

Lisa Mitchell

Town Hall Theater



Middlebury, Vermont

Story

Vermont life drew Lisa Mitchell from the hustle and bustle of her hometown of Washington D.C. Vermont was the perfect place to raise her family. She felt connected to the culture and serenity that a place like Middlebury offers. Lisa co-founded a new creative business in Middlebury because she saw an opportunity to create something unique to the area. Middlebury Underground, which founded the food and arts festival, Foodaroo, was created six years ago with the desire to build a resilient arts and culture community. From there, Lisa found her way to the theater. Lisa has been the executive director of Town Hall Theater in Middlebury, Vermont since February 2020. A regional venue, Town Hall Theater hosts 165 events and shows per year, ranging from operas, plays, and educational programs for kids. The theater opens for private events such as weddings and workshops to serve the community. Lisa is involved with programming, communication with the board and has general oversight of the theater.

Community

Town Hall Theater is driven by the community and for the community. Lisa explained that Vermonters have a desire for involvement in community arts and culture and will do everything they can to see the growth of their local organizations. The support the theater receives from community members is no exception. In response, the theater does its best to cultivate event schedules that are interesting, broad, and cost effective, above all. Town Hall Theater strives to make its environment inclusive and accessible for anyone who wants to partake in the arts and culture that Middlebury has to offer.

Right Now

Everyone has been hit hard by Covid-19, and Town Hall Theater knows the struggle firsthand. As soon as word spread about the virus in Vermont, the theater closed. Lisa explained the decision was difficult but necessary for the safety of the theater employees and community members it serves. Programming has been pushed back until it is safe for Vermonters again. However, the theater has created a new Instagram video series called "The Quarantine Sessions" filmed by artists and performers to help unite the Town Hall Theater audience at home. Lisa has expressed gratitude for the incredible support they have received at the theater since the beginning of the pandemic. Donors have been generous, but seeing as though Town Hall Theater has lost revenue from the cancelled season, additional donations are always welcomed and appreciated. Notes and letters from the public have also served as reminders of the impact Town Hall Theater has had on Middlebury.



Photo Credit: Elisabeth Waller

Final Words

Lisa has stayed optimistic during this time. She thinks this may be a time for creatives to thrive and learn from each other. Having limitations allows creatives to expand what is possible for them. So, if you can, take advantage of this situation. Vermonters are an innovative group of people who always come together through the good and bad times, and this pandemic will be no different. For the Town Hall Theater, even with the influx of support and donations, the theater relies on the community to survive and needs even more support either by donation or kind words to keep the organization alive through this tough time.

Written & edited by Korey Ward

“We [at the theater] want to create experiences that are inclusive, inviting and affordable.”

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