatre closed in mid-March we had no idea how truly devastating the COVID-19 pandemic would be to the arts, and especially to live theatre. As of this writing, Broadway is closed with theatres not scheduled to reopen until after January 2021. This is the longest closure in Broadway's history, and unfortunately, it remains unclear when it will be safe for theatres on Broadway or throughout the US to open to full houses. Broadway and New York City were hit hard by the pandemic with over 223,000 cases and 23,247 COVID related deaths as of mid-July. Among the more than 674,000 people worldwide who have died from COVID-19 are screenwriter and playwright, Terrence McNally, actor Mark Blum, actress Hilary Dwyer, and Broadway actor Nick Cordero.

New Virtual Programming. In June the Lucas County Health Department approved recording/live-streaming (with no audience) from our Main Stage. *Valentine Sessions*, will feature small group ensembles from the Toledo Symphony, Toledo Jazz Orchestra, as well as local musical jazz, rock and heavy metal groups. Each Session will be recorded on the Valentine Main Stage employing social distancing rules. The 45-minute Sessions will be available on our website and social media with a "Donate" button and the proceeds divided equally with the performers. Stay tuned for more information on this exciting new venture.

Also going virtual this year is our signature education program, **Valentine School Days**. National touring groups, ArtsPower, Virginia Rep, National Players, and TheatreWorks will offer virtual children's musicals which we can share with area schools and homeschoolers free of charge. We will also present *Storytime at the Valentine*, a new virtual program in which local residents from various walks of life will read children's books that reflect the work they do in our community.

A Thoroughly Cleaned and Sanitized Valentine. As we await approval to re-open our Main Stage for performances, we are working diligently to get our historic theatre ready. Facilities Manager Bill Colter and his staff have thoroughly cleaned and sanitized the building with new sanitation equipment that allows us to sanitize between shows. Hand sanitizing stations have been added throughout the theatre and our HVAC system has been professionally cleaned as per new health guidelines.

We Miss You! We are ready and anxious to open once again and look forward to the day when we can welcome you back again to our beautiful Valentine Theatre. In the meantime, please stay safe and well until we can be together again!

Sessions at the Valentine The Valentine is excited to announce a brand new virtual program, *Sessions at the Valentine*. This monthly event will live-stream local artists from our Main Stage. The 45-minute performances will be available to view synchronously and later via our website. As we wait until the theatre can reopen for audiences, we hope you will tune in to *Sessions* and celebrate Toledo's local artists. Performances will start soon.



A round of applause for our generous sponsors!



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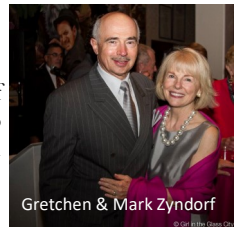
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Gretchen Zyndorf — A Heartfelt Remembrance by Jori Jex

In April 2010 I was introduced to Gretchen Zyndorf. I had just accepted the position of Executive Director for the Valentine and first order of business was to be introduced to the members of the planning committee for the October 2010 Gala. You know when you meet someone and there is an instant click and a feeling that this person is really special? That is how it was with Gretchen. The beautiful smile, the taking of the hand and truly shaking it while she looked in your eyes and said your name in a bit of a sing-song fashion. I have shared with my younger sister that in another life Gretchen was our older sister. I just knew we were meant to be friends.



Gretchen & Mark Zyndorf

We started meeting at Star Diner for a brunch that included the same order every single time - scrambled eggs, extra crispy hash browns, one shared pancake and toast that we would wrap in napkins so that Gretchen could feed the deer. Our brunches could go for three hours. So many world problems were solved at that table at Star Diner.

For nine years Gretchen worked on Valentine Theatre events, solicited community funding and spent many hours in the theatre enjoying the productions. Gretchen loved opera and musical theatre. Gretchen also loved to write and had started working on a children's play entitled "Captain of the Crossing Guards". It is a charming story dealing with kids in school and their hopes and fears when it comes to being a crossing guard. Gretchen wanted it to be a musical so David Jex, UT Music Professor and composer, spent an entire summer volunteering his composing skills and wrote the score. During this time Gretchen was diagnosed with cancer but she continued to work on the script. Once completed, we asked local theatre director, Amy Heuring, if she would direct and asked TPS music teacher, Bob Duris, to be the music director. What a time we had organizing a cast and rehearsing throughout the summer of 2018. I remember Gretchen attending the rehearsals and trying to assist Bob with the turning of the pages of the score - he laughed and told her she was sitting on the wrong side of the piano and he could not see the notes as her arm was covering the sheet music! She laughed and said that Bob had fired her!

The show opened to sold out houses in our Studio Theatre in August, 2018 and Gretchen just glowed as she saw the happy faces of the audience. The Valentine then reprised it and scheduled it as the lead play for our Valentine School Days program in October, 2019. Gretchen stood at the door and thanked the students and teachers for attending. Throughout the process Captain of the Crossing Guards was an extraordinary and fun process. And Gretchen was thrilled with the results.

We lost Gretchen in December 2019. Not a day goes by that I do not think about how important she was to my life and how much she and her husband Mark have given to our community. We are honored and humbled that Gretchen included the Valentine Theatre in her estate planning. **Today we introduce to the community "The Gretchen Zyndorf Education Program". The educational wing of the Valentine will include Valentine School Days, the Weekend Family Series and our new live streaming programs that will include "Storytime at the Valentine".** During a regular school year, our educational programming impacts over 15,000 students and family members. This upcoming season will be virtual but will still have great impact within our schools and with our home school families. Nothing will replace the joy that Gretchen brought to all of those fortunate enough to know her but the Valentine will, for decades to come, celebrate her life and love for the arts and for children. If you have not seen Captain of the Crossing Guards please take a moment to check it out on our website -- it will probably be the only time you see the "Whoopee Cushion Chorus"! The things Gretchen would do to catch the kids' attention and make them laugh!!

Educational Programming

The Valentine's hugely popular **Valentine School Days** will also be virtual this coming school year. Matt Lentz is coordinating with touring groups, including National Players of DC, to finalize this season's selection of shows for students in grades PreK-12. The shows will be based on classic popular children's literature and align with Ohio Common Core Standards. Please stay tuned for more VSD updates.

Storytime at the Valentine, a new virtual program in partnership with Scholastic Books, will film local leaders, artists, and educators reading aloud children's books which reflect the reader's work in the community. A wonderful complement to VSD, **Storytime** will also feature improvisational musical accompaniment by a professional musician. The books will range from fun stories to topics of a more serious nature written for the appropriate age group. **Storytime** will be available on our website in the fall and will be free of charge for teachers and parents. The series will capture a critical time in history, a time capsule reflecting readers who were pivotal in navigating our journey through the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020.



Valentine Receives Arts Partnership Grant

The Valentine Theatre and Yamaha Performing Artist and Toledo Jazz Festival Director Ron Kischuk have partnered to create a Community Big Band for adults. Auditions were held in early March with nearly two dozen area musicians participating. The project is on hiatus due to the Coronavirus, but Project Director Ron Kischuk is looking forward to starting up the Band again as soon as it is safe to do so. Interested players should email toledo jazzfest@comcast.net to get more information. There is also a youth Community Jazz Band project directed by Mr. Kischuk.