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Concrete Theatre Awarded \$50,000 Historic Preservation Grant

Concrete, WA – The Concrete Theatre is pleased to announce it has received a \$50,000 grant from the Washington State Historic Theater Capital Grant program. This funding will support essential upgrades, ensuring the theatre continues to be a vital cultural hub for the community.

Established by the Washington State Legislature in 2021, the Historic Theater Capital Grant program aims to preserve historic theaters, which are crucial to the economic and social vitality of their communities. The program, managed by the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, has awarded grants to 12 recipients in Washington State for the 2023-2025 Biennium.

“The Concrete Theatre has been a cornerstone of our community since 1923. This grant will help us preserve its historic charm while enhancing the experience for our patrons,” said Valerie Stafford, co-owner of the theatre.

The funding will be used for key upgrades, including a new HVAC unit, replacement of the rear exit door, and new stage lighting. These improvements will enhance comfort and safety, while also expanding the theatre's capacity to host live performances, enriching the local arts scene.

The Concrete Theatre hosts various community events that showcase local talent, including the annual Concrete Ghost Walk in October, which features local storytelling. The theatre has also collaborated with the Skagit County Boys and Girls Club and Concrete Elementary School to present theatrical productions and children's operas. Additionally, the theatre partners with Shakespeare Northwest to present classic plays, providing audiences with access to timeless literature.

Upcoming live events include "Moments in Time," scheduled for September 28, featuring songs and monologues performed by 13 local performers under the direction of Gretchen Hewitt,

accompanied by pianist Cheri Cook-Blodgett. "Moments in Time" will highlight local talent and demonstrate the theatre's commitment to providing a platform for artists of all ages.

The stage lighting improvements funded by the grant will significantly enhance live performances such as this at the Concrete Theatre. Outdated portable lights currently in use require cumbersome setup and fail to deliver the professional quality needed to truly elevate the productions. Upgrading to a dedicated stage lighting system will not only improve visibility and atmosphere, but will highlight the talent of performers and enrich the audience experience. These enhancements will also support a 2025 initiative to establish an annual drama camp for youth.

"We are grateful for the support from the Washington State Legislature and the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation. However, the grant requires a 25% match, so we will seek additional community support to make this project a success. This is an investment in the lives of young performers and the theatre's future," Stafford added.

With over 80 historic theaters operating in Washington, many in small towns like Concrete, these venues play a crucial role in supporting local economies through job creation and cultural tourism. By enhancing the Concrete Theatre, the community can attract visitors seeking authentic cultural experiences, further benefiting the local economy.

As the theatre prepares for these upgrades, it remains committed to fostering a preservation ethic and ensuring this cherished community space thrives for generations.

For more information about the Concrete Theatre and upcoming events, please visit www.Concrete-Theatre.com.

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