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## Ghost hunters return to Venetian

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By **Susan Gordanier, The Hillsboro Argus**

While the audience watched the closing minutes of "Death of a Salesman" in The Venetian Theatre's auditorium Saturday night, a team of paranormal investigators set up equipment, hoping to capture a performance of a different sort.

Greg Gieler, co-leader Chris York and 10 other members of Rain City Paranormal planned to spend the night in the darkened building, watching for a sign from any of the spirits that may lurk in the refurbished theater and bistro at 253 Main St.

On July 25, Gieler had led a smaller investigation at the invitation of owners Denzil Scheller and Saxony Peterson. Since the Venetian's opening in the summer of 2008, its staff had witnessed a number of unexplainable events. Lights and music have turned on and off unassisted. Phantoms, including a gray-haired man who favors one of the auditorium's back-row seats, have made multiple appearances.

During their summer inquiry, Gieler's team had themselves witnessed a strange phenomenon in the projection room when the temperature rose and then fell one degree at a time upon verbal request. Also, a review of recordings had revealed voices, inaudible to those present, one clearly saying "I'm sorry...sorry."

Based on those discoveries, an expanded team set up even more equipment for this second visit. Four infrared cameras would constantly surveil the main foyer, the auditorium, the projection room and the second floor hallway. Two team members stayed at "base camp" to monitor a computer screen and the images from those cameras.

Meanwhile the remaining 10 team members, accompanied by an Argus reporter, split into two groups and began their investigations. They carried audio recorders and K2 electromagnetic field detectors. The EMF meters would sense changes in electrical energy that paranormal investigators think may be caused by spirits. Those readings could be compared to baseline measurements collected by the team as part of their setup procedures.

One team headed to the dressing rooms beneath the stage and began the procedure that would be repeated throughout the building's many rooms.

Everyone took a seat in the darkened room and, with the audio recorders running, identified themselves for the record. Each sound was labeled, leading to comments such as "my stomach growled" and "adjusting my seat." The team waited for a noise no one claimed.

None came.

One by one, team members made requests in soft voices. "If you're here, please let us know by making the lights change on that device over there with the green light," indicating the EMF detector.

The lights didn't waver.

They asked questions: Had the spirit worked in the theater? What was the year? Did it want the team to stay, or leave the room?

No response came.

After 20 minutes or so, the team shifted to the stage and began again.

Nothing happened. Over two-way radios, everyone agreed to meet back at the base camp.

Gieler speculated the spirits might be overwhelmed by the presence of so many people at once, so he next sent out two-person teams for another round of observations.

A team led by Chris York climbed the narrow stairway to the projection room. They began their questioning, at one point requesting the spirit tap in response. A loud thud came from below.

York descended to check if someone had banged the door at the base of the staircase. No one had. A call went out for teams in other parts of the building to repeat recent actions, while those in the projection room listened to see if those sounds reproduced what they had heard.

The thud remained unexplained, the only such event to occur during hours of close observation. The time approached 1:30 a.m.

In the next weeks, the investigators will comb through hours of film and audio recordings and use special software to search for speech concealed beyond audible frequencies.

In the meantime, the primary message from Saturday night's long investigation was that paranormal investigations require great patience.

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