

## **Yorkton Stories**

*The audio version of this and all other podcasts can be found at [www.yorktonstories.ca](http://www.yorktonstories.ca) and on all podcast directories.*

*This transcript was produced using voice recognition software, which is not perfect. It has been edited for clarity, to correct misspellings and to delete duplication.*

## **Duval Lang: high school football to professional live theatre**

*Published 6 February 2026*

### **Dick DeRyk**

When the Yorkton Sports Hall of Fame inducted the 1964 Yorkton Collegiate Institute eight-man football team in September of 2022, quite incredibly almost half of the players on that team came to the ceremonies. Many from out of town, and all of them well into their 70s. Not there due to previous commitments was Duve Lang. But two years later, he and his wife Pam made the trip to Yorkton from their home in Calgary to attend the 30th anniversary inductions of the Sports Hall of Fame.

That's where I first met Duve. His given and professional name is Duval, but to his more immediate circle he is known as Duve (or Duvy, both pronounced Do-vee). After the ceremonies, he and Pam stayed to peruse the showcases with sports artifacts and pictures on the second floor of the Gallagher Center. We talked, and he mentioned that his father was in one of the photos, and that led to a conversation about his youth in Yorkton and eventually to what he now does in Calgary.

He told me that for the past 40 plus years, he has been involved in professional live theatre in Calgary as an actor, director, and founder of theatre companies. That took me a bit by surprise as I told him, because I'm one of these people that thinks that, you know, people are either very involved in active sports or involved in the arts and cultural side of life, maybe golf and tennis, the exceptions, but I may have to rethink that. I told him I was interested in talking more about his life in Yorkton and in life theatre arts. This podcast is a result of that conversation.

When we connected to talk at length, it turned out that Duve had many personal recollections of his youth in Yorkton and memories of his family. His father was Elmer Lang, owner of a plumbing company that is now Hancock Plumbing, who was also very much involved in curling, hockey, and baseball in the post-war years, the 1950s and 1960s. His mother was Meta Lang, who, among many other community activities, looked after the art gallery that the York and Arts Center, now the York and Arts Council, operated in its early years. He has now been active in Calgary Life Theatre and other places literally around the world for 46 years. He has been an actor in well over 100 professional productions, not just in Calgary, but in all major centers in Canada. Not to forget Blyth in southern Ontario, a village of a thousand people that has been hosting an annual drama

festival since 1975. And in Rosebud, Alberta, population just over 100, which has a year-round theatre school that will stage seven plays and a number of other events in 2026.

He has performed in the Olympic Arts Festivals in Calgary and Vancouver, when those cities hosted the Olympics, and has directed more than 150 professional productions, many in Calgary, but also in Vancouver, Kelowna, White Horse Yukon, Lethbridge, and Red Deer. He has conducted dozens of workshops. He was instrumental in bringing a child sexual abuse prevention theatre program to elementary schools across Alberta. He has taught at several universities, has served and continues to serve on numerous theatre-related boards, and has been a mentor to many.

In 1984, he was the founder and artistic director of Calgary's Quest Theatre, geared then and now towards young audiences. He retired from that after 25 years, but the theatre company continues to this day. In 2019, he co-founded Black Radish Theatre, which after one very well-received major production ran into the start of COVID and the shuttering of most public venues.

Calgary has several major awards for excellence in theatre work. The Harry and Martha Cohen Award is presented for significant and sustained contributions to theatre in Calgary. Duve received that honor in 1996. He has received three Betty Mitchell Awards for Outstanding Acting, as well as the Sterling Award and the Calgary Critics Award, both also for acting, all between 1996 and 2022. We had a long conversation, first about his youth in Yorkton, his parents, his family, career, and the economics and future of live theatre, about which, by the way, he is quite optimistic.

### **Dick DeRyk**

Your dad was a plumber in town. He retired and did a few other things. He had an interest in various sports as well.

### **Duval Lang**

Very much so, Dick. His name was Elmer Clarence Lang. I mean, those are old-time names. No one would name their kids that these days, but that was his handle. And he liked to call himself EC, EC Lang. But yes, he was quite a sportsman, a good hockey player, played with Sam Gibney on a team for Moose Jaw at the time in the senior league. Everybody had a nickname in those days, and my father's name was Fat Lang. You wouldn't give a nickname to that these days. you'd be hauled over the coals. Back then, it fair game. Hockey was a big part of his life, and he eventually became involved in the Terriers. He would scout the hockey rink. I can picture my father standing with some team, I think in the 1950s. All the gents had these big fedoras on and hockey players with limited teeth attempting to smile.

He was also very involved in curling. He was instrumental at setting up the old curling rink at the bottom of Tupper. And baseball. I think baseball probably was his passion as he matured. He was very instrumental in establishing and continuing the health of the Yorkton Cardinals in the 50s and

60s. And I remember paintbrush in my hand and a bunch of white paint and told, go paint all the outfield fences. Went to a lot of ball games throughout Saskatchewan with my dad and my mother and my sister. Played a little bit myself. I wasn't as good as an athlete as my father, terrible skater, never took to hockey quite well, but I did manage to shine in football.

### **Dick DeRyk**

He had a plumbing shop. He retired and sold it.

### **Duval Lang**

He had some early health problems. He had a major heart attack when he was 42 years old, which prompted him to get out of the plumbing business. He was a bit of a workaholic and that, and I'm sure that contributed that to his heart problems. So he retired.

I remember going on a four or five-month trip to Europe with my mother and my father and my sister when I was 12 years old in 1961. We left Yorkton on April 1st and drove east across the country, stopping in places to see hockey games primarily. We stopped in Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, saw all the junior hockey league games that were available to see, and then finally made our way to Quebec City and got on an ocean liner called the Homeric and sailed to Le Havre and rented a car in France and drove throughout France and Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, and then took the ferry over to England and went all the way up to the Orkney Isles, where my mother and her family came from, and then back down and over to Ireland and eventually back to England and to London and then to Liverpool, where we boarded the Empress of Canada and back to Montreal, where we got off, picked up our car, and then came home by the U.S. seeing ball games in Detroit, Minnesota, Chicago. So we left enjoying hockey, came back enjoying baseball. But it was rare back in the days in the early 60s, going to Europe for that extended period of time. My sister doesn't remember too much about it. She was eight or nine at the time, but it's still rich in my mind.

### **Dick DeRyk**

When he retired, he didn't sit still, he got into a few other things.

### **Duval Lang**

Far from sitting still, Dick. He was very much involved in the construction of the current hospital. He was the clerk of the works. So his plumbing background and ability to manage budgets and construction timelines served him well. So he was very much a part and parcel of the construction of that hospital.

He also was a bit of an entrepreneur during those days as well. He brought in a franchise restaurant, Chicken Delight, and established the restaurant across from, it would be Deer Park Golf Course, just on that little hill overlooking the slough. I remember the fellow from Chicken Delight, whose head office was in Chicago, flew in for the grand opening. And we lived on Logan

Crescent, and the flats behind Logan Crescent had a grass runway and a bit of a hangar. This fellow flew in on his plane, his personal plane from Chicago, and the bloody plane was shaped like a chicken. Its nose cone was the chicken's head, painted appropriately, and the wings were feathered appropriately. And so it was a wonderful and very funny experience watching this thing land and my father going out to meet the guy, and then we traveled to the franchise across from Deer Park on Broadway and cut the ribbon and did whatever he had to do.

One of my first jobs was working at the Chicken Delight cleaning grease off of God knows how many boilers and French fry dispensers. Oh my god, that was that was horrible. And the other interesting thing, and I would have been a 16-year-old approximately, my first girlfriend came along shortly thereafter, and Chicken Delight had two delivery wagons. They were Vauxhall Victors, they were a light blue, and they of course had Chicken Delight stenciled along both sides of the vehicle. But there was also a plastic chicken, which was maybe 18 inches, that was bolted on to the top of the vehicle. And my first date with this girlfriend, Marlene McKay, I picked her up from her home in this chicken wagon, as we called it. And fortunate she laughed. I don't think her mother was quite enamored with this dude who showed up with this station wagon to begin with, and this chicken sticking off the top of it. Fun experience. And I think it kind of mirrors the sense of humor that I've continued to showcase as part of my life. That was Chicken Delight. It eventually burned out. Sorry to see it go, but there were other things that kept my father occupied.

He was a silent partner in Bailey's Funeral Home, and he welcomed Alan Bailey and his wife Colleen, and we spent a lot of time with them in the formation of Bailey's Funeral Home. I remember washing a lot of cars in the funeral home itself and trekking downstairs to have a look at the more gruesome aspects of the business. And we also had Yorkton Memorial Gardens east of Yorkton, basically a pasture at the time. But I remember spending several summer jobs cutting grass there, sitting on a lawnmower and traveling around, hoping not to run into the brass urns that were sticking up out of the ground.

And he also had a fur shop, Furs by Lee's, which was on Broadway and lasted for a couple years. He was very, very active. Unfortunately, he didn't live that long. He died at 58 in 1971. His heart failed him. And unfortunately, that was before all the medical interventions that exist these days. I regret not really getting to know my dad very well and having an opportunity to chat with him.

### **Dick DeRyk**

Your mother, on the other hand, lived a long life and also has a very interesting background.

### **Duval Lang**

Her roots come from the Orkney Islands. Her dad, David Pratt, emigrated to Canada. He had studied to be a tailor in the Orkneys and came to the Yorkton area and couldn't find a job as a tailor, but eventually found work at one of the grain elevators. And he was the elevator agent in Willowbrook, Saskatchewan for many years. And so that's where my mother grew up. I remember

her story about her sister Alex was about, I don't know, six, seven, eight years older than her. And she had a boyfriend, Alex did, and the boyfriend showed up at the farm with this wonderful-looking car and was going to take my aunt on a date. But my mother, who was maybe 13 or 14, was quite enamored with the car and asked the guy, can I drive it? And the fellow said, sure, here's the keys. I don't even know if you needed keys back then. But anyway, it was pointed in the direction that she had to go outside the farmyard. So they went inside, and not thinking that my mother would actually start the car and go for a drive, but she did. But she couldn't figure out how to get it into reverse. So I think she had to drive all the way from Willowbrook to Yorkton to find a place where she could turn around and drive back to the farm in Willowbrook. That's the kind of person my mom was. She was a bit of an imp. And well, both my folks were imps. They were big teasers, and so growing up was always an adventure.

### **Dick DeRyk**

She's also a singer.

### **Duval Lang**

She was a very, very good singer, an alto voice. I just remember loving to hear her sing. She was involved in a very big orchestra, was the lead singer in about a 25 to 30 piece orchestra that would barnstorm throughout Saskatchewan and play at dance halls and the like. She did a lot of touring. I think it was during the war years, singing in front of big audiences. But she had a beautiful voice.

### **Dick DeRyk**

You became an actor, but you were a football player in your youth and other sports, which to some people might seem like a bit of a dichotomy. Like, you know, people tend to go either the sports side or the arts side. You covered both.

### **Duval Lang**

I found a love for football in high school, back at YCI, and took to it like a duck to water, I suppose. And I was good. I was not the biggest. I played in positions where you should be big, but I wasn't.

### **Dick DeRyk**

The picture I've seen of that team, you were probably the smallest guy on the team.

### **Duval Lang**

Well, I had maybe a couple of people that were about the same height. Maybe Wayne Rusnak was a little an inch or so smaller than I was, but he could get away with that because he was very fast and could run with the ball. I was on the frickin' front line. I was a centre, but I was quick. I was really fast off the mark, from zero to whatever, I could pretty much beat anyone. And so when there was a couple of big lugs standing opposite me, just relishing the opportunity to knock me into the dirt and push my face into the mud, I was up and at it before they even noticed that the ball was snapped. I could dart around them and push them out of the way if it was a running play,

or get in front of them to stop them from getting at our quarterback, Jim Logan, and I just use my wits and speed off the mark to take the place of someone who should have been there in my place who was bigger. And I also played defense as a center linebacker, and I was tenacious. I loved to get in the middle of the play and knock somebody on their ass. I just relished that. I don't know, there's a side of me that, I took up boxing for a while and my wife couldn't believe the animalistic violence that was stored in this body. Maybe it was just a release of a bunch of tension.

Never was involved in the theatre productions, which there were many at YCI. I eventually did when I was in grade 12, it was part of a major musical that Daphny Marshall headed. I was very comfortable in getting up in front of people. And we would have these things called open lits that would happen kind of every couple of months. People would get up there and entertain. And of course, whatever choire would do their bit, whoever played a musical instrument would get up there and showcase themselves. I and a group of guys would develop and write corny scripts, get up there and have the greatest time making people laugh and laughing at ourselves. I just enjoyed getting up in front of people and hamming it up as we were doing back then. I had a natural proclivity for being in front of people and trying to make them laugh. That was my foray into the performing arts, I suppose. And the musical was helpful, got me into an organized structure. And everyone encouraged me to go do more of it.

Out of high school, I was not sure what I wanted to do with myself. I had a half-brother who lived in Vancouver. My father was married before he married my mother, and had a son who was 11, 12 years older than I was. And he went to live with his mother in the Vancouver area. He went to UBC and studied commerce. Not knowing what I wanted to do, my father and half-brother said, Well, do this. And so I enrolled at UBC in the Faculty of Commerce and hated it. And so I specialized in having a good time instead. One had to put in an effort, and I certainly didn't. I put in an effort of going out and having fun and visiting a lot of really interesting drinking haunts in Vancouver. So I specialized in that. And after three years of doing that, they gave me the boot. I ended up working summers in Prince Rupert, BC, and got a job in the fishing business. I I went out on the boats one year, but mostly I worked in a cold storage plant at BC Packers, this enormous building that housed six or seven million pounds of fish that was frozen and was exported to various parts around the world.

Surprisingly, there was a very good community theatre in Prince Rupert, which I became a part of. There were a lot of draft dodgers from the United States who were involved in theatre in some aspect and didn't want to be drafted or were drafted and struck out for Canada. Prince Rupert was kind of an area where not many people thought of, so it was a good place for them to hide. And they became involved in theatre. And I, along with them, got my taste of being in plays, which I did several times. I remember taking a play to the BC Drama Festival. I was an actor, and the adjudicator was a woman by the name of Sharon Pollock, who I eventually became very good friends with. She was from Calgary and a fierce woman, wonderful playwright. I was given some praise by Sharon, which was quite a remarkable achievement when I look back. She didn't give

praise very much at all. I took that as a sign and continued to do a little bit more in Prince Rupert in the world of theatre.

And my very good friend Jim Gibney, we lived next door to each other in Logan Crescent, had moved to Calgary after finishing his commerce degree in Regina, and he got a job in the oil patch. And he knew I was dabbling in theatre in Prince Rupert. So he encouraged me to come out to the University of Calgary and take a course just to try it out at the University of Calgary Drama Department, which I did. I loved it. I took some of my meager credits from UBC and applied them to three years of study at the U of C and graduated, and boom, I got a job in the professional theatre pretty damn quick out of university.

### **Dick DeRyk**

Calgary at the time, the reputation was much more cowtown than cultural center. And I'm surprised because right now, and through the years, I'm assuming, it has had a very vibrant live theatre scene. Which runs counter to the impression that we get of Calgary as being cowtown and hockey players, right?

### **Duval Lang**

Yeah, the culture was cow culture back then, and Stampede ruled the roost. That's basically all it was noted for. And there were Theatre Calgary and Alberta Theatre Project that were just in the nascent beginnings when I came to Calgary in the early 70s. Edmonton, on the other hand, had a very healthy and vibrant art culture. Calgary was always 50 steps behind Edmonton. But there were jobs to be had, and I managed to snag a couple of them and started my career here and was a very much a participant in the evolution of the arts in Calgary.

And it's grown to the point where I'd say that Calgary has eclipsed Edmonton in terms of the cultural opportunities and health and wealth of what we have to offer and the undercurrent of young people that are coming out of educational institutions and moving to Calgary because they see an opportunity that exists here for them to get in the in the art. It's always had a very good music scene, and it continues to do that. But theatre, classical music, ballet, dance, jazz dance have all had amazing growth in this community, and it's a pleasure to continue to live here and be a part of that.

### **Dick DeRyk**

He and Pam met at university and have now been together for many, many years. Actually, they're well into their fifth decade together.

### **Duval Lang**

I was going to the University of Calgary and taking drama, as was this mature woman. And we ended up in a design course together sitting in this amphitheatre. I looked over at her and she had these beautiful, detailed aboriginal moccasins that were stunning. And so I said, Hey, I like your

moccasins. And she said, Thanks. And she looked at a ring that I had, and it was a Haida gold ring. It was from an Eagle clan. I had met the grandson of the carver and arranged to have a ring made for me, and I still have it. So she admired that. We started to hang out a little bit more in this design class and got to know each other a little bit more. I discovered that she had a family. She had four kids, and she was 10 years older than me. I was 24, she was 34, and had four kids. The youngest was five, and the eldest was 12.

Eventually we started to date, and I ended up moving in with her, and that was an experience in itself, moving into a family of four, three boys and a girl. The noise was unbelievable, but somehow I managed to, I guess you call that love. Eventually became friends with the kids, not all at once. Two were solid behind me. The other two were, who is this guy anyway? And we lived together for three years prior to getting married, and so I inherited four kids, and my wife says, You brought into our family a lovely clock radio, a record player, and a small color TV that my mother had given me. And I brought in four kids. That was part and parcel of making sure that made Calgary my bay. The kids wanted to grow up here. She taught school for five years, drama at a junior high school, and then kind of soured with the vagaries of the teaching profession. You're not always recognized for what you do, it's the amount of hours that you put in. So if she was working tons of hours on various productions, and she would be compensated at the same rate with some other teacher that would just be putting in his or her time until they could retire, didn't like the unfairness. And so she went on and got her master's in communication and did a lot of marketing jobs for professional organizations.

We have four kids and we have seven grandkids, and we've done something very special with our grandkids. When they hit the age of 12, we will take them out of school to anywhere they want to go in Canada, and we will go for 10 days, and so we've been to, my God, the plains of Abraham three times. We've been to Nova Scotia another three times, we've been to Newfoundland once and been to the Yukon once. So we've had wonderful times with our grandkids and have a wonderful relationship with them, largely because of quality time we spent together on the road.

### **Dick DeRyk**

You've been doing this for 46 years in Calgary. You must be one of the granddaddies of live Theatre in Calgary by now. Are there others?

### **Duval Lang**

Certainly. I mentioned Sharon Pollock. There were other luminaries, John Morrell, Grant Reddick. unfortunately, all of those individuals have passed, and I suspect that yeah, I'm kind of the senior statesman in the theatre community in Calgary. I've started a couple of companies that still exist. I continue to work as a freelance actor and director and invariably do at least two shows each year, two or more. I've got a one-man show I did that is starting to tour across the country. And so I keep my hand very much in the theatre world and in the arts world. I sit on several boards, and ironically, some of my failed commerce background has served me well. I did remember

something from books that I didn't open or opened reluctantly, and some of that actually sunk in. And so I can contribute when talks turn to administrative areas and how to effectively manage a budget.

### **Dick DeRyk**

The conventional wisdom is that being an actor, with few exceptions, is not really a get rich quick scheme.

### **Duval Lang**

That is a truism, Dick. Unless you happen to find yourself in front of a movie set, as opposed to a bit player, a recurring role will pay you very well. But there's a very low percentage of individuals that have that good fortune and good luck.

### **Dick DeRyk**

You've done a few. You've done the episode of various shows. You had a part in Brokeback Mountain, the movie, which was somewhat controversial at the time.

### **Duval Lang**

You don't see a lot of me in Brokeback Mountain, but you do hear a lot of me. I was a rodeo announcer, and it was a delightful afternoon or a couple of afternoons recording that. I was very proud of that work. And I'm proud of the fact that the director, who didn't know much about rodeo at the time, I remember going into the audition and he said, You know anything about rodeo? And I said, Yeah, actually, my wife was on the board of the Calgary Stampede at the time. She was actually the fourth female director of the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede, which started in 1912. In the 90s, she became the fourth female director. So I said, Yeah, I knew quite a bit about rodeo, been several times. And he said, Okay, here's this scene, just narrate it and go off script. I don't care what you do but make yourself sound like a rodeo announcer. And I did that and obviously impressed him. And then when it got to the filming part of it, he said, Well, here's the script, but if you hit a few points on the script, great, but just keep talking. Did well in the audition, just do it. And so I just babbled on and on like a rodeo announcer and had a great time doing it.

### **Dick DeRyk**

How do you get those roles? Do you have an agent? Do you just show up for auditions?

### **Duval Lang**

You are represented by an agent, and if you kind of fit into the criteria that they are looking for, they will send you out to do an audition in front of, if you're lucky, the director, or at least a casting director, and you will do your audition opposite a reader, and you they will ask you to do different takes on it. And if you're lucky, if you make an impression, you may be asked to come back and do something else. Or, hey, you've got the job.

I must admit that I really don't have a passion for doing film and television work. It's lovely gravy that happens. It's a lovely treat to do something like that, but I don't pursue it as much as I should if I was truly committed to being a player in the film and television business. My passion is for live theatre, and so I will go out of my way to find work and continue to find work in that area.

I remember doing a lovely commercial that paid me an extraordinary amount of money for Glad Wrap. The audition was to go, you didn't have any lines, but they wanted to see your hands because they were going to be prominent in this particular commercial. And so I said, what the hell? I guess I look like a fisherman. I've got some experience as a fisherman. So I showed up and I was sitting waiting to go into the room where they were going to look at your hands. A friend, a woman, was going up for the same part since it was a hand commercial by and large. She had gone to extraordinary levels to make her hands beautiful. She went to a salon and got them neatly clipped, and she soaked her hand in a plastic bag with hand lotion for that evening and went to bed with her hand in this god-awful muck and showed up, and her hands were beautiful, and mine were well, like this, chewed at the ends, and they were fishmen hands. And I went in and had this audition and had a good time and laughed with them and thought, well, this is a lark. My friend will get it because her hands were beautiful, but they gave the jump to me.

It was two parts, and the first part was going out and doing ice fishing just outside of Canmore on the Chain Lakes. It was a cold day, and I had to sit and pretend to catch a fish. The other day was in a kitchen where I was wrapping this piece of, was salmon. How the hell did a salmon get into this lake that I was fishing in? Anyway, I was I was to wrap salmon, and we spent the entire day with me carefully wrapping a piece of salmon with Glad Wrap. And then the director said, I'd like to do an outtake. It has nothing to do with this commercial, but kind of putting something together for my own enjoyment. So I would like you to take this piece of salmon and just play with it. Do whatever you want with it. So I said, sure, I'll go along with this. So oh my god, it was not fit for family entertainment. And they had the entire crew and the director falling off their chairs laughing at it.

### **Dick DeRyk**

We won't get into the details of that one.

### **Duval Lang**

No.

### **Dick DeRyk**

You've done a fair bit of touring. Back a couple of years ago, 2023, you appeared in a program for kids at the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra Kids Concert Series. And you were an actor in a production called The Mysterious Maestro. You had the full orchestra as backing.

**Duval Lang**

A large part of my career has been working with young audiences. I started a company called Quest Theatre, which is primarily focused on taking theatrical productions out into schools and ran that for 25 years. But I would also do independent work as an actor or director, and what you just spoke of is an instance of that.

A good friend in Calgary has a company called Dandy Productions, and they take stories that are geared towards young audiences, but stories that have had composers develop symphonic work that an entire orchestra can play. We've done a lot of stories that Roald Dahl, English cheeky writer for young people, he has a collection of fractured fairy tales, and amongst them is Little Red Riding Hood, a half a dozen of them. Mysterious Maestro is based on the Pied Piper. There's a fellow in England who has written a full score for each of these adaptations of Roald Dahl's work. And I actually met the gent and spent a weekend at his place. And so we would rehearse the telling of the story, say Little Red Riding Hood, and would incorporate the orchestra. Sometimes they would be playing, sometimes we would be showcasing the telling of the story on our own. A lot of time we would be doing that in concert with the orchestra. They would be playing the same time we were telling the story. We would do it for several weekends in front of massive amounts of families.

I've done these literally around the world. I've performed at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles doing Little Red Riding Hood. We took it to Manchester, England, and did it in front of the Roald Dahl Foundation. I've been across Canada several times doing these, and at several points in the United States as well. And also a tour to Australia, where we did Little Red Riding Hood, as it were, in Adelaide and Perth. Performing in front of young audiences is a bit of a Cinderella story for me. I'm very skilled at it and can interact with young people so easily. In fact, I probably feel more comfortable with young people than I do with people my own age. The inner kid in me takes over, and I speak their language. I have their same naivety towards life, and I'm not afraid to take the mickey out of who I am and what I am doing, which is endearing to young people. So I've made a very large part of my career at performing and developing work for young audiences.

**Dick DeRyk**

We talked about the economics of live theatre and Duve's view of the future of the work to which he has devoted a lifetime.

You're not surviving on the admission that the patrons are paying to come and see the play. How do the live theatre companies, how do they survive? What is involved in maintaining a theatre company in any community?

**Duval Lang**

There's a kind of a prescribed ratio that theatre companies have existed on for decades. Maybe it's shifted somewhat these days, but it certainly was very prominent when I had started the

company and ran it for so many years. You relied on your box office for about a third of revenue. You relied on government support, it could be municipal, it could be provincial, and if you're lucky, federal, for the other third. The remaining third was through fundraising.

And with a lot of government agencies clawing back funds towards the arts, the fundraising aspect has become more prominent in most arts organizations. And it's been a bit of a challenge. Calgary in the 70s and 80s, there were a lot of a lot of oil companies that would contribute heavily to the arts and were part and parcel of the growth of the arts community in Calgary. But those organizations merged a lot, and when times were tough, then they would phase out the arts component somewhat. It's always been a major challenge these days generating enough operating income to conduct a season.

I know a lot of companies are co-producing with other companies, either in the same community or province or outside the province in order to cut the costs, which means lesser opportunities for actors because you're doing the same show in Calvary as you are in Winnipeg and maybe Edmonton, Vancouver. I've been on a few of those tours, and in the past, each community would do their own production of that, but now they're sharing it. And of course, cast sizes tend to lessen when there is not enough money to go around to hire more people. It's always been a challenge and will continue to be a challenge.

### **Dick DeRyk**

Seems to me that live performances of all sorts tend to attract more of the older generation, the baby boomers, than young families. Young families have pressures from kids' hockey and sports and streaming services and two jobs. What is the future of theatre vis-a-vis all the competition that families and the next generations that theatre would depend on? All the pressures that they're facing.

### **Duval Lang**

I think there is a future. I think it goes in cycles, to tell you the truth. I think we're coming out of a cycle that had a lot to do with the pandemic when people would cluster in their homes and become addicted to series and Netflix. I'd like to think that things have come back to where it was before the pandemic hit. It's a slow evolution, but I continue to think that theatre has the potential to have a unique part in people's lives. It's an experience that is of the moment. You are there communing with people on stage. You have to pay attention. You can't pause and go do something else. If it's done well enough, which has always been the case, if you do something well, it will find an audience. It's a bit like the baseball story. If I build it, they will come. If you do it well, they will come. That's always been the case with live theatre, and that will be the future.

I see a lot more young people eager to get into live theatre than in the past. When I was fresh out of theatre school, most people went to Toronto to find their place in the theatre world. I, for various reasons, remained in Calgary and helped grow the community here. I see a lot of people

choosing to come to Calgary and other communities like Edmonton or Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and avoid the bigger communities like Toronto or Vancouver and develop the arts community in their smaller communities. There's greater opportunities for them. And so I think the future is, I'm very optimistic about the future.

*Yorkton Stories is presented by*



*Supporting sponsors*

MICCAR Group of Companies

