

FORT WAYNE - Quarantine and social distancing have made audiences nearly unfeasible, but theater art depends on people. People to perform, people who watch. Without people, theaters around the world have been struggling through this arduous year.

During the weekend of November 12-15, more than 2,500 theaters across all 50 states and over 40 countries, including Fort Wayne's own Summit City Music Theatre, will participate in Music Theatre International's *All Together Now!*: A Global Event Celebrating Local Theatre.

Music Theatre International's Chief Operating Officer and Director of Education & Development said, "*All Together Now!* is about bringing people back to the theater, whether as audience members or cast, crew and musicians."

Music Theatre International, a prominent global theatrical licensing agency, is offering this revue to serve as a local fundraising event for theaters around the world with free-of-charge licensing on a large collection of musicals.

Mindy Cox, co-founder of Summit City Music Theatre said, "This same production is going to be put up by different theaters all over the country, all over the world, but on the same weekend, so we literally are all together now."

For Cox and her co-founders, this will be one of their first shows since the pandemic began.

"We've never experienced, worldwide, something that has affected the theater industry - from community theater all the way to Broadway, the London West End - that's affected us in this way," said Cox.

Featuring local talent, they will be performing songs including "Seasons of Love" from *Rent*, "Let it Go" from Disney's *Frozen*, "Beautiful City" from *Godspell*, and many others.

"We chose to do a cabaret-style version of the show with some of Fort Wayne's most beloved performers where we can really showcase the talent and the music itself," said Cox.

Cox and her husband, Jeff, along with Chris Spalding and Kelly Bartlett of the Fort Wayne Ballroom Company, began Summit City Music Theatre in 2018 with a hope of offering family-friendly theater and supporting artists.

"We wanted to be able to pay our actors, even if it was a small amount," said Cox. "We believe that art deserves that recognition. Our art is our work."

By what Cox called "divine intervention," they found themselves breaking out of some traditional ways of theater.

"Rather than just a conventional theater experience, we've morphed into this idea of using more found spaces, rather than a conventional Proscenium Theater," said Cox.

The unconventional "where" is just as important as the "who."

One of their featured actors moved back to Fort Wayne with loss of hearing, and two ASL translators became actors in a production. They were able to represent a traditionally missed group of people in theater.

“They became members and translated as they were acting as we were going through the show, which was just an incredible experience,” said Cox. “It’s something new for this area, to be able to tap into an underserved community with the hard of hearing and deaf community.”

Summit City Music Theatre has performed most of their shows in northwest Fort Wayne, allowing them to potentially “unlock some doors for people” and serve a different part of the community.

“We’re excited about having the opportunity to present all together now, which is going to be a small production that we’re hoping can raise some funds for us so that we can continue to present this sort of theater,” said Cox.

This event is not only a celebration of a return to theater after such a long year, but for Summit City Music Theatre it holds a deeper sentiment.

As the quarantines began, so did co-founder Chris Spalding’s battle with brain cancer. Unable to put forth art as well, the year has been hard and well worth a moment to celebrate good things.

“This has really been a very exciting time for us to be able to celebrate Chris’s health being there, and us being able to move forward with some big dreams,” said Cox. “We’ve kept dreaming through that whole shutdown period.”

This production has allowed them to once again partner with the Embassy Theatre and local performers to revive life back into the local theater community.

“The Embassy has been fantastic through the whole pandemic, reaching out to local theater organizations, not just us, but a lot of the different local theaters,” said Cox. “We thought this would be the perfect opportunity to use their beautiful venue in getting things back on our feet here.”

Several other local groups, including Belmont High School, and the Van Wert Civic Theatre, will be joining the *All Together Now!* event with their own performances that weekend.

Cox said, “To be able to get back working safely, and to be able to share that love and light again, with our community, that’s what it’s all about.”

Summit City Music Theatre’s three performances for *All Together Now!* will be held in the Embassy Theatre Ballroom.

Shows are Friday, November 12 at 8:00 PM, and Saturday, November 13 at 2:00 PM and 8:00 PM.

Tickets are available at the STAR Bank box office (260-424-5665), [ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com) and [fwembassytheatre.org](https://www.fwembassytheatre.org).

This fundraising event will support Summit City Music Theatre and the Embassy Theatre.

“Out of the ruins and rubble; out of the smoke; out of our night of struggle; can we find a ray of hope; one pale, thin ray reaching through the day? We can build a beautiful city together, yes we can.” - Godspell’s *Beautiful City*