



# SUN ERGOS

A COMPANY OF THEATRE AND DANCE



*"Working Together" – Moving the Human Spirit!*

## BACKGROUND

**Brief History:** Sun. Ergos, A Company of Theatre and Dance, was founded by Robert Greenwood, actor, and Dana Luebke, dancer, in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, in 1977. Robert, a *cum laude* BA graduate of Dartmouth College and an honors MFA graduate of Yale School of Drama, and having left teaching and chairmanship positions of acting-directing at the University of Oklahoma and the University of Calgary, and acting positions in various repertory theatre companies, and Dana, having left dancing and teaching positions with the Minnesota Dance Theatre and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, decided to create a company combining their abilities with a mandate to celebrate the differences and recognize the similarities among peoples and cultures from around the world, "working together" to move the human spirit.

They determined to make Sun.Ergos an international company from the beginning, touring the second year to the prestigious Edinburgh Festival Fringe and over the next 6 years premiering 8 new shows. They have since created a repertoire of more than 400 original, classic and folkloric works of theatre and dance in 47 different productions and have performed in 17 countries on 4 continents. The company's mandate has evolved with the artists, and today, they strive to perform, preserve and develop the legacy of theatre and dance with visual and textile arts from around the world, creating shows with as much authenticity and cultural truth as possible.

Unique in North America and Europe, Sun.Ergos' energetic blend of the performing arts has been compared to the story-telling of the Blackfoot Elders who fascinated their audiences by telling two stories at once, one verbally and the other in sign-language or movement.

At first, the idea was to overlap theatre and dance pieces, sometimes making comments on each other, abstracting the ideas one from another or sometimes just letting each piece speak for itself. The works became multi-layered with projections, sound patterns, text, movement and dance, highly selective, authentic costuming, props and set pieces – but the goal was always the same – to express a common humanity. There was also a real commitment to young peoples' audiences, and so the work evolved organically into in depth research of ethnic traditions, folk-tales and dances, to break down prejudice and intolerance.

Sun.Ergos' original mandate includes communicating and celebrating theatre and dance in urban and rural communities, providing educational opportunities, community outreach and services, promoting the arts in each and every community in which it works. To meet this goal, Sun.Ergos has developed and delivered very successful residency, workshop and master class programs at all levels of each community it serves.

Sun.Ergos has performed for hundreds of thousands of people in theatres, on television, on flat-bed trucks in sandbars, for Bali Aga chieftains and local people in temples in Bali, for refugees in their camps, soldiers at the front-lines and families in bomb-shelters in Croatia, for Jews and Arabs

in courtyards of mosques in Israel, for students and teachers in schools, colleges, universities, churches, for patients in hospitals, elder-care centers, for the general public in festivals, community subscriptions seasons, and in its own seasons for 10 years at The Scarboro, a chamber-theatre created in Calgary that sat 63 people. The world has indeed been a stage...and continues to be.

**Philosophy:** Sun.Ergos' philosophy is to create the highest level of theatre and dance, combining them with the best possible music and visual arts without prejudice of culture, race, creed, sex or religion, and to let the Universe take them where they are wanted, needed, respected, received well as people and adequately paid to make their lives possible and their creativity on-going, growing and effectively entertaining and edifying to peoples of all cultures and backgrounds in order to promote greater compassion and understanding in our world. The Croatians say "Zivjeli!" ("Let's live!") and hopefully, together, working and living without prejudice.

**Structure:** Sun.Ergos operates as a traditional non-profit organization, registered under the Societies Act of Alberta (#500106992) and the charitable-society status regulations of Revenue Taxation Canada (BN119205789RR0001). The organization is overseen by a Board of Directors and managed by the Artistic and Managing Directors working together to fulfill the artistic vision. Sun.Ergos (meaning from the Greek, "working together") is a two-man company, and the artists are employed year round. Sun.Ergos is also unique in that research, design, script-writing, costume, set and props construction, promotion and administration are all done in-house by Robert and Dana, providing a very high degree of artistic control and integrity. They are responsible for managing the performing seasons, touring operations, educational initiatives, and databases. They and the Board members are responsible for communicating with donors and delivering donor benefits including events, information and acknowledgement. Other tasks in the administration and production aspects of the company's activities are undertaken with seasonal or contract employees and volunteers as required. Fund-raising activities are done in conjunction with the Board of Directors.

**Financial Profile:** Sun.Ergos has an annual budget of approximately \$250,000. 60% of this is earned income from performance fees, ticket sales, touring, educational services and subsidies. 20% comes from grants. 20% comes from fund-raising activities, including casino funds of 11% (Alberta Gaming Commission License #67676). Financial Statements are available upon request.

**Organizational Culture:** Sun.Ergos maintains a disciplined, energetic and interactive organizational culture. It attempts to cultivate a climate that nurtures creative and innovative approaches to opportunities and problems, to explore new and different approaches, creative and educational theories and philosophies and supports the freedom to investigate new solutions, new methods, original concepts. It maintains open communications, limits hierarchy of any kind and nurtures an attitude of 'working together' to achieve goals and to move the human spirit. The company takes on an advocacy role on behalf of the performing arts community, and, in fact, has founded or been part of many organizations to address concerns and considerations of the arts communities and the broader cultural community.

**Strategic Directions:** Current strategic goals of Sun.Ergos, A Company of Theatre and Dance, include:

- Expanding opportunities to present Sun.Ergos and its work through creative tour-booking, international and regional showcasing, development of the web-site and promotional brochures, expanding presenter databases and obtaining ever more community, festival and school engagements.

- Packaging and marketing Sun.Ergos' assets, including festival, school, college-university programming, residency programs, community outreach for diversified audiences from children to seniors.
- Managing human resources creatively and effectively to continue to meet Sun.Ergos' needs and remain a conscientious and considerate employer.
- Maintaining and developing opportunities for multi-year support from individuals, organizations, foundations and governmental programs which help to stabilize operations.
- Deficit reduction and building up of working capital, including managing and reducing the existing deficit to ensure the continued viability of the company and developing working capital to allow Sun.Ergos to take advantage of future opportunities.
- Continuing leadership and a role in rebuilding support for the work of artists and arts institutions in the local, national and international community through advocacy, support of arts service organizations and public profile.
- Expanding the archival mandate of Sun.Ergos, including development of infrastructure to support the archival work of the company and increased public awareness of the company, its work and the arts in general as part of the company's legacy to the arts.