

## News Release

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For more information contact:

Richard Wright 250-994-3340

[wright@theatreroyal.ca](mailto:wright@theatreroyal.ca)

or: Amy Newman 604-255-3465

[aln@plankroad.ca](mailto:aln@plankroad.ca)

### Theatre Royal, Barkerville travels to Innsbruck, Austria

The Theatre Royal of Barkerville fame will be represented at a world conference on the heritage of mining at the University of Innsbruck, Austria in April.

Amy Newman and Richard Wright, Barkerville producers and playwrights, have been invited to present two papers at “On the Surface: the Heritage of Mines and Mining.” Their papers will focus on: “The Importance of Theatre as Cultural Tourism in the British Columbian Gold Rush of 1860,” and “The Rough But Honest Miners: Music in the Cariboo Goldfields, 1860-1881”.

The three-day conference will represent 30 countries, with close to 100 academics, mining site authors and researchers giving 100 papers. Newman and Wright are the only ones being offered two, rather than one, presentation slots, and only two of four speakers from Canada.

“We think that says more about the perceived importance of theatre, music and cultural tourism than it does about us,” says Wright.

“It is a unique opportunity to tell the story of the Theatre Royal and it’s impact on Barkerville gold rush society to a world audience. It is a reaffirmation that what we had here specifically in Cariboo and generally in British Columbia has importance and an impact around the world.”

“As great as it is to be offered the chance to speak the second benefit is that we will have the chance to hear speakers with diverse mining topics”, says Amy Newman, from subjects like, “Industrial Colonies in Algeria, the urban history of the mining town of Beni-Saf,” to “Absolute heroes: ethnography of socialist Yugoslavia mining aristocracy”, and from “Interpreting Mining Heritage in National Parks” to “Reinterpreting Chinese Mining Heritage in Australia.” The latter is of particular interest to Wright as he has written a book on the Chinese in Canada, “In a Strange Land” and has a history of his own as a street interpreter in Barkerville.

For Newman it is an opportunity to hear stories from Japan to Tanzania and see how they flesh out the social structure of mining and how these stories might enhance presentations on the stage of Theatre Royal.

“Imagine”, she says, “over 100 papers on the heritage of mining, and only two on music or theatre, and those are from our own Theatre Royal in Barkerville.”

“We are anxious to hear about some of our favorite sites, like Dawson City, Yukon; Virginia City, Montana, and Australia; and to hear how other sites are managing the economic down turn, a shift in cultural tourism and the transition from mining to heritage,” says Wright. “And, it will be a significant forum in which to promote and introduce the 1860s Cariboo Gold Rush, just a year before the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Billy Barker’s strike on Williams Creek.”

After half a lifetime of researching gold mining and its social life, for Wright, the greatest outcome beyond this will be the door-opening contacts and exchanges between attendees, the chance to visit an Austrian silver mine, chat with folks about Welsh coalmines and share dinner with a Japanese researcher, or for Newman to talk with a Scottish researcher about the legacy of Scotland’s coalfields.

“It will be an exciting few days,” says Newman, as she puts the final stitches on her new 1860s costume she is sewing for the presentation. “Fitting my petticoat into the suitcase will certainly be a challenge.”

Not ones to let an opportunity for research slide by, Newman and Wright will use the journey to drop in on Germany and the province of Hessen, to visit the hometowns of hurdy-gurdy dancers who were in Barkerville. Ongoing research has identified some surnames, birthplaces and hometowns. The research will enhance this season’s drama “Escape to Barkerville” which Newman is writing. It will also be an opportunity for Wright to complete a photography and writing assignment on a newly discovered Celtic site in Hessen, Germany for an archeological magazine.

The conference attendance is supported in part by the Barkerville Heritage Trust, The Friends of Barkerville and Newman & Wright Theatre Company. As a follow up, Newman and Wright will be presenting lectures this summer focused on what they learned at this conference on the heritage of mines and mining.