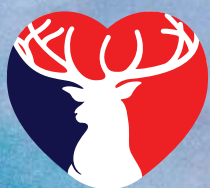


THE LERNER

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023



City of Elkhart



410 S MAIN ST • ELKHART, IN
(574) 293-4469 • THELERNER.COM



LernerTheatre



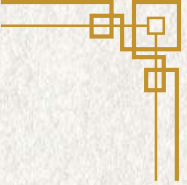
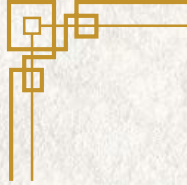
TheLernerTheatre



the-lerner-theatre



thelernertheatre



LETTER FROM MAYOR ROD ROBERSON

Since its opening, The Lerner Theatre (as well as the ELCO) has been a beacon of inspiration and community. From captivating plays to concerts and community celebrations, The Lerner Theatre has created priceless memories for all that enter its doors. It has also served as a place for everyone. It is not only the people's theatre but the gem of downtown, something we all can be proud of.

Not only does The Lerner Theatre provide world-class entertainment, but it also serves as an economic driver for our city, attracting visitors from near and far who support local businesses and contribute to the vibrancy of our downtown area. Its presence enhances the overall quality of life for our residents and helps to showcase the talent, personality and diversity of our community. From the aspirations of the local talent that Premier Arts cultivates that makes memories on The Lerner Theatre stage, to the sounds of the Elkhart County Symphony that fills the theatre with musical notes of joy.

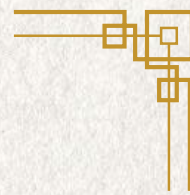
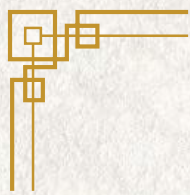


As the Mayor of Elkhart, I am committed to supporting and preserving The Lerner Theatre as a cherished institution that enriches the lives of all who walk through its doors. No matter where you live in our city, state, or country, The Lerner Theatre is for all.

I encourage each and every one of you to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities that The Lerner Theatre offers and to continue to show your support as we near its centennial anniversary.

One of my most cherished memories was at The Lerner Theatre, where I enjoyed the music of one of my favorites, Tim Cunningham playing the saxophone, at The Elkhart Jazz Festival. Being lost in his music took me back to my childhood when I played the saxophone. This memory really made The Lerner Theatre feel like home. What is your favorite Lerner Theatre memory?

Mayor Rod Roberson



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“The arts are fundamental to our humanity. They ennoble and inspire us—fostering creativity, empathy, and beauty. The arts also strengthen our communities socially, educationally, and economically — benefits that persist even during a pandemic that has been devastating to the arts.”

– Randy Cohen, Americans for the Arts

In 1988, Philip Miller requested a meeting with the supporters of the arts in Elkhart, Indiana and City of Elkhart officials asking for their help to restore The ELCO Theatre and make it a visionary in arts and entertainment for the Elkhart community. Mr. Miller had a vision in 1988 of “what could be” for this landmark building. 36 years later, the vision is in motion with vibrancy. Following the completion of the 400 Block Study, a vision was cast in the early 2000’s for a renovation and restoration of the former ELCO Theater, along with an operational model that focused on the local community, arts education and national touring talent.

In November 2024, The Lerner Theatre will turn 100 years old. What an accomplishment and testament to the forward thinkers of this community to save this building so many years ago! In its existence over the last 100 years, The Lerner has seen several recessions, a world war, a pandemic, a \$20 million renovation and thousands of local and national events on its stage. The saying, “if these walls could talk” comes to mind!

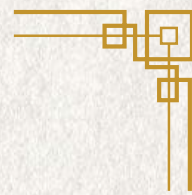
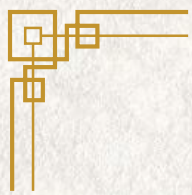
Following the renovation of The Lerner over a decade ago, The Lerner has followed the operational model established during the 400 Block Study. Emphasis on local production and arts education was a key component to ensuring this beloved building remains affordable and useable for those that helped save it. The Lerner has grown its popularity among national talent agents and promoters, who book the shows and events that are seen on The Lerner stage. Over the last decade, shows and events, attendance, and the economic impact of The Lerner Theatre have all grown, showcasing again that the choice to restore The Lerner Theatre was in the best interest of this community.

As I end my time here after nine years of serving The Lerner Theatre and the City of Elkhart, I am truly grateful for the support for this facility that I’ve seen daily in my role. It’s been an honor to play a part in The Lerner’s history. From the administrations to the boards, staffs, volunteers, promoters, the patrons and the community – thank you for your fierce support, trust and love you’ve shown The Lerner and its staff and volunteers that leads it every day!

The future of The Lerner is bright as it looks ahead to its 100-year anniversary celebration and exciting future to come. What an exciting time for the future of Elkhart and for The Lerner Theatre! Here’s to the next 100 years!

Thanks for the memories,
Michelle Weir





LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE LERNER GOVERNING BOARD

The Lerner Theatre and Crystal Ballroom continue to experience strong growth coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic. The last two years have truly shown the growth of The Lerner as a concert and event venue that both artists and patrons enjoy visiting. We expect a strong 2024 as Elkhart continues to grow and opportunities expand. We continue to receive rave reviews from promoters, performers, and attendees on our well-maintained, accommodating, and beautiful facility, thanks to the hard work by our entire staff. The HVAC improvements over the last couple of years have been completed and are serving us well. In an effort to make our facility more user friendly and available to all, we have added a program called KultureCity which is geared to meeting and accommodating the sensory needs and challenges of our patrons.

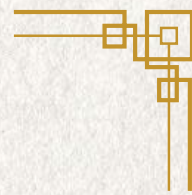
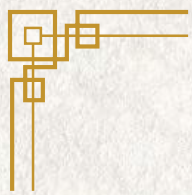


In addition, the Lerner has implemented the Ticketmaster ticketing system, which will provide us a wider marketing capability, provide a broader range of sales information and reports useful for future planning and facilitate show closings with promoters. Also, Premier Arts continues to provide training and performance experiences to adults and children and a wonderful array of shows each year. Its plans for the 2024 season include Peter Pan, Matilda, Oklahoma, School of Rock and Elf. A special thank you to Premier Arts for the Lerner Christmas show and the spectacular holiday window displays. We also wish to give a special thank you to the Friends of the Lerner for its program sponsorships throughout each season and our wonderful volunteers without whose help the shows would not be possible.

As the Theatre approaches its 100th anniversary, I am pleased to report that it is in great shape and ready to take on the next hundred years.

Come see us and enjoy all that your Lerner has to offer.

Gary Boyn, President, Lerner Governing Board



LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, FRIENDS OF THE LERNER, INC.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Rex Martin for serving as the Chair and President of Friends of the Lerner, Inc. since 2018. It was Rex's vision and then his guidance and leadership that have positioned the Friends of the Lerner to continue in its mission for the Lerner's future.

As Rex departs, we are fortunate to have Ashley Martin, Rex's daughter, step in as our next Friends of the Lerner President and Chair. We look forward to working with Ashley.

Thank you, Rex and welcome Ashley.

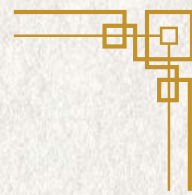
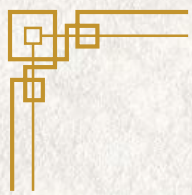
Ashley Martin is President and Chief Operating Officer of NIBCO INC., the worldwide leader in the manufacture of flow control products for the residential, industrial, marine and commercial construction markets. She serves as Corporate Officer and Executive Leadership Team member and serves on the Board of Directors. She represents the fifth generation of Martin family leadership. NIBCO has been headquartered in Elkhart, Indiana since its inception in 1904.



Since joining NIBCO in 2012, Martin has held a variety of positions including executive vice president, senior vice president, sales; vice president of wholesale sales; general manager of PEX; and director of distribution and transportation. In her current role, Martin is responsible for maximizing the company's operating performance and achieving its financial goals.

Martin co-founded the American Supply Association Women in Industry group in 2013. She served a two-year term as chairperson, beginning in 2016. She currently serves on the Boards for the Indiana United Way, the United Way of Elkhart County and the Stanley Clark School in South Bend, Indiana. She is also a member of the Notre Dame Business Advisory Council.

Martin received her bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of Notre Dame in Notre Dame, Indiana. She holds a master's degree in business administration with a concentration in strategy and operations management from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas.



LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, FRIENDS OF THE LERNER, INC.

2023 was a year filled with diverse performances, community engagement and memorable experiences that truly showcased the magic of live entertainment at The Lerner Theatre.

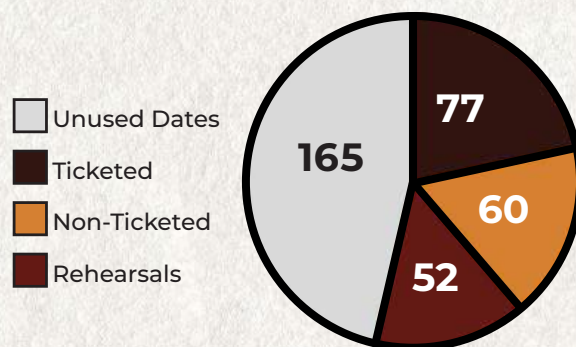
Friends of The Lerner's commitment to contributing to our community was evident in every event that Friends of The Lerner produced. From the relaxed atmosphere of Lerner on the Lawn gatherings to the enchanting melodies of The Lunchtime Live Kimball Organ Concerts with Celia Weiss, we made sure to provide something for everyone to enjoy. The inaugural Lerner Theatre Haunted History Tours added a new dimension to our offerings, allowing guests to explore the fascinating stories and rich history of our beloved venue.

One of the highlights of our programming was the support of national touring shows that captivated audiences from near and far. From the country sounds of Tracy Lawrence to the timeless classics of Killer Queen, we brought a diverse range of talent to The Lerner's stage. Boz Scaggs, Ancient Aliens, #IMOMSOHARD, and Chris Isaak each left their own unique mark on our community, enriching our cultural landscape and bringing joy to all who attended. The national tours listed above were shows funded by the Friends of The Lerner with a co-promoting partner in 2023.

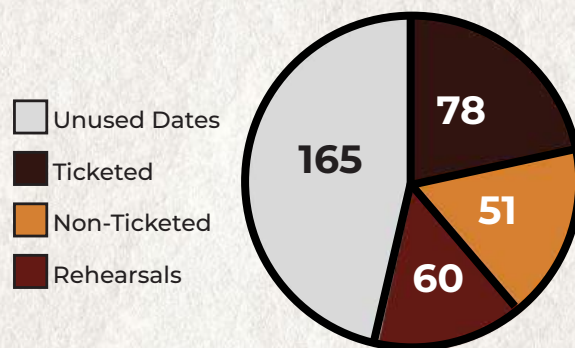
None of these remarkable events would have been possible without the support of Mayor Rod Roberson and his administration, the dedication of the exceptional team at The Lerner, including its leadership and staff, and our devoted volunteers. We are deeply appreciative of the vital roles each of them plays in ensuring the success of our beloved theatre. As we look to the months ahead, The Lerner staff will be diligently preparing for our centennial celebration and another year of memorable experiences for Lerner Theatre guests.

The Friends of The Lerner will continue to collaborate closely with The Lerner staff to bring diverse and community focused shows in 2024 and beyond. We are confident that the future holds great promise, with ongoing efforts to expand and grow. Positioned as the cornerstone of our community's performing arts scene, The Lerner Theatre is poised for even greater heights, and the Friends of The Lerner is happy to play a part in its commitment to our community.

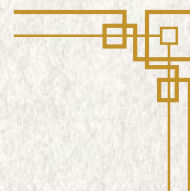
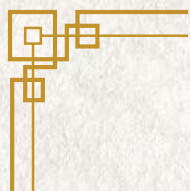
2023 EVENTS



2022 EVENTS



*based on 354 programmable calendar dates



THE HISTORY OF THE LERNER THEATRE

On March 31, 1923, Harry E. Lerner, an Elkhart businessman, announced that he planned to construct a modern “theatrical palace” on the corner of Franklin and Main Street in downtown Elkhart. The Lerner Theatre became a reality with the grand opening on November 24, 1924. It had 2,000 seats and was host to a variety of vaudeville, big band, and theatrical reviews, as well as the exciting new movies!

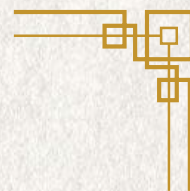
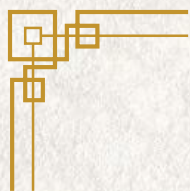
In 1931, The Lerner was purchased by the Warner Family and was renamed “The Warner.” In 1934, after a county-wide contest (won by Judith Grover), the theatre was renamed the ELCO. In 1940, Manta and Rose Theatre Chain purchased the theatre and operated it until 1961, when it was purchased by William (Bill) Miller. Bill operated the theatre until his death in 1987.

The City of Elkhart purchased the ELCO from Ruth Miller in 1990 in an attempt to save the theatre from deterioration caused by vacancy.

Following months of preliminary design and fundraising, the City of Elkhart approved the \$18 million Lerner Theatre renovation in 2008. Construction began in early 2009 and was completed in June 2011, drawing rave reviews and capturing national attention. It has been described as a project that has truly put the “heart” back in downtown Elkhart.



As The Lerner approaches its 100th year of operation, we are grateful to have had the opportunity to serve our Elkhart community for so many years, and are looking forward to celebrating this upcoming milestone with the community, as well as many more years to come.



MEET THE STAFF THE LERNER THEATRE



Michelle Weir
Executive Director



Sarah Macer
Director of Events



Tristin Tubbs
Box Office Manager



Brittany Weingart
Box Office Assistant



Rachel Buckley
Office Manager



Deen Tuggle
Technical & Facilities Director



Jacob Zehr
Assistant Technical Director



Jenna Brouillette
Communications &
Marketing Coordinator



Holly Cowan
Media Specialist



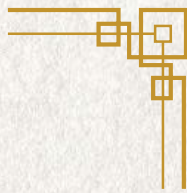
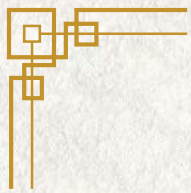
Therese Geise
Volunteer Coordinator



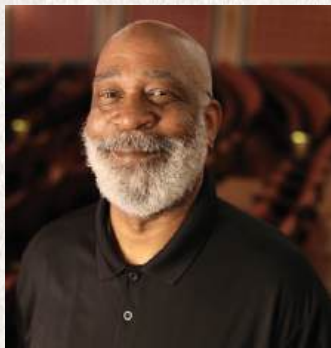
Wayne Neff
Operations &
Building Manager



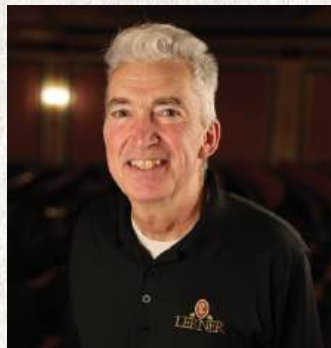
Diana Galves
Lerner Services



MEET THE STAFF THE LERNER THEATRE

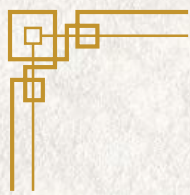


Garry Moore
Lerner Services Janitor



Tom Istenes
Facilities Coordinator





LERNER VOLUNTEERS

LERNER VOLUNTEER MISSION STATEMENT:

“To support theatre administration and ensure every patron has an enjoyable experience when visiting this jewel of Downtown Elkhart. To be goodwill ambassadors of the theatre and strive to provide the highest quality service to our guests and the general public.”



At The Lerner Theatre, we wholeheartedly believe in the adage, “it takes a village,” especially when it comes to our invaluable volunteers. Their dedication and enthusiasm infuse every event with an extra layer of magic and warmth. With the introduction of a new system, we’ve been able to formally recognize and reward the tireless efforts of these hardworking individuals who go above and beyond to make each occasion special. Our heartfelt appreciation extends far beyond the banquet we held in September of 2023; it’s a continuous sentiment throughout the year. Julie Reynolds exemplified extraordinary commitment, earning her the Above and Beyond award, while Cookie Stenburg’s unwavering dedication earned her the well-deserved title of Volunteer of the Year. This year, we were honored to present the Helping Hands award to Marty Conley, whose legacy of selflessness continues to inspire. During her 13 years as a Lerner volunteer, Marty gave over 1,775 hours of her time, talent, and abilities. Marty passed away during the Fall of 2023, but we will always be encouraged by her dedication to ensuring that everyone feels welcome at The Lerner Theatre. All our volunteers’ contributions are at the core of what we do and who we are, and for that, we are especially grateful.

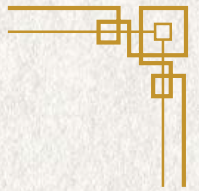
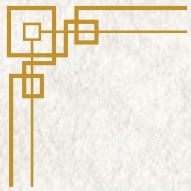


IN LOVING MEMORY



MARTY CONLEY





LETTER FROM PREMIER ARTS

"If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision whenever it takes him." - John F. Kennedy

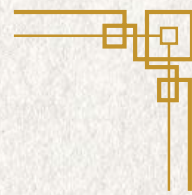
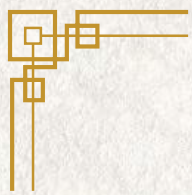
Premier Arts has been rooted in our community for 17 years and we are proud to nurture the creative spirit in all of you. Facilitating and managing performances, classes, workshops, special events, Art Walk, The Lerner Theatre holiday windows, along with the youth summer camps are the way we work to ensure that everyone in our community has the opportunity to participate and benefit from this municipal jewel: The Lerner Theatre.

Our 2023 season at the beautiful Lerner Theatre included a wide variety of performances, such as family favorite Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* and perennial favorite *A Lerner Christmas*. In total, more than 3,000 volunteers gave their time, talent and treasure to help make Premier Arts a stand out regional arts organization.

Our commitment to arts education has never been stronger. The Premier Arts Academy opened in 2023, and has seen great success with 200 students attending this free, chartered public school offering integrated arts and core academic learning. The students were able to perform on the Lerner Theatre stage in the first all school musical, *The Wizard of Oz*. This experience at the Lerner Theatre is life changing for these young artists; and is a testament to the commitment of our local government to put the people and the arts center stage.

Craig Gibson, Founding Executive Artistic Director, Premier Arts





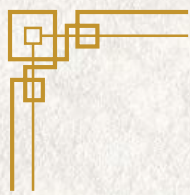
LETTER FROM THE CRYSTAL BALLROOM

In 2023, the Crystal Ballroom held a total of 110 events, featuring notable occasions such as the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce in quarter 1 with 470 guests, Oaklawn with 400 guests in quarter 2, Cancer Resources with 387 guests in quarter 3, and Elkhart Samaritan Center with 401 guests in quarter 4. The Crystal Ballroom accommodated various events like wedding receptions, corporate gatherings, and non-profit fundraisers, welcoming over 15,000 guests throughout the year; it was our second busiest year in the ballroom. With combined ballroom events and concession, Navarre paid \$197,000 in commissions to The Lerner and the City of Elkhart.



Kurt Janowsky, Navarre Hospitality Group



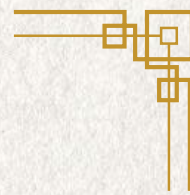
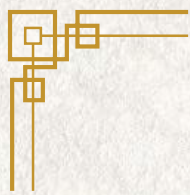


TECHNOLOGY & FACILITIES REPORT



In 2023, The Lerner Theatre worked to continually improve technological capabilities and facilities, ensuring an even more enriching experience for patrons. One notable achievement was the enhancement of the Lerner Hearing Loop, allowing a greater number of patrons to fully immerse themselves in the theater's events. This improvement reflects our commitment to accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring that all individuals can enjoy the Lerner experience to its fullest extent. Additionally, the introduction of the Flex Seating project marked a pivotal moment, providing the flexibility needed to expand programming in 2024 and accommodate diverse audience preferences. Furthermore, The Lerner continued its dedication to improving technology across various aspects, including guest experience and building security. The Lerner introduced digital concession signage to more clearly state menus, and worked to add additional safety features to make the Lerner more secure.

Future plans: The Lerner Theatre is poised for an exciting future, with plans that aim to elevate the patron experience and further solidify our commitment to accessibility and innovation. Building upon the successful transition to Ticketmaster, we are excited to leverage the platform's capabilities to streamline ticketing processes and enhance the overall booking experience for patrons and promoters alike. The introduction of flexible seating opens up a world of possibilities for expanding our programming, allowing us to cater to a wider range of audience preferences and interests. Moreover, as we strive to create a welcoming environment for all, we are proud to announce our achievement of becoming a KultureCity certified venue. This certification reflects our dedication to inclusivity and ensuring that individuals with sensory sensitivities can fully enjoy the magic of live entertainment at The Lerner. Finally, The Lerner sincerely looks forward to celebrating 100 years of live entertainment in 2024.



TICKETMASTER

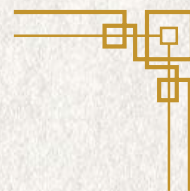
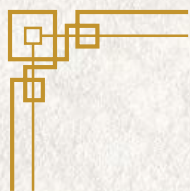


Toward the end of 2023, The Lerner Theatre successfully undertook the exciting project of transitioning its ticketing platform to Ticketmaster. This endeavor, completed over a few short months, was met with enthusiasm from the Lerner team. The anticipated benefits of partnering with Ticketmaster, include enhanced reporting, settlements, and marketing capabilities, which were eagerly welcomed by promoters. Patrons benefit from the ease of use, customized experience, and convenience of mobile ticketing. By attentively considering both promoter and patron feedback and addressing their needs, The Lerner ensured that this change further elevated the experience for

all involved. Through the transition, The Lerner remained true to its commitment to delivering top-notch local music and live entertainment to the vibrant community of Elkhart. Additionally, The Lerner Theatre furthered commitment to local performing groups by keeping the fee structure for local events consistent with past years.



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ticketmaster®



LERNER THEATRE FINANCIAL REPORT

Lerner Box Office Operations

2023

Income	\$892,981
<i>Numbers provided by internal accounting firm</i>	
Cost of Goods Sold	\$214,868
Gross Profit (Loss)	\$678,113
Lerner Labor Expense	\$91,865
Lerner Contribution from Operations	\$769,978

City Operational Expenses

Staff & Related	\$1,109,155
Other	\$618,360

Total Expenses to be Covered

\$1,729,186

Income (Loss) before other financing sources

(\$959,208)

Plus: City Subsidy (Budgeted)	\$950,000
	\$950,000

Net Lerner Income (Loss)

(\$6,638)

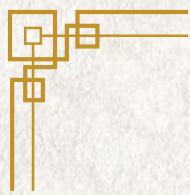
Additional Subsidy Sources

City Subsidy (Un-Budgeted)	(\$6,638)
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How the Operational Expenses Are Covered:

City Contribution	\$956,638	55%
Lerner Contribution	\$769,978	45%
Total Expenses to be Covered	\$1,729,186	100%



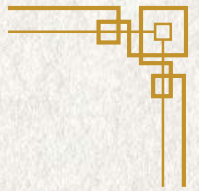
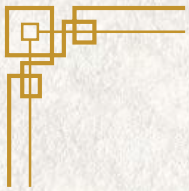


FRIENDS OF THE LERNER CONCERTS



In 2023, The Friends of The Lerner delighted audiences with an array of both local shows and national tours, catering to a diverse range of tastes. The Friends of The Lerner heavily supported community engagement, extending their reach beyond the confines of traditional performances to embrace a diverse array of events. From the laid-back ambiance of Lerner on the Lawn gatherings, to the melodies of The Lunchtime Live Kimball Organ Concerts with Celia Weiss, the Friends of the Lerner continued to support diverse live entertainment for all. This year, The Friends of the Lerner also presented the inaugural Lerner Theatre Haunted History Tours, offering a one-of-a-kind journey through the venue's storied past. Additionally, the timeless charm of Silent Movies accompanied by the masterful organist Clark Wilson transported audiences to eras of cinematic magic, underscoring The Friends of The Lerner's commitment to fostering a vibrant and inclusive community through the arts.

The Friends of the Lerner also supported the programming of several national touring shows in 2023. Country music enthusiasts swayed to the tunes of Tracy Lawrence, while fans of classic rock reveled in the electrifying performance of Killer Queen, paying homage to the legendary band. Boz Scaggs serenaded the crowd with his soulful voice, captivating hearts with timeless melodies. For those intrigued by the mysteries of the cosmos, Ancient Aliens offered a thought-provoking exploration into extraterrestrial phenomena. The comedic duo #IMOMSOHARD brought laughter with their hilarious takes on the quirks of modern parenthood. Rounding out the lineup, Chris Isaak enchanted the audience with his velvety vocals and captivating stage presence, leaving an indelible mark on The Lerner's stage in 2023.



FRIENDS OF THE LERNER FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Friends of the Lerner
Program Revenue

\$296,470.00

Friends of the Lerner
Program Expenses

\$85,757.77

Public Donations

\$51,870.11

Net Assets

\$184,589.95

Volunteer Generated
Revenue

\$5,880.61

Volunteer Program
Expenses

\$3,422.73

Total Support & Revenue

\$369,726.54

Total Expenses

\$295,070.68



The image shows a close-up, low-angle view of the ornate, vaulted ceiling of the Lerner Theatre. The ceiling is painted in a deep blue color and is adorned with intricate gold-colored decorations. A wide band of gold-colored figures, possibly cherubs or angels, is arranged in a circular pattern around the perimeter of the ceiling. Below this band, there are several large, circular medallions or rosettes, each containing a different design. The overall effect is one of grandeur and historical significance.

LIFE'S A PERFORMANCE LIVE IT AT THE LERNER

November 27th, 2023 marked
The Lerner Theatre's 99th Anniversary.

Nearly a century ago, Harry E. Lerner, an Elkhart businessman, announced that he planned to construct a modern "theatrical palace" on the corner of Franklin and Main Streets in Downtown Elkhart. The Lerner Theatre became a reality with the Grand Opening on Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 1924.

Very few theatres get to celebrate 99 years of making long-lasting memories. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to serve our Elkhart community for the last 99 years and are looking forward to many more years to come.

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