

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007**

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**SENATE BILL 872*
State & Local Government Committee Substitute Adopted 4/4/07**

Short Title: Thalian Assoc./NC Community Theater.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 19, 2007

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1
2 AN ACT TO ADOPT THE THALIAN ASSOCIATION AT WILMINGTON, NORTH
3 CAROLINA, AS THE OFFICIAL COMMUNITY THEATER OF NORTH
4 CAROLINA.

5 Whereas, the Thalian Association was organized in 1788 in Wilmington,
6 North Carolina; and

7 Whereas, the Thalian Association is the oldest community theater in the State
8 of North Carolina; and

9 Whereas, the Thalian Association was organized for the purpose of providing
10 a foundation for the artistic, cultural, and social development of the Wilmington
11 community; and

12 Whereas, the Thalian Association participated in the endowment of the Innes
13 Academy, the first public school in Wilmington, and supported that endowment by
14 organizing a community theater company, the proceeds from which supported the
15 public school and the poor of Wilmington; and

16 Whereas, the Thalian Association was first chartered by the State of North
17 Carolina in 1814 to provide "learning and the promotion of literature" to the people of
18 Wilmington; and

19 Whereas, the Thalian Association community theater became an enduring
20 tradition in the Wilmington community that has lasted from 1788 to the present day and
21 from its beginning has attracted the support and participation of the most public-spirited
22 of Wilmington citizens; and

23 Whereas, the Thalian Association contributed in 1851 to the building of the
24 Washington Monument, and its public-spirited generosity is displayed to this day in a
25 memorial stone on Landing 23 that reads "Wilmington, North Carolina, Thalian
26 Association"; and

27 Whereas, the Thalian Association, championing the need for a large and
28 beautiful public theater, conceived the original idea of a civic union of culture and

1 government and formed a partnership in 1854 with the City of Wilmington to build a
2 combination theater and City Hall; and

3 Whereas, the Thalian Association in 1854 sent its president, Robert H.
4 Cowen, to New York City to commission America's premier theater designer, John M.
5 Trimble, to design a theater and City Hall building; and

6 Whereas, the Thalian Association in 1857 to 1858 supervised the construction
7 of the theater and City Hall building, named Thalian Hall; and

8 Whereas, the Thalian Association in 1860 gave its ownership interest in
9 Thalian Hall to the City of Wilmington; and

10 Whereas, the Thalian Association in the Civil War years of 1861 to 1865
11 committed itself to fund-raising performances in Thalian Hall to help alleviate
12 sufferings from yellow fever and smallpox epidemics; and

13 Whereas, the Thalian Association in the Reconstruction years of 1865 to 1871
14 struggled against political partisanship and provided a bridge over the chasm of
15 bitterness; and

16 Whereas, the Thalian Association in the post-Civil War era supported popular
17 education in a nonpartisan manner despite opposition, continued the tradition of theater
18 despite economic decline and poverty, opened Thalian Association membership, and
19 allowed onstage participation in the theater for the first time to females; and

20 Whereas, the Thalian Association maintained through the years of poverty the
21 spirit of culture and provided a focal point for the revival of the performing arts in the
22 early 20th century; and

23 Whereas, the Thalian Association rescued Thalian Hall from neglect and
24 possible destruction and restored it to its original beauty; and

25 Whereas, the Thalian Association inaugurated children's theater in
26 Wilmington; and

27 Whereas, the Thalian Association is fully committed in the present and in the
28 future to the historic and cultural preservation of Wilmington and Southeastern North
29 Carolina in the face of rapid development and irreversible change; and

30 Whereas, the Thalian Association stages each year five productions of drama
31 and musical theater in the Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, six productions
32 of children's theater in the Hannah Block Historic USO and Community Arts Center, a
33 street fair showcasing locally produced visual art, and a bluegrass musical festival; and

34 Whereas, for no monetary consideration, the Thalian Association promises to
35 further assist the State of North Carolina in its work of advertising and promoting the
36 educational, cultural, and economic interests of the State, and in attracting and
37 encouraging people from other states and countries to visit the State where so many
38 shrines and historical sites are located; and

39 Whereas, the General Assembly wishes to recognize the Thalian Association
40 for its contributions to the cultural life of this State over the last 218 years by
41 recognizing it as the official community theater of North Carolina; Now, therefore,
42 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

43 **SECTION 1.** Chapter 145 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a
44 new section to read:

1 **"§ 145-27. State community theater.**

2 The Thalian Association in Wilmington, North Carolina, is adopted as the official
3 community theater of North Carolina."

4 **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law.