

The Life Changing Power of Live Theater

Totem Report May 31, 2017
By Dann Mead Smith

The program opened with **Lauren Domino** sharing how she has been inspired by the arts throughout her life and **Linda Rough** and **Marli Iverson** led us in “There’s No Business Like Show Business” to celebrate today’s program theme!

George Twiss introduced our new corporate member, **the Woodland Park Zoo** and their President/CEO, **Alejandro Grajal** who was with the Chicago Zoological Society before coming to Seattle.

President Cathy gave an overview of our club’s new strategic plan, **Seattle Rotary 2020**, that goes into effect on July 1st and thanked the key members who lead the strategic planning process especially **Laura Rehrmann** and **Beth Wojick**, as well as recognizing the Membership, Service, and Finance/Administration task force members who developed the goals under each area.

She read our **Mission statement: Seattle Rotary creates strong relationships, informs understanding, and serves to resolve critical community needs;** and our **Vision statement: Inspired leaders connecting for extraordinary good.**

President Cathy called it a “solid plan to guide our club for the next three years.”

Chris Otto announced our 11 Winners for Life scholarship recipients who joined him on stage. Eight are in high school with three in college and all are mentored by one of our club members. Chris called the scholarship program “a real gem of Seattle Rotary” and reminded us that these students have overcome significant barriers and obstacles to pursue their dreams and academic excellence. He said this is a program of the club’s Education Committee that is chaired by **Ben Linford** and **Janice Winemiller**, and he encouraged us to get involved.

Here are their one word reactions from the students to receiving the scholarship: ecstatic, fortunate, shocked, excited, surprised, speechless with four students saying, blessed.



Chris said we are “guaranteed to hear more from these Winners for Life.”



Jim Duncan introduced our main speaker, Andrew Russell, Producing Artistic Director of the Intiman Theater. Jim said we are blessed to have “so much great theater in Seattle” and that Intiman is “one of the gems in our theater community.” Andrew has been the artistic director since 2011 and has led the theater to “tackle the tough issues of our time.”

Andrew said the highlight of his day was everyone singing “There’s No Business Like Show Business!”

He began his talk by looking back on his childhood in Indiana and how he first was touched by theater and artists. He knew that being on Broadway and being involved with theater was what he wanted to do and that the lessons of theater and storytelling can change the world.

After moving to Seattle he learned how theater and storytelling can shape a community. “Where else can you experience wrongness in real time?” Theater proposes a path forward; it tosses a decision to the audience and asks them, now that you have seen this production that tackles a current societal issue, what are you going to do about it?

Three things that theater does:

- 1) We can change and grow
- 2) Let ourselves be surprised and live in mystery



3) And put ourselves in someone else's situation

He said that theater is a “superpower” for him; there is so much to do in the world today and we have to get started.

Andrew then brought Intiman’s new executive director, Philip Chavira, on stage and the two of them talked about Intiman: they have a new production starting this weekend at the Langston Hughes Theater, they are doing educational programs as well as emerging artists programs; you can learn more at intiman.org; and answered questions on how Intiman differs from other Seattle theaters and about the arts receiving less money under President Trump’s proposed budget.



President Cathy closed the program by thanking Intiman for “being a gift to our community” and wished “good luck and keep us posted on your progress” to the Winners for Life scholarship recipients.



She said goodbye to our member **Navi Bains** who is leaving the club to continue her medical school studies as someone who is an “outstanding example of a young Rotary leader”; and thanked her for “all you’ve done for our club; we hope to welcome you back some day.”

Her call to action was for us to be “active and engaged Rotarians who walk our talk” given our new club vision of being inspired leaders connecting for extraordinary good.