

Everything you ever wanted to know about **WODL**

Welcome to a community of people with a passion for theatre! Theatre has played an important role in the community for centuries. The call to entertain is a very strong one; the call to be entertained is stronger still. WODL supports and encourages those who entertain.

What is WODL?

The **W**estern **O**ntario **D**rama **L**eanue was established by D. Park Jamieson in 1932 to unite community theatre groups in Western Ontario. This covers an area from Burlington west to Sarnia and Welland, and north to Tobermory. WODL has over two dozen member groups.

The Western Ontario Drama League exists to:

- \$ encourage, assist and promote Community Theatre
- \$ convene an annual Theatre Festival
- \$ to provide education in Theatre Arts

The Western Ontario Drama League also:

- \$ Supports the development of high quality training to WODL member groups.
- \$ Celebrates the best of Community Theatre through the annual WODL Theatre Festival, which is adjudicated by a professional adjudicator.
- \$ Engages a professional adjudicator to travel throughout the Region from October to February each year, for the purpose of adjudicating member group productions as requested, and who selects the productions which will appear in the annual Theatre Festival.
- \$ Develops new material and training for directors, actors and technicians through the annual Minifest weekend.
- \$ Facilitates communication and access to resources through its association with Theatre Ontario and other professional theatres.
- \$ Issues a newsletter "Cue Sheet" every few months to keep their membership informed on the activities of member groups, Annual Festival and Minifest information, workshops in the Region, and information from other Regions.
- \$ Maintains a web site with information on all member groups, as well as WODL programs, festivals etc .

WODL is managed by an elected board of directors, who have membership in a member group.

The Executive Officers of WODL include a Past President, President, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. The board also consists of Area Vice-Presidents as well as a number of standing committees, each of which is appointed a chair. There is an Area Vice President for each of the following areas:

Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk; Bruce-Grey; Elgin-Middlesex-Perth; Essex-Lambton-Kent;

Lincoln-Wentworth; Oxford; Waterloo-Wellington.

Area Vice Presidents provide liaison between the groups in their area and the WODL Board, attend their adjudications and assist as required.

How do you join WODL?

To be eligible for membership, a group must have been in existence for a minimum of one year and performed at least two full-length productions and have a board of directors. An application along with the membership fee is needed in order to become a member group. Once this is received and a review done on your theatre group the application will be processed before one is accepted.

Groups must be located in one of the following counties or former counties:

Essex, Kent, Lambton, Elgin, Middlesex, Huron, Perth, Oxford, Brant, Norfolk, Waterloo, Wellington, Grey, Bruce, Wentworth, Lincoln, Haldimand, the Regional Municipality of Niagara, or the City of Burlington.

The Board of WODL determines fees for Active Membership and to receive adjudication annually. The appropriate annual fees are due early each fall. Before becoming a Member Group, the interested theatre group needs to fill out an application for membership. WODL membership is also possible on an individual basis. You need to be a member in good standing to apply for adjudication.

For a Membership Application Form, check out our web site.

Benefits of being a member of WODL are:

- \$ Free posting of playbills on WODL's web site as well as other opportunities via Area VP's to promote your group to WODL.
- \$ Receive our newsletter "Cue Sheet" every few months, with information on the activities of member groups, the annual Theatre Festival and Minifest information, workshops in the Region, and information from other Regions. We also publish the adjudication dates of all those who chose to have a production adjudicated.
- \$ Subsidization of the actual costs of the adjudication fees and ability to participate in adjudication process and Festival.
- \$ Opportunity to vote on major decisions put out by the WODL executive at delegates meetings (you are entitled to name two Delegates). These are held in October and February, and the AGM is held in July, immediately following Minifest.
- \$ Representation at delegates meetings where we discuss various aspects of theatre. You gain: a) Shared awareness of what other theatres are doing. b) Advanced notice of theatre seasons from other groups c) New Thoughts, New Ideas d) Access to mentors and e) an opportunity to network.
- \$ Eligible to apply for financial assistance to host workshops.
- \$ Eligible to enter in our annual Minifest - see below for more details.
- \$ Unified advocacy – over a score of theatres can speak louder than individual theatres. Issues that directly affect theatre in South Western Ontario can be addressed and WODL is a recognized organization that has high standards and

- respectability amongst the theatrical world.
- \$ Invitation to President of your theatre group to Gala opening ceremonies of WODL's annual Theatre Festival.
- \$ Access to information in WODL data bank.

WODL Theatre Festival

WODL holds an annual Theatre Festival in which all member groups are eligible to participate. A preliminary adjudication is provided for each entry on their own stage. An invitation to apply for an adjudication along with the application form (also available on the WODL website under "useful forms") is sent to all groups towards the end of the summer. Applications for a preliminary adjudication are to be returned to the adjudications chair by a date specified on the invitation to apply, a date which will be in the second half of September. Adjudications are held from just after Thanksgiving until around the middle of February of the following year. Theatre groups may enter "in" or "out" of festival. A group entering "in festival" is indicating their willingness to go to festival and remount their play there (see below for more information on festival). Groups entering "out of festival" are indicating that their production is not available for presentation at festival. These groups are eligible for various awards. Some groups chose to ask for a second adjudication. These occur if they can be fitted into the schedule of adjudications. Only one adjudication can be "in festival". Second adjudications have a substantially higher fee than first adjudications. While both adjudications cost WODL more than is charged to the theatre group, WODL unfortunately can only subsidize to a large extent the first adjudication. However, like the first adjudication, second adjudications are excellent learning experiences for the group.

From this initial process, five productions are chosen to participate in the week-long Festival, which is held in a different member town each year, generally during the School March (Spring) Break. A second adjudicator evaluates these shows and selects individuals and productions to receive awards for acting, directing and stagecraft. The 16 sponsored awards are presented at a Banquet and Ball on the closing Saturday evening to which all members, their friends, the public and media are invited. Adjudicators of the highest caliber offer constructive criticism to each group generally geared to their level of experience. The Pre-Festival Awards which are given to recognize excellence in groups not participating in Festival are also presented at the Banquet and Ball though most will have been announced in February.

The group, which takes "Best Production" then, must represent WODL by participating in the Theatre Ontario Festival with other companies who have been chosen to represent their regions of Ontario. The Theatre Ontario Festival takes place around the May long weekend. WODL provides some financial assistance to the group's costs in traveling to this Festival.

WODL Workshops

WODL will provide financial assistance to groups wishing to offer workshops in their community. Financial assistance can be applied for to a maximum of \$200 per workshop, and \$1,000 is allocated per fiscal year for this purpose. The workshops must

be open to all member groups to attend. For more information, please contact Membership and Development Committee Chair, or check out that area of our web site.

WODL Minifest

During the last full weekend of July each year, WODL holds its unique Minifest Workshop. Six participating community theatre groups produce the same one act play - on a set provided by the host group - and the result is six vastly different productions! A Workshop Leader, who offers advice and wisdom, constructively critiques each production. The workshop is non-competitive in nature, although mocks "awards" are presented on the final evening in a spirit of fun. The intent is to encourage emerging directors, actors and technicians to participate in this learning experience and have fun doing it.

This weekend of theatre has proven very popular and participants have a lot of laughs, while learning much about the disciplines of acting and stagecraft. Plays are often original, specially written for Minifest, thus it assists in developing local playwrights.

THEATRE ONTARIO

WODL is proud to be a member of Theatre Ontario, an umbrella group for all amateur theatre organizations in Ontario - Educational, Professional and Community. Each of the five community theatre regions appoints one representative to the Board of Theatre Ontario to attend their meetings in Toronto and co-ordinate community theatres throughout the Province. Each year the Theatre Ontario Festival is held in May in one of the regions on a rotating basis. Awards for excellence are given and the Festival offers an opportunity to meet with theatre people from across Ontario, to see their productions, and share in the community theatre experience.

Training opportunities in acting, directing and stagecraft are offered through Theatre Ontario Summer Courses. Theatre Ontario maintains a talent bank of professional workshop leaders for all aspects of theatre; and a roster of qualified adjudicators.