



## “Building a Better Basie”

### The Count Basie Theatre Foundation Update

August 2011

Mr. David Cooner is currently serving his term as Board Chairman for the Count Basie Theatre Board of Trustees. Mr. Russell Lucas serves as Board Chairman for the Count Basie Theatre Foundation Board of Directors. Both gentlemen are two of the Basie’s most enthusiastic supporters. Although separate, both boards work in tandem with their respective members to oversee theatre operations and fundraising efforts. Long time board members, Mr. Cooner and Mr. Lucas have been advocates of live theatre, live music, performing arts education and the importance of keeping the Basie here in Red Bank. Both chairmen spoke with Tiffany McDermott, the Director of Development of the Count Basie Theatre Foundation to discuss their personal connection with the theatre and to share their visions for this local treasure.



(above) Russ Lucas and Dave Cooner

#### How long have you been involved as a board member at the Basie?

**DC:** *I have been on the Board since 2006, and Chairman of the Board since 2009.*

**RL:** *I have been on the CBT Foundation Board since 2007, and Chairman of the Foundation Board since 2009.*

#### What was the motivation for getting further involved in the theatre and taking that step to become a board member?

**DC:** *The Basie is the cultural heart of Monmouth County, and one of the real gems in the State of New Jersey. I have been going to shows at the Basie since I was a boy. I initially got involved because I was interested in preserving the Theatre, so that it would continue to be a cultural landmark for future generations. I stay involved because restoring the Theatre is only part of what we do. Our arts education programming and our support of philanthropic causes are wonderful gifts to the community. Countless lives are touched by the Theatre.*

**RL:** *I love great music and this venue particularly. It is so cool to see the caliber of entertainer we program here – like Tony Bennett, John Fogerty, the recent Peter Frampton tour kick off and it is all in our backyard. I feel pretty strongly about giving back to the community where you live and work. I am very enthused about the Basie as a community asset and resource for other non-profits to use to socialize with their constituents and fund raise too.*

#### Is it safe to say that the Basie is a personal “investment” of yours?

(Considering all of the time, talent and generosity you have given over the years)

**DC:** *The Theatre pays dividends to our community by providing access not only to popular music, but also to opera, jazz, classical music, theater, dance and a wide range of cultural attractions. It also has educational programs, which are supported by almost two thousand children annually. On top of that, the Theatre is an economic engine in our region, supporting a wide range of local businesses. We work hard to keep costs low and increase access to the arts. My role on the Board keeps me invested not only in the good works of the Theatre, but also of the community as a whole.*

**RL:** *Absolutely! I am deeply invested in the Basie on many levels but it all started with the emotional investment when I came for a show with family and friends. It has grown over the years as we have continued to restore the theatre and bring wonderful shows and programs to the community. I think that during this recession I have a greater respect for what an important economic engine the Basie is for our town and area.. In tough times, being able to bring folks into red Bank, spend money, make friends, leave town with smiles on their faces and ready to repeat is a great gift. Or a great dividend on this investment.*

#### Why continue to “invest” (time, talent, generosity) to this local landmark?

**DC:** *Our work is on-going. The arts corridor in Red Bank continues to blossom, even with the struggling economy. Our region rightfully supports the arts and arts education. We have much more to do in that regard. We have a long term plans to finish (and pay for) the restoration of the Theatre and we have a host of initiatives to make the Theatre and its performances and programs even more exciting and accessible in the coming years.*

**RL:** *In today’s world where we see governments spending far above their means and what seems to be a lack of interest in paying down debt, I have pledged to help us pay off our investments in the restoration and leave the community with a beautiful theater that can be sustained for our children and the children in us. Because of the scale and size of the Basie and the great support of the Basie community, we can be sustainable with the help of members and donors. Its not what I call a black hole, that requires miracle fund raising each and every year. But as I said, we must pay off debt and finish up the final pieces of the restoration first.*

(Q&A continued from page 1)

**When one considers the “new” Count Basie Theatre, it appears to be in good, working, condition for an 85 year old structure ... why should our fundraising and renovating efforts continue?**

**DC:** *We have come a long way, but there is work to be done, not only on the physical structure of the building, but behind the scenes, such as on the stage and back stage. Our aim is to be one of the region’s finest theaters, a goal that requires maintenance and improvement.*

**RL:** *I’m sure we have all seen what happens when economic downturns or budget crunches stop facilities such as schools, hospitals or libraries from being maintained regularly. Small leaks and cracks lead to bigger and bigger problems until it is critical that that repairs be done and it is no longer a small job but a major project. That happened to a certain extent here but has been rectified now. I’m thinking five or ten years down the line. We have done great work with the inside and the façade of the theatre – that’s true. But there are other issues of equal importance behind the scenes such as heating/air conditioning, upgraded lighting and sound and backstage areas, box office improvements, and classroom space for our Performing Arts Academy that all need attention. It would be hard to raise all the money at one time so we continue to “fight the good fight” and complete these renovations in smaller phases and in a fiscally responsible way.*

**What are some upcoming Basie events that you are looking forward to?**

**DC:** *I am looking forward to Elvis Costello and Jackson Browne. John Hiatt and Lyle Lovett are regulars, and they always put on a great show. Every year I also look forward to seeing one of the varied holiday productions, such as Holiday Express, and I love the Basie Awards, which is our Tony Awards style show which honors the accomplishments of high school student productions. This show is among the most spirited of the year, and students come and support theater in general and their classmates in particular.*

**RL:** *Meat Loaf, Jackson Brown, Bobby Bandiera’s latest show are all on my radar. I love coming with a group of friends, family or colleagues who I can meet in the Carlton Lounge, have a drink and then go in for the show. I agree with Dave about the Basie Awards too. That program has grown so much in popularity in the past few years and it excites me because it is building a love and appreciation of live performance in a new generation – talk about a great legacy! It doesn’t get better than that.*

### *Foundation Events*

On June 25th, the Count Basie Theatre Foundation hosted the

Fab Faux for their 10th anniversary performance on our stage. The tone of the evening was set with a pre-show curtain speech sharing that this benefit concert has raised over \$1.5 million dollars for the theatre since its inception in 2001. The show, which opened with “Love Me Do”, featured all the Beatle’s #1 hits, had the packed auditorium singing for three hours!

As per our summer tradition, the CBTF will be collaborating with the Two River Theater for our “Intimate Evening” series. This month, Grammy winning artist/songwriter, Marc Cohn returned to Red Bank on Friday, July 15th. This three concert series concludes in August with a performance by Joan Osborne featuring Jack Petruzelli (of the Fab Faux) on Friday, August 12th, followed by the timeless Judy Collins who, along with her performance will share her personal journey as an Academy Award nominated director, author and head of a major record label. Ms. Collins is scheduled to perform on Sunday, August 21st.

\*Tickets and VIP meet/greet packages are available for the August shows\*



Mark your calendars for the Count Basie Theatre Golf and Tennis Outing, Thursday, September 29th. Our annual golf outing has been enhanced for 2011! This year’s event will be held at the Trump National Golf Course in Colts Neck, combining men and ladies golf and a newly added tennis component. The day will include a luncheon for participants, awards, silent auction and live entertainment. This is a wonderful way to support the Basie, introduce new comers to our organization and enjoy a day out at one of Monmouth County’s premier golf facilities. If you’re unable to join us, support the outing as a sponsor.

For information regarding VIP opportunities for the “Intimate Evening” series, please contact Rachel O. Warnick at 732-224-8778 x118 or at [rwarnick@countbasietheatre.org](mailto:rwarnick@countbasietheatre.org). To learn more about sponsorship opportunities for these concerts and for the September golf/tennis outing, please contact Shannon Eadon at 732-224-8778 x128 or at [seadon@countbasietheatre.org](mailto:seadon@countbasietheatre.org).





Photos: (prev. page) Jack Petruzelli and Frank Agnello of the "Fab Faux"  
(l) A foursome at the CBT 2010 Golf Outing at Beacon Hill (below l) two of our participants at the 2010 Ladies Golf Outing (right) New board member Chip Schulz and family at the Fab Faux VIP reception (below r) The annual Fab Faux benefit brings Beatle fans of all ages!



### *Other Foundation Projects*

As we begin a new fiscal year, plans are created and put in motion by the various departments of the theatre. New marketing tactics are discussed, fundraising strategies are adjusted and maintaining a dynamic calendar of events are just some of the many priorities of the Basie.

An additional component of the Foundation's fundraising efforts are directed toward the support and continuation of the Count Basie Theatre Performing Arts Academy (CBTPAA). Now entering its sixth year, the CBTPAA Outreach Program works with students of the Red Bank Primary and Middle Schools providing workshops and weekly classes which introduce students to performing arts and offer personal instruction in music, dance and live theatre.

This program is essential to providing the arts to children who are economically disadvantaged with few, if any, cultural outlets. Red Bank continues to struggle as one of the most economically challenged school populations in Monmouth County, with 72 percent of Red Bank Primary and Middle School students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

In speaking with local educators these students face a variety of obstacles stemming from their home lives and challenges at school (language barriers, reading below grade level, lack of self confidence and at times trouble relating to their peers). Teachers have also mentioned that many students do not have exposure to arts/ performance outside of their daily/weekly planned classes during the school day. In addition, the arts have suffered in schools locally as a result of low standardized test scores. As a whole, focus and funding has been designated to working to improve falling test scores from local students.

These statistics serve to highlight the great need among Red Bank's students. Their families can not afford music, theatre or dance instruction outside of school. To serve this need, the Basie created the Outreach Program.

The outreach program has been fortunate to receive financial support from various organizations such as PNC Wealth Management, the Target Neighborhood Foundation and the J.C. Kellogg Foundation.

Generous donations from these supporters have allowed the CBTPAA staff to remain in the Red Bank Primary and Middle Schools. This funding has not only enabled us to sustain this vital program, but expand our efforts to a growing student population. Similar to our capital fundraising, many of these grants have been received through the efforts of networking and relationship building. If you are familiar with a granting organization that may be able to support this initiative, we encourage you to forward us contact information for future funding requests. Often times many employers match contributions to the theatre and have a giving program of their own.

For further information regarding ongoing fundraising efforts, please contact:  
The Count Basie Theatre Foundation 99 Monmouth Street, Red Bank, NJ  
Tiffany McDermott (732) 224-8778 x 115  
[www.cbtfoundation.org](http://www.cbtfoundation.org)