

ARTS CLUB VENUE REPURPOSED FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE

VANCOUVER, B.C. (May 14, 2020)—After temporarily closing its doors on March 17, Western Canada's largest theatre company is repurposing its spaces at the BMO Theatre Centre to aid in COVID-19 response efforts.

Though the Goldcorp Stage at the BMO Theatre Centre remains dark, its rehearsal studio space has found a whole new use during this time.

During the month of May, the open-source Vancouver-based medical technology initiative COSMIC (Collective Open Source Medical Innovations for COVID-19) Medical will be using an Arts Club studio to build and showcase their novel design solutions, which include ventilators and respiratory equipment. This space is being lent to the group free of charge.

"At this time, with the temporary closure of our theatres, we couldn't think of a better use for our facility than to provide free space to the COSMIC team," said Artistic Director **Ashlie Corcoran**. "As a Vancouver theatre company dedicated to the development of local storytelling and voices, collaborating with COSMIC to showcase their exciting medical innovations is a perfect way for us to continue to celebrate local talent."

COSMIC sought out the Arts Club's studio because of its capacity to support media and videography. The group aims to demonstrate the use of their products, which include a clinical respiratory support system that's being developed as a low-cost approach to providing care for COVID-19 patients, in this space.

"When a crisis brings together collaboration, creativity, and commitment at this speed, it brings out the best in us all," said **Dr. Christopher Nguan**, co-founder of COSMIC Medical. "COSMIC not only has an overarching mission to prepare for COVID-19 and future pandemics, but we are challenging one another and collaborating with groups like the Arts Club to come up with creative solutions to improve health outcomes and, we hope, save lives."

The venue's costume shop has also been repurposed during the pandemic.

Staff from the costume and production departments—some of whom were laid off due to COVID-19, and then rehired as a result of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS)—go into the shop one by one to sew masks and scrub caps for a local initiative called Protect Our Frontline Vancouver. The mission of this community group is to build a supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to support frontline workers and healthcare professionals in Vancouver.

So far, the Arts Club has sewn 110 scrub caps and over 300 masks to contribute to this initiative. Donation recipients include the Vancouver General Hospital and the Lakeview Care Home in East Vancouver.

"With the ability to hire back most full-time employees through the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy program, it has been inspiring to see our staff come together for the good of our community and provide these services to care facilities in need," said Executive Director **Peter Cathie White**.

Until the Arts Club can bring theatre back to its stages, Corcoran and Cathie White hope that the company can continue to contribute to Vancouver's COVID-19 response in any way possible.

ABOUT THE ARTS CLUB

The Arts Club, one of the largest not-for-profit theatre companies in the country, is the principal gathering place for the theatrical arts in British Columbia. Comprising three unique venues across Vancouver, the Arts Club welcomes more than a quarter million guests annually, tours provincially and nationally, and engages students and artists alike through educational and professional programs.

Above all, the Arts Club is dedicated to the advancement of local artists telling stories from around the globe and, in particular, those of our region. From this, we believe that culture expands, an understanding of differences is nurtured, and art bursts forth. The Arts Club was founded in 1964 and is currently led by Artistic Director Ashlie Corcoran and Executive Director Peter Cathie White.