

RPI Players Alumni, Parents and Friends:

We, the RPI Players, need help. The administration needs to know that two years with no solution is unacceptable.

On February 4th, 2023, the RPI Playhouse flooded as the result of a burst pipe. Since that day over two years ago, the building has been deemed uninhabitable and there has been little to no progress towards its restoration. The Players have been diligently working with the RPI administration to get this issue resolved, with no success. Through frequent meetings with the director of the RPI Union, Dr. Charlie Potts, we have received little help or information, but rather an ever-growing list of broken promises and missed deadlines. When the issue was brought directly to President Schmidt (on multiple occasions), the response was no more than a snide dismissal: "It's the students' problem".

If nothing else, the lack of action by RPI and the Union clearly shows that the Players are not a priority for this school. Despite this, RPI continues to flaunt the Players and Playhouse. The Playhouse's central position on campus continues to make it a selling point on tours, and the Players are celebrated directly on the school's Bicentennial website in the following quote:

"As RPI reflects on two centuries of firsts, we applaud the R.P.I. Players for their integral role in broadening the academic and creative landscape. Their formation is a reminder that art and science can, and do, co-exist splendidly. Here's to another 200 years of making history in multiple acts!"

The state of the Playhouse is an issue that extends beyond the current need for a student performance space. It is a building with historical significance within the club and on campus as a whole. It has been here on 15th street for nearly eighty years since its move from Connecticut

in 1946. At the time, it was called the 15th Street Lounge, and was used by the broader RPI community as a study space and an expansion of the library. The Players first used the 15th Street Lounge in 1948, while our old building, the Old Gymnasium was under renovation. These renovations took one year, after which we returned to the Old Gymnasium. The 15th Street Lounge became our permanent home in the middle of our 1965-1966 season. We remained in the building until our 1983-1984 season when the building underwent renovations; this season is known as the “Season on the Road”. These renovations took one year. Since our return in 1984, we resided in the building uninterrupted until 2023, in which the damages detailed earlier in this letter occurred. We have now been on the road for over two years, and renovations have not even begun.





Since the destruction of the Playhouse, the Players have produced 14 shows. We struggled to find venues for every show because there are no accessible performance spaces on campus; notably, EMPAC has repeatedly denied and even cancelled our reservations for our shows. This has forced us to use venues further away from campus, requiring us to transport our necessary equipment and personnel with our own vehicles. This has led to damage of equipment, incredible stress being placed onto the *students* who keep the club running, and a hemorrhaging of money from the Union in order to fund these venue rentals. In almost every instance, the Union provided no help in finding, negotiating, and securing these venues. We are unable to keep working as we have been for much longer; without action being taken to repair the Playhouse, the future of the RPI Players as a whole is in jeopardy.

**The Players are at our wits end with the current situation, and thus are requesting help. We ask that you reach out to RPI administration and express anything you believe could help shift focus to the restoration of the Playhouse: how the Players or Playhouse**

**influenced your decision or your student's decision to attend RPI, for example. If you are an Alumni, reach out to your local Alumni Association chapter about the issue. Demand that action be taken by the school to promptly move towards the restoration of the building and request a concrete timeline or definitive steps towards its repair. Communicate that this issue is important and that the way it has been handled greatly damages the school's image and reputation. If you are financially able and willing, we ask that you donate to our Players GoFundMe <https://gofund.me/c16f0be2>, all of the proceeds of which will be sent directly to the Players for the purpose of funding the repair of the Playhouse. The Union has a history<sup>[8]</sup> of taking 10% off nearly all donations made and applying donated money to purposes other than the original intent of the donation. The donations made to the GoFundMe account will be held in escrow by the Players until the Union provides a contractual agreement to use the funding to repair our building. If the Union or the Institute instead tear down the building, as they have suggested will occur if they continue to leave the building in disrepair, all donations will be refunded to the original donors. Even if only a fraction of the current \$750,000 estimate of the Playhouse repair is raised, the clearly money-minded institute might be that much more likely to finally take action.**

For those looking to verify the information laid out in this document, here is a list of resources about the building.

- <https://gofund.me/c16f0be2> The GoFundMe for the building repairs.
- <https://empac.rpi.edu/program/students>, Noting the Extracurricular Clubs section  
“Outside of events, productions, and classes, EMPAC is a meeting place for student groups.”

-  EMPAC Cancellation EMAIL CHAIN.pdf Cancellation of the Lightning Thief venue reservation a month from start of reservation.
- [Live Your Truth - By Arwen Costello](#) A film noting our process of performing without a venue surrounding last year's production of The Lightning Thief.
-  FB\_VID\_4349039807737097273.mp4 Our Playhouse funeral video
-  PlayersHistoryPoster2021-2022.pdf The current history of shows poster, not updated since Spring 2022.
- [RPI Bicentennial - RPI Players](#) The RPI Players section of the bicentennial website, shows that they understand our importance to campus.
- [Playhouse Opportunity Cost - Arwen Costello](#) All of the costs for each show done outside of the Playhouse.
-  Playhouse Flooding Timeline - Mick McCartney A full timeline of the day of the flood.
- [RPI Playhouse, E-Complex Flooding - By The Polytechnic](#) An article detailing the day of the flood.
- [RPI Forward](#), noting the lack of Playhouse Repairs

If you have any further questions, feel free to reach out to the current officers at [rpi-players@rpi.edu](mailto:rpi-players@rpi.edu) or message Arwen, the holder of the GoFundMe. We thank you again for staying by our side and supporting us all these years. Please continue to do so as we navigate these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

The RPI Players