Off the Wall Stratford Artists Alliance

OUR MANDATE

Each summer, once shows have opened at the Stratford Festival, the contracts with backstage artists are completed. Off the Wall (OTW) engages these talented artisans to teach workshops and courses -- to pass their considerable knowledge and skills on to the next generation. For sixteen seasons, OTW has provided a setting for theatre enthusiasts of all ages to gain hands-on experience in backstage production -- mentored by artists with decades of experience.

OUR PROUD HISTORY

OTW has a proud and successful sixteen-year history. In 2005, Stratford theatre artists and arts-education volunteers formed OTW to raise awareness about the backstage world of theatre and to mentor aspiring production artists. After two successful seasons, OTW was incorporated in May 2006, and attained charitable status the following year, under **Charitable number 85347 8964 RR0001**.

In 2008, OTW recognized the need to expand from fall weekend workshops, to a summer course suitable for high school and university students. A two-week ***Setting the Scene*** course was developed, giving students intensive backstage production experience.

For the next three seasons, OTW continued teaching summer and fall courses, all the while raising funds to build a teaching studio in Factory163. Today, our Desmond Heeley Theatre Production Arts studio is equipped with a vacuum-forming machine, welding machines, plasma cutter, fume extractor hood, band saws and more -- offering students the full backstage production experience.

OUR GROWTH

In the summer of 2011, OTW expanded the program to include a six-week summer course in ***Theatre Production Arts*** for students with a keen interest in pursuing apprenticeships in large theatres, employment in small theatres, or further study in theatre and visual arts programs at the University level. ***Theatre Production Arts*** imparts the basic skills required by artists working backstage in theatres -- text analysis and design interpretation; mask and prop making; scenic painting, drops and murals; set building, decorating and assembly.

After several expansions, OTW now offers a full summer roster -- our premier ***Theatre Production Arts*** course, twelve specialized one-week courses, and our popular two-week ***Setting the Scene***. We also teach a full slate of fall workshops -- from wig-making, to shoe-making, to special-effects makeup.

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

2012 marked the beginning of OTW's collaborations with local, independent theatre companies in a unique arts-education initiative. Each season, OTW students create a set, complete with props, for a professional theatrical production. Partnering with small theatre companies gives students the opportunity to liaise with a designer, director and actors, strengthening their understanding of the stage-arts collaborative process. At the same time, OTW serves the regional theatre community by supplying high-quality sets to small acting companies that could not, otherwise, afford them.

In the 2021 season, OTW will support Stratford Perth Museum, creating a display for their permanent exhibit about the origins of the Stratford Festival.

In 2014, OTW formed an educational alliance with the Faculty of Dramatic Arts at the University of Windsor. Students enrolled in this faculty receive transfer credits for taking OTW courses. Since then, eight students have received two transfer credits each for our courses. OTW is currently in conversations with other colleges and universities -- to establish similar partnerships throughout Southwestern Ontario.

PLANNED EXPANSION

Arts and culture contribute to the quality of life and the social and economic vitality of many small, rural communities in Ontario. At Off the Wall, we are working toward expanding our theatre production training courses into a four-season program, to increase artistic opportunities for youth in our region and strengthen support for creative theatre endeavours across the region.