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## The Lights Have Been Raised

Blackness slithers through aisles. Chairs squeak as audience members shift uncomfortably in their aged seats, trying not to touch arms with the people in the seats next to them. All else is quiet. The silence seems unnatural before the grand stage and the dark lights, which buzz with the excitement of a child just before he is released to recess. Then a drum beat fades into the theatre, sloshing over the orchestra balcony and sinking down through sweater, skin, and soul. The show has begun.

With every swish of an opening curtain, Lewiston-Auburn's new-found growth finds its place in the arts. For many years theatre has been developing as a preferred form of entertainment in the twin cities, but never before has it represented such a wealth of cultural diversity and economic opportunity as it does today.

Auburn's Community Little Theatre is virtually a timeline of Lewiston-Auburn's cultural and economic progress. Started in 1940, CLT began as a quaint theatre of very limited means: such was the state of early Lewiston, widespread and populated by only a few farmers who sought only to maintain a comfortable family life. However, as CLT grew more successful, it began to attract larger audiences. By this time, Lewiston had grown into a bustling mill town, sparkling with Irish and Franco-American cultures, all intertwined exquisitely. Today the cities' progress, and that of its theatre web, is overwhelming. For example, for quite some time, many people have struggled with the arrival of our new Somali neighbors. However, we have come to accept and appreciate the new traditions that they have brought to our city, which was, for some time, almost exclusively Catholic. Very recently CLT presented *Once on this Island*, a production featuring a purely African-American cast. It was a huge success. Lewiston-Auburn also reached out to young people some years ago, urging them to become more involved in the arts. We responded. And so CLT embraced the brilliant new glow emanating from LA's teenage population with Maine's Premier of High School Musical on Stage. There is no way to describe the adrenaline of performance. It is no less than a high of the spirit, and priceless in its magnificence, surpassed only by the elevation one associates with love. And this feeling has flooded the community. Musicals have now become a subject of conversation, important enough to grace the tongues of our cities' inhabitants, although they would normally speak of war and politics. "Maybe it *is* happening here," a mother mutters under breath as an LA It's Happening Here commercial ends. A CLT poster is plastered on the refrigerator behind her.

Theatre not only represents what is happening in each of our beloved cities separately, but how we are growing together! Although Community Little Theatre stands beyond a wide river, it recently partnered with Lewiston High School to reproduce High School Musical In Concert. This new collaboration proved that if we truly wish to press forward into the future, people on both sides of the river must come together, work together, and perform together. The concert was an incredible success, and initiated an unprecedented fusion of high school drama clubs in the approaching collaboration, "Sounds of the Cities". Hosted by the Lewiston High School and Edward Little High School drama clubs, this event will mix talents once miles away in a brilliant performance, beguiling community members as would a roulette containing all desirable prizes.

Interactive and exciting, there is no match for the wonder of live performance. Now, thousands of people attend theatre productions in LA at various high schools, the Public Theatre, and Community Little Theatre to experience the new technology that has accompanied our cities' new economic opportunities in the arts. Moving spotlights and accomplished musicians

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are only the “the start of something new”. Now that the lights have been raised, they will grow brighter with each year. L-A, it’s happening here.