



Count Basie Theatre Foundation

“Building a Better Basie”

The Count Basie Theatre Foundation Update

September 2011

You may recognize the name, even be familiar with him from the cover of the CBT publication “Showtime”, but do you really know Numa Saisselin, the CEO of our organization? In an effort to offer a more formal introduction to you, our members, Mr. Saisselin spoke with Tiffany McDermott, the Director of Development of the Count Basie Theatre Foundation. Below he discusses his personal connection with the theatre and some of the highlights during his time with the Basie.

How is it that you became involved with the Basie? What were your first impressions of the Theatre?



(above) Count Basie Theatre CEO,
Numa Saisselin

NS: In the summer of 2001, a colleague, Chris Butler, then VP at the State Theatre in New Brunswick, called me to tell me he had just met with some of the Basie’s board members. The Board was looking for a new CEO to replace Lynda Rose, who had just jumped ship to the Eastern Monmouth

Chamber of Commerce, where she’s been a big success and still works. Chris gave them my name and although I wasn’t looking for a job at the time, one thing led to another and six months later in January of 2002, here I was.

My first impression of the theatre itself was that it needed a lot of work, but it wasn’t a lost cause. Obviously, a lot of people loved the place. It was almost literally falling down yet 50,000 people a year kept coming here. This was an encouraging sign of life.

Can you explain a bit about the responsibilities you have as CEO of the Basie?

NS: I work with the foundation and the theatre and foundations boards on fundraising, and I have direct responsibility for everything else. I book the shows and set the artistic direction and the theatre staff report to me. Almost 200 people are on our payroll every year.

What is your personal philosophy when it comes to performing arts? (Specifically how the Basie impacts the community and our state)

NS: Our role is to bring artists and audiences together; to provide a place where that interaction can happen. It’s not necessarily about what I personally like. If I only booked what I like, average attendance would be about 6 people a night instead of almost 1200 a night, and that’s assuming my mother could make it most nights. Often we’re booking something because an artist is good and we can make money, but a few times a year we book a show for the love of it, and that’s the great thing about working for a nonprofit organization. Once in a while, we can budget for and do something just because it’s the right thing to do, because we raise money to do it.

Last month, we spoke with Board Chairmen Dave Cooner and Russ Lucas about the restoration of the Theatre and why we should continue this work. What message do you have for our audience members?

NS: The audience knows better than we do why it’s important to restore and improve this theatre. For 85 years it’s been a unique asset of Red Bank and Monmouth County. It’s one of the things that make the Shore “The Shore,” if you know what I mean. Plus, 200 nights a year 1200 people come into town and spend money. The economic impact of that activity is north of \$11 million now.

It goes without saying that you have experienced some memorable performances here... do you have a favorite?

NS: They’re all great. People should see every performance. They should try performances they don’t think they’ll like just on the off chance they’ll be surprised. They should bring friends.

Any hints about upcoming shows you’d like to share?

NS: There’s a new kid named Bach. The NJ Symphony is playing some of his music on October 22. Check him out.

Foundation News

The Count Basie Theatre is continually working to secure donor support from our Theatre members, corporate sponsors and from members of the Monmouth County community. Throughout the summer, the Foundation staff has offered backstage tours to many of our top level members. These tours offer a rich history of the Basie, its beginnings as a vaudeville theatre and a peek of where our talent preps before “show time”. We also use this opportunity to give guests an inside look of what our structural needs are and why we continue to ask for support.

After one of our tours, the Foundation was thrilled to receive a generous *pledge of \$20,000* allocated toward our capital campaign! As a “thank you” for this commitment, the Count Basie Theatre reserved four seats, which will be personalized by our generous donors.



The Basie belongs to you and we love sharing the back story of this treasured landmark! To schedule your own tour, please contact Tiffany McDermott at 732-224-8778 x115.

Thank You Supporters!

The Two River Theater was kind to host our annual “Summer Concert Series” benefitting the Count Basie Theatre Foundation and the Better Days Ahead Organization. We are grateful to all of our guests and sponsors who made these shows so successful and memorable!

Although the weather was not on our side for this year’s “Bike/Run for the Basie”, the event still lent itself to a fun morning to mingle with Basie supporters in the Carlton Lounge. We moved the event from Sandy Hook to our lounge on Monmouth Street where participants enjoyed a complimentary breakfast, goodie bags and our beach cruiser raffle. Thank you to all of our supporters, runners and riders and a special congratulations to Scott Zettel who was the winner of this year’s bike donated by Pt. Pleasant Distributors!

The CBT golf outing took place on Thursday, September 29th at Trump National Golf Course in Colts Neck. We were pleased with a turn out of 105 golfers who supported the Basie with a day on the green. The morning kicked off with lunch, followed by play time and concluded with a cocktail reception and both a live and silent auction for a number of unique prizes! We would like to thank Trump National for hosting us and additional thanks to all of our participants, donors and sponsors which made the day so enjoyable!

For event information, please contact Rachel O. Warnick at 732-224-8778 x118 or at rwarnick@countbasietheatre.org. To learn more about sponsorship opportunities please contact Shannon Eadon at 732-224-8778 x128 or at seadon@countbasietheatre.org.



(left) The foursome from Boynton & Boynton, a sponsor of the 2011 CBT Golf Outing (right) Vice Chairman of the CBT Board of Trustees, Ray Moser, (2nd from left) and his group at the outing



Donations at Work...

By now you are familiar with many of our completed projects here at the Basie. There are, however, some “smaller” restoration needs on site that we are working to address. The CBT was given the green light to upgrade one of our rehearsal studios in 99 Monmouth (the space above the main lobby of the Theatre). This space, primarily used for CBTPAA instruction is in desperate need of a facelift. In order to enhance the classroom experience and expand the usage of our current space, we are working on the following improvements:

- sand and refinish the original wooden floor
- seal walls and re-paint room
- upgrade lighting fixtures
- replace aging ceiling tiles
- order and install fireproof window treatments
- install state of the art voice/technology system and flat screen TV to be used for corporate meetings and presentations
- install music/pa system linked to the main auditorium



The work on this space will be assisting the Basie in a number of ways. The first is through improving the environment for the students of the CBTPAA, and incorporating this as a small performance space for future programs. This room also creates another opportunity for relationship building with our guests. We hope to offer future events and VIP opportunities that create more of the “customer experience” at the Basie. For example, using the room for meet/greet receptions with performers, hosting book signings and/or wine tastings on site in addition to a performance. This upgrade also allows us to offer this space for rent to outside organizations, corporate clients or for private parties, creating a new stream of revenue designated toward operating expenses.



(top) Director of Education, Yvonne Lamb Scudieri teaching a movement class to CBTPAA students (above) Studio 99 today, which is currently being upgraded to serve as a multi-purpose space

Creating a multi-functional entertaining at the Basie to a new level. Pictures of the newly renovated rehearsal space in 99 Monmouth are forthcoming!

“Thank You” to our Donors and Corporate Sponsors

In our past newsletters, we have made you aware of our efforts to fundraise for capital projects and for the Continued mission of our Performing Arts Academy. We are pleased to acknowledge the following sponsors for their belief in our mission and support of performing arts: the Investors Savings Foundation, the OceanFirst Foundation, the PNC Bank Foundation, the Target Neighborhood Foundation and the William T. Morris Foundation.

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For further information regarding ongoing fundraising efforts, please contact:
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www.cbtfoundation.org