



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

OUR COMMUNITY  
YOUR PLAYHOUSE



PLAY IN THE PARK  
CINCINNATI **HOUSE**

## 2021-22 MARX THEATRE SEASON



### THE WEST END

By KEITH JOSEF ADKINS

OCT. 9 – NOV. 7, 2021

Sponsored by THE CAROL ANN AND RALPH V. HAILE, JR. FOUNDATION

Set in 1941 in Cincinnati's West End, this world premiere drama shines a light on a transformative chapter of local history.



**FIRST** first financial bank presents

### A CHRISTMAS CAROL

By CHARLES DICKENS  
Adapted by HOWARD DALLIN

NOV. 24 – DEC. 30, 2021

Faithful storytelling and spellbinding stage magic make this family favorite a must-see for the holidays.



### INCIDENT AT OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP

By KATIE FORGETTE

JAN. 29 – FEB. 27, 2022

Sponsored by JOHNSON INVESTMENT COUNSEL and CLARK SCHAEFER HACKETT

It's 1973, and the Irish-Catholic O'Shea family muddles through a series of hilarious mishaps that jeopardizes their reputation — and their souls.



LEADING Ladies presents

### STEEL MAGNOLIAS

By ROBERT HARLING

MARCH 19 – APRIL 17, 2022

With beloved characters, heartwarming dialogue and snappy repartee, *Steel Magnolias* revels in the power and grace of female friendship.



MOE & JACK ROUSE and RANDOLPH WADSWORTH present

### SCHOOL GIRLS: OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY

By JOCELYN BLOH

APRIL 30 – MAY 22, 2022

This biting comedy explores the universal challenges of teenage girlhood and all the drama that comes with it.

## 2021-22 ROSENTHAL SHELTERHOUSE THEATRE SEASON



### NEED YOUR LOVE

By KJ SANCHEZ

OCT. 30 – DEC. 12, 2021

Sponsored by DIGI & MIKE SCHUELER and JENNIFER AND WOODY TAFT

From the creator of *Cincinnati King* comes a world premiere musical portrait of King Records star Little Willie John.



### ROOTED

By DEBORAH ZOE LAUFER

FEB. 12 – MARCH 20, 2022

Sponsored by THE GEILER COMPANY

In this warm-hearted world premiere comedy, a reclusive amateur botanist unwittingly becomes a new-age, YouTube messiah.



THE JEWISH FOUNDATION OF CINCINNATI presents

### BECOMING DR. RUTH

By MARK ST. GERMAIN

APRIL 9 – MAY 15, 2022

This heartwarming portrait is a humorous and illuminating one-woman show about America's favorite sex therapist Dr. Ruth Westheimer.

The 2021-22 season is presented by **SCHUELER GROUP** and **HEIDELBERG DISTRIBUTING COMPANY**

Season Sponsor of New Work: **THE ROSENTHAL FAMILY FOUNDATION**

Robert S. Marx Theatre Design Sponsor: **U.S. BANK**

Marketing Visuals by Tony Arrasmith/Arrasmith & Associates. Photos of the 2019 cast of *A Christmas Carol* and Antonio Michael Woodard in *Need Your Love* (cover and above) and of Brittany Anikka Liu, Annie Fitzpatrick and Susan Lynskey in *Steel Magnolias* (cover) by Mikki Schaffner. Anne O'Sullivan as Dr. Ruth. Photos by Andrew Brilliant/Brilliant Pictures.

# LETTER FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

Greetings from your Playhouse!

Many words come to mind as I reflect on, and conclude, my two years as President of the Playhouse Board of Trustees. But one word rings much louder than the others: gratitude.

I'm grateful for all the artists — playwrights, designers, directors, actors, technical crew and others — who weathered the pandemic storm and created magic on the Playhouse stages this past season.

I'm grateful for our talented staff — some long-tenured, others (like Managing Director Abby Marcus) new to the Playhouse — and especially for Producing Artistic Director Blake Robison, who leads this organization with relentless determination, unending optimism and enviable skill.

I'm grateful for a Board of Trustees that leaned into the challenges of the past two years with an abundance of time, talent and treasure. What an extraordinary accomplishment to have raised the funds necessary to launch construction of our new theatre complex, given this unprecedented environment.

And last, but most certainly not least, I'm grateful to YOU, our audiences and donors. You are the reason the Playhouse not only exists but thrives. You are the reason that the Playhouse can proudly claim its place as “Cincinnati's national theatre.”

It is with tremendous enthusiasm that I transition the role of President to Digi Schueler, one of the Playhouse's strongest advocates and supporters. With the opening of Moe and Jack's Place – The Rouse Theatre next March and a terrific season of old favorites and engaging new works, the year ahead will unquestionably prove to be one of the most exciting in Playhouse history. I look forward to sharing it with you.

Take care.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellen G. van der Horst". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Ellen G. van der Horst**  
Board President

# LETTER FROM OUR PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

When I think about this past season, I feel an abundance of joy. We gathered together again at the theatre, in the workplace and within our own vibrant communities after two years of uncertainty and distance. I've always believed that theatre gives us the unparalleled opportunity to illuminate the human experience — and in doing so, we experience joy.

On stage, we immersed ourselves in riveting chapters of Cincinnati history. We visited familiar places with familiar faces, like Truzy's Salon in Louisiana and Scrooge's Counting House in London. Through new works and iconic characters, we experienced stories about resilience, the bonds of family and unlikely connections. What a joyful experience it's been to share these productions with you.

We deepened our roots in the community off stage with engagement events and partnerships. Through the power of artistic storytelling, we took part in meaningful cultural experiences and returned to schools and classrooms while still offering ways to engage with our programming virtually and safely. Throughout the region, we presented entertaining and socially interactive events that offered thrilling new ways to enjoy our city.

Our return to a full season of operations represents an important transformation as well. After reflecting on the past and future of your Playhouse, we developed a three-year strategic plan that clarifies our mission as an institution. We asked ourselves, what does our community need right now, and how can we deliver that through artistic experiences and education? Informed and supported by our ongoing commitments to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, our strategic plan emphasizes the role the arts play in making our world better, stronger and more open-hearted.

I feel humbled by the goals set forth for us and optimistic about their impact on our community — especially as we bring our Capital Campaign to a close. The remarkable support we've received from patrons, donors and sponsors has quite literally paved the way for us to bring an all-new, state-of-the-art Mainstage Theatre Complex to our iconic Eden Park home. It represents the future of your Playhouse in the very best way.

Thank you for playing a role in this remarkable moment. And thank you for enabling us to share the joy of theatre with our community!



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Blake Robison', written in a cursive style.

**Blake Robison**  
Producing Artistic Director

# CONTINUED IMPACT – WHERE COMMUNITY MEETS CREATIVITY

The Cincinnati region is an artistically vibrant place to call home thanks to the millions of dollars raised and distributed annually by ArtsWave. As a proud partner, the Playhouse is guided by their Blueprint for Collective Action — a strategic initiative designed to keep our region rich with creativity by highlighting the following focus areas.



## ARTS DEEPEN ROOTS

**8** professional shows on **2** main stages entertained **68,442** audience members.

**1,073** audience members attended **27** post-show Meet the Artist events.

**400** people experienced innovative Off the Grid events in the region.

## ARTS BRIDGE CULTURAL DIVIDES

**3** shows featured the stories and experiences of BIPOC characters.

**4** mainstage productions were led by women directors.

**1,642** people were engaged by the Playhouse's role in community cultural events.



## ARTS FUEL CREATIVITY AND LEARNING

**3** outreach tour productions reached **22,382** students.

**24** school districts across **11** counties experienced Playhouse classroom workshops.

**2,409** students at **5** Title I schools were immersed in a theatre arts residency.



## ARTS ENLIVEN NEIGHBORHOODS

**26** Off the Hill performances took place at **23** different community partner spaces — overall attendance: **2,316**.



**5** stage productions, including Off the Hill and mainstage shows, were presented virtually.

## ARTS PUT CINCINNATI ON THE MAP

**3** world premiere productions were produced — **2** of which put Cincinnati stories and settings in the spotlight.



**3** new play commissions are in progress — **1** of which will premiere in our 2022-23 season.

The Playhouse's production of *An Evening With Groucho*, filmed on site in 2017, premiered on PBS.



# COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY (DEIA)

## DEIA PLAN

Our Diversity-Equity-Inclusion-Accessibility (DEIA) plan was formally adopted by the Playhouse Board of Trustees in March of 2018. It outlines our ongoing commitments, goals and action steps to creating a DEIA-based environment that reflects the diversity of our community. As a living document, it is updated annually with the participation of staff, Board, artists and community stakeholders.

## OUR PLEDGE

Our theatre is a community gathering place where we seek to illuminate the human experience. We celebrate differences and lift up our shared humanity. The Playhouse recognizes the injustices and inequities that underpin our city and our nation.

## OUR COMMITMENT

We welcome people of all races, ethnicities, religions, sexualities, gender identities, ages, abilities, backgrounds, countries of origin and other non-majority communities. This commitment will be reflected in our programming, audience, outreach and all connected with the Playhouse — management, staff, Board of Trustees, volunteers and vendors.

## ADVANCES MADE IN THE 2021-22 SEASON

- Incorporated DEIA goals and metrics into new, three-year strategic plan
- Staff and Board training established on an ongoing basis
- Hired a full-time, dedicated DEIA staff member
- Reduced 12-hour technical rehearsal days to 10-hour days
- Land acknowledgement printed in all programs and incorporated into rehearsals
- Established cultural consultant position for educational touring shows
- Updated job descriptions
- Increased Board representation to 24% BIPOC
- Increased staff representation to 15% historically excluded individuals

*To read more about our current and ongoing commitments to DEIA, visit [cincyplay.com](http://cincyplay.com).*

# STRATEGIC PLAN

Our new, three-year strategic plan reflects the progress and promises of your Playhouse. This season, we developed a new mission statement and institutional values to reiterate our purpose and vision as an organization that serves the Greater Cincinnati community. We asked our communities what they need and focused on how we can deliver that through artistic and educational experiences as we move into a new era with the opening of our new Mainstage Theatre Complex.

## OUR MISSION

We are Cincinnati's national theatre — committed to bringing diverse, engaging works of great artistry to our community and to putting Cincinnati's artistic excellence in the national spotlight.

## OUR VALUES

- **Inclusion on stage and off:** We tell everyone's stories on stage and value everyone's contribution to the process of making them.
- **Be curious:** Dream, try, fail, try again, learn, grow.
- **Keep the "play" in Playhouse:** A joyful sense of adventure creates the best experience for all.
- **Collaboration is key:** Our art relies on everyone's participation.
- **Excellence matters:** We seek the best in ourselves, assume the best in others and strive for excellence in our work together.

## HOW WE DO IT

- We produce theatrical works of exceptional artistry.
- We provide a home for national and local artists and area arts groups.
- We facilitate lifelong theatrical discovery and learning.
- We respect and uplift each other — our staff, artists and audience.

## STRATEGIC PILLARS

- Maximize the potential of the new theatre facility.
- Expand and diversify income sources.
- Build an inclusive organization that embeds DEIA values in all aspects of operations.
- Embrace programming that reflects the world around us.

# MADE IN CINCINNATI

For our first full season back on stage, we opened with two world premieres about the Queen City: *The West End* by Keith Josef Adkins and *Need Your Love* by KJ Sanchez. Each took audiences back in time to historic Cincinnati, inviting them to experience chapters of our city's own history. We then presented our third world premiere of the season with *Rooted* — a modern-day comedy that transformed the Rosenthal Shelterhouse stage into an idyllic treehouse full of botanical life and greenery.

## THE WEST END

Playwright Keith Josef Adkins grew up in Cincinnati, and his story paid homage to the legacy of the Great Migration and his own family history. The play featured richly drawn characters, a riveting drama about reconciling the past and illustrative details about 1940s Cincinnati. Lobby engagement offered glimpses of mid-century life in the West End community. The script was then named a finalist for the theatre industry's acclaimed Harold & Mimi Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award.



Shanelle Leonard, Kevin Cristaldi, LaTonya Borsay and Brian D. Coats in *The West End*.

### PRODUCTION SPONSOR OF THE WEST END

The Carol Ann and  
Ralph V. Haile, Jr.  
FOUNDATION

"*The West End* indeed resembles [August] Wilson's admirable body of work with strong, opinionated characters wrestling with contemporary issues. ... Director Nicole A. Watson has put together an engaging production that's a solid reminder of how much we have missed during 18 months of dark theaters." — **Rick Pender, CityBeat**

## THE PEOPLE OF THE WEST END

Lobby engagement included historical photos of life in the mid-century West End community, provided by the Robert O'Neal Multicultural Art Center's Black Cincinnati History Collection.



Ezzard Charles



Guests at the Cotton Club



Stowe School Faculty



## **NEED YOUR LOVE**

Writer/director KJ Sanchez premiered the homegrown musical *Cincinnati King* in 2018 which celebrated the legacy of King Records studio and the talents of real-life R&B star Little Willie John. Compelled to continue telling his story, Sanchez created *Need Your Love*. The world premiere featured an electrifying performance by Antonio Michael Woodard and live music from an onstage band.

### **PRODUCTION SPONSORS OF NEED YOUR LOVE**

**DIGI AND  
MIKE SCHUELER**

**JENNIFER AND  
WOODY TAFT**



Photo of Antonio Michael Woodard in *Need Your Love*.

## **ROOTED**

Playwright Deborah Zoe Laufer's comedic story about a reclusive botanist unfolded beneath a canopy of greenery. *Rooted* followed one woman's unlikely rise to new-age cult leader after her plant experiments went viral on YouTube. The ambitious stage design included a trap door entrance with a pulley, a tree-trunk foundation with a walkable balcony and plant life that moved with graceful ease.

### **PRODUCTION SPONSOR OF ROOTED**

**GEILER**



Photo of the *Rooted* set.

# POWERFUL WOMEN'S VOICES

This season, we continued to amplify stories about women on stage. The characters and casts of *Rooted*, *Becoming Dr. Ruth*, *Steel Magnolias* and *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* were all women. In addition, *Steel Magnolias* and *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* were each directed by a woman and featured all-women design teams.

## INCIDENT AT OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP

Written by Katie Forgette and told with affectionate humor, the play introduced memorable women characters who spoke frankly and humorously about their lives, their community and being a woman in 1970s America.

PRODUCTION SPONSORS OF  
*INCIDENT AT OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP*



The cast of *Incident at Our Lady of Perpetual Help*.

## LEADING LADIES PRESENTS *STEEL MAGNOLIAS*

Robert Harling's much-loved play about the power of female friendship warmed audiences' hearts while eliciting plenty of laughter.



The cast of *Steel Magnolias*.

"As I return to the theatre, I want to see stories of resilience with characters who see each other through the dark times and celebrate the good, who speak with candor, generosity and great humor. I want to feel lifted up. I need to be moved, and I really need to laugh."



— *Steel Magnolias* Director Laura Gordon



Susan Lynskey and Gina Daniels in *Steel Magnolias*.



Susan Lynskey and Kate Abbruzzese in *Steel Magnolias*.

PRESENTING SPONSOR OF  
*STEEL MAGNOLIAS*



Production photos on pages 10 and 11 by Mikki Schaffner.

## **BECOMING DR. RUTH**

Anne O'Sullivan embodied Dr. Ruth Westheimer, describing the separation of Westheimer's family during the Holocaust and her inspiring journey towards becoming an author, radio host and television personality.



Anne O'Sullivan in *Becoming Dr. Ruth*.

**PRESENTING SPONSOR OF  
BECOMING DR. RUTH**



## **SURVIVOR STORIES**

Stories from survivors of the Holocaust were available to read in the lobby. The display gave audience members the chance to deepen their understanding of some of the show's subject matter. The lobby engagement was made possible by a partnership with The Nancy and David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center.

## **SCHOOL GIRLS; OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY**

Jocelyn Bih's fierce comedy about a group of boarding-school girls in 1986 Ghana tackled still-current issues about colorism, classism and young women of color learning to navigate a world that favors whiteness. A Playhouse Perspectives event, titled "If the Present Looks Like the Past: A Conversation About Colorism," featured a panel discussion about the way colorism affects the Black community.

**PRESENTING SPONSORS OF  
SCHOOL GIRLS; OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY**

**MOE AND JACK ROUSE  
RANDOLPH WADSWORTH**

**PRODUCTION SPONSOR**



The cast of *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play*.



The cast of *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play*.

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

This season, the Playhouse presented our final performances of *A Christmas Carol*, as adapted by Howard Dallin and directed by Michael Evan Haney, in the Marx Theatre. The production has been a beloved regional tradition since 1991. For three decades, students, families and Cincinnatians from all walks of life celebrated the spirit of the holiday season, year after year. The opening of Moe and Jack's Place – The Rouse Theatre will bring with it a newly envisioned adaptation of Charles Dickens' timeless tale, featuring enhanced theatre technology and artistic capabilities.

PRESENTING SPONSOR OF  
**A CHRISTMAS CAROL**

**first**<sup>®</sup>

first financial bank



Greg Procaccino and Bruce Cromer in *A Christmas Carol*.



The cast of *A Christmas Carol*.



Britney Nicole Simpson in *A Christmas Carol*.

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL BY THE NUMBERS:

**34:** Number of performances in the 2021-22 season

**1,149:** Number of performances since 1991

**94%:** Theatre capacity over the 30-year history

**675,881:** Total attendance since 1991



**Keith Shilt**

Our annual tradition, we go the weekend before Christmas every year since 1999. Never disappoints or gets old. Amazing how they always find a way to make it better each and every year. THANK YOU for the wonderful memories you have brought to my family and friends. Merry Christmas!!



**Matt Roffes**

Thank you so very much for this excellent production! Attended when it first opened in 1991, was there two weeks ago on the 17th. It is a family Christmas tradition to see this wonderful play! Will miss the original stage and production, looking forward to seeing the return in 2023!



**Lora Gandy**

Thank YOU for always making this production so special and memorable! It is always a joy to behold!



Photo by Michael Wilson.

“As an actor, family man and college professor, I’m such a believer in what live theatre does for the families that make up our communities. We gather in the dark, eager for a story to take place before us, to pull us in together with our fellow humans.”

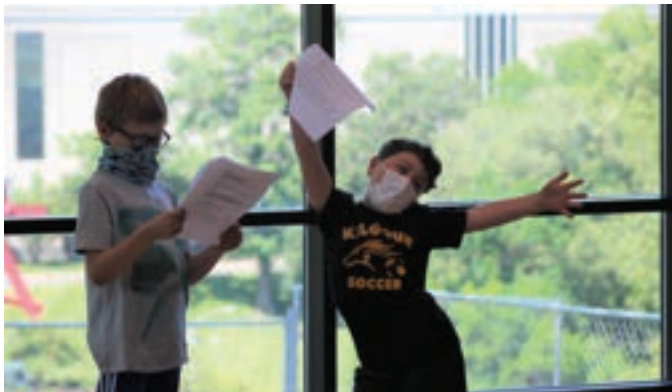
— **Bruce Cromer, Ebenezer Scrooge**

Production photos on page 12 by Mikki Schaffner.

# 2021-22 EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

We believe the arts can deepen and enhance learning, and provide a mirror through which the audience sees themselves and the world around them. For children, participation in the arts encourages the development of a broad range of 21st-century skills, including creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, leadership and problem solving. We strive to create programs that are equitable and accessible for children regardless of their language barriers, socioeconomic status or abilities. Our education programs provide high-quality, professional theatre experiences for children throughout the Tristate.

- **School Outreach Tour and Off the Hill** performances give students and families the opportunity to experience the magic of live theatre together.
- **Classroom workshops** bring professional teaching artists into schools, virtually and in person, to supplement curriculum with artistic integration.
- **Playhouse Education Program (PEP)** ensures that students at Title I schools engage meaningfully in the arts all year long.
- **Summer camp programs** support children's social, creative and academic development in a fun environment.



Summer camp participants.

## SUMMER CAMP

Construction at the Playhouse gave us the opportunity to offer summer camp in communities around the region. Last season, children ages 6 to 17 attended full-day camps at the Playhouse and at satellite camps with a total participation of 459 students.

**SATELLITE CAMPS:** Downtown, Evendale, Mason and Wyoming

## LAUNCH PAD

We continued our commitment to increasing accessibility with Launch Pad — a program designed to integrate students with developmental disabilities into a traditional theatre camp environment. All camp counselors and instructors were trained in effective communication strategies for students, and a Launch Pad coordinator worked with families to assess each child's accommodations and needs. In 2021, 83 of our summer camp participants reported a disability, and nine of those students demonstrated financial need and received scholarships.



# 48,636

Total estimated number of students who participated in ALL education and community engagement programs this season.

**THANK YOU  
TO OUR SPONSORS**  
FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT!

**ROBERT AND ADELE SCHIFF  
FAMILY FOUNDATION**



**ANONYMOUS**

**BETSY AND JERRY SHROAT**



**JAMES A. MILLER**

**WILLIAM P. ANDERSON FOUNDATION**



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THE GREATER CINCINNATI FOUNDATION**

**RON BUNT  
AND WEI SUN**

**ROBERT A. AND  
MARIAN K. KENNEDY  
CHARITABLE TRUST**

## EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

### SCHOOL OUTREACH TOUR AND OFF THE HILL

The Playhouse produces theatrical adaptations of classic children's literature every year. A diverse group of professional actors and members of the Bruce E. Coyle Acting and Education Intern Company perform during the week in schools and at community centers throughout the region on the weekends. This season, we integrated our programming virtually and in person, adhering to guidelines and restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. We stayed virtual in the fall, and by late winter and early spring, we returned to in-person performances with options for virtual engagement. Each production was filmed and edited professionally by Optic Lizard Productions, a Cincinnati-based production company.



Two productions (including *Hare and Tortoise*, pictured) included ASL interpreters on screen.



#### **SNOW WHITE**

PRESENTED VIRTUALLY  
IN THE FALL



#### **HARE AND TORTOISE**

PRESENTED VIRTUALLY AND IN PERSON  
IN THE WINTER



#### **THE LITTLE MERMAID**

PRESENTED VIRTUALLY AND IN PERSON  
IN THE SPRING

Marketing visuals by Tony Arrasmith/Arrasmith & Associates.

### OUTREACH TOUR

- **102** performances for **94** schools were held — **55** of these performances were virtual.
- The estimated total attendance for the School Outreach Tour season was **22,382** — **11,814** attended virtually, and **10,568** attended in person.
- We offered full or partial subsidies for **89** of the **94** schools visited.
- **54%** of students come from racially/ethnically diverse backgrounds.

### PRAISE FROM TEACHERS

- “I loved the inclusion of the actor in a wheelchair!”
- “Students all raved about the performance! I feel live theatre is a valuable learning experience for all ages. Thank you!”
- “It really was a great connection for my 2nd grade students since we are currently covering the elements of drama in reading.”

### OFF THE HILL

- **26** performances were held at **23** community partners around the region.
- The total attendance for the Off the Hill Tour season was **2,316**.



Photo from *Snow White* by Mikki Schaffner.

## CLASSROOM WORKSHOPS

Playhouse classroom workshops, held in person and virtually, covered topics that integrated seamlessly into educators' curriculum. An expansive library of pre-recorded virtual workshops were offered for schools and teachers who had Education Memberships, in a continuation of our virtual offerings prompted by the pandemic.

- **24** school districts across **11** counties were reached through classroom workshops.
- **362** workshops took place virtually or in person.
- **80** Greater Cincinnati classrooms received free Education Memberships with access to over **130** hours of drama workshop content.

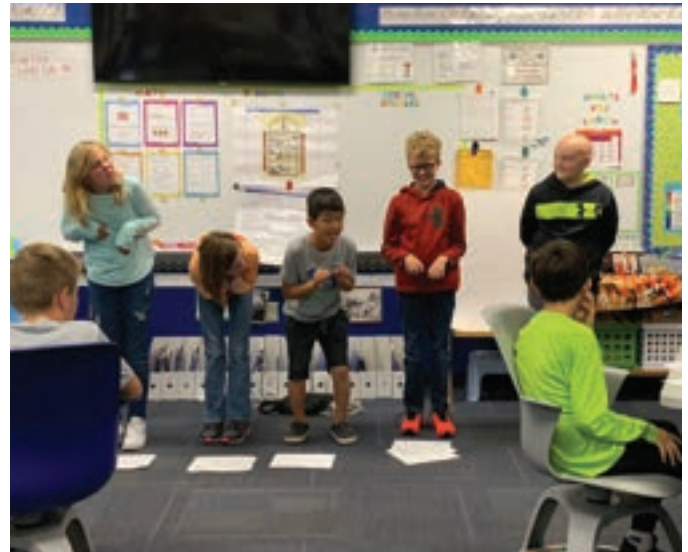


Photo from classroom workshop.

## PEP

The Playhouse Education Partnership (PEP) program is a free, multi-year theatre residency that immerses students at five Title I public schools in arts education programming. PEP is structured to be customized to the needs of each school served and designed to provide a different way for students to engage with core content. This season, PEP schools received access to all three Outreach Tour productions, virtual student matinee performances of *The West End* and *Need Your Love*, classroom workshops and free Education Membership access.

**PEP Schools:** Silverton Academy, Midway Elementary, Academy for Multilingual Immersion Studies, Roberts Paideia Academy and Woodward Career Technical High School

- **2,409** students participated in programming.
- **354** workshops took place.
- **288** students attended virtual student matinees.
- Playhouse teaching artists spent a total of **157** days with students.



Photo from PEP workshop.



Photo from PEP workshop.



Photo from a writing survivors' stories workshop at Woodward Career Technical High School.

Over the course of six days, Playhouse Education Associate Julia Gomez engaged two classrooms of 11th-graders at Woodward Career Technical High School in a workshop about writing survivors' stories. This curriculum, in partnership with the The Nancy and David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center, used theatre techniques to highlight stories of Holocaust survivors for Yom HaShoah – Holocaust Remembrance Day. At the end of one of the workshops, a student privately asked Julia when she would be back. When she said, "In two days," the student replied, "Ah, two days. I'll come to school then." He then felt comfortable enough to have an in-depth conversation about the survivors, engaging even more deeply with the material.

# OFF THE GRID AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our series of immersive Off the Grid events integrates theatrical storytelling with social settings. Partnering with local businesses and organizations, the Playhouse performed three site-specific productions in spring 2022. A total of 400 audience members participated.



## TOP MOM AND POP

**LOCATION:** Garage on York in Newport, Ky.

**STORY:** Chefs from three family-owned restaurants compete on the fictional, reality competition show *Top Mom and Pop*. But on the day of filming the season finale, nothing is going right!

**ATTENDANCE:** 69 participants at 2 performances



## HEXES & VEXES: A DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS EXPERIENCE

Presented in Partnership with Green & Garb

**LOCATION:** Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park in Hamilton, Ohio

**STORY:** The Kingdom of Cinestreal has long been protected by the ancient magic of the Queen's Crown. But calamity erupts when a cloaked mage steals this powerful artifact and vanishes beyond the city's walls!

**ATTENDANCE:** 187 participants at 3 performances



## THE ERSATZ EXPRESS

**LOCATION:** Lebanon Mason Monroe Railway

**STORY:** A ragtag band of time-traveling explorers commandeer a train ride as they try to get back to their own era. It takes more than song and dance to convince them that the audience shouldn't be taken along with them!

**ATTENDANCE:** 144 participants at 1 performance

Marketing visuals by Tony Arrasmith/Arrasmith & Associates.

## ISH FESTIVAL

In September 2021, the Playhouse joined the third biennial ish Festival, which celebrates Cincinnati Jewish and Israeli artists. The Playhouse provided actors to portray historical figures at a rededication of the Chestnut Street Cemetery, one of the oldest Jewish cemeteries in the United States.

## PRIDE

In June 2022, we participated in Cincinnati's PRIDE festival, showing continued support for our region's LGBTQ+ community.



Left: Sean P. Mette played Rabbi Dov Behr Manischewitz, a humanitarian and matzo baker; Carter Bratton played Joseph Jonas, the first Jewish person to settle in Cincinnati and one of the founders of the cemetery; and Makenzie Ruff played Lucia Jonas, who played a prominent role in Jewish cultural life in New York before her passing shortly after her marriage to Joseph and arrival in Cincinnati. Right: Playhouse staff at the 2022 PRIDE festival.



# NEW LEADERSHIP

As we returned to the stage this season, we welcomed new artistic and administrative leadership.



**ABBY MARCUS**  
Managing Director

“How can we better serve the greater Cincinnati community and evaluate how that manifests through our staff, our artists, our programming, our messaging, our box office, our lobby, our new building? There are so many opportunities now to take these values and place them out in front of the

organization — which is a really thrilling moment to be in. In terms of navigating change, I think we are very much in a place of opportunity, and all of those roads lead to very positive results.”



**JOANIE SCHULTZ**  
Associate Artistic Director



**DAWN MUNDY**  
Director of HR,  
Equity & Inclusion



**JOSH ESCAJEDA**  
Director of  
Production

# GOODBYE TO THE MARX THEATRE

Since breaking ground in 2021, the Playhouse has been undergoing construction to build the new, state-of-the-art Mainstage Theatre Complex, which opens in March 2023. One of the most significant changes took place recently: The Marx Theatre came down after 54 years of operation. In anticipation of that, we created opportunities for lobby engagement so that audiences could learn more about the Marx’s history and artistic legacy.



The Marx theatre is demolished to make room for the new Moe and Jack’s Place – The Rouse Theatre.

## MAKE YOUR MARK ON THE MARX

In the spring, during performances of *Becoming Dr. Ruth* and *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play*, we invited audiences and community members to write their name, a message or a memory they have of the Marx Theatre on the building in chalk.



A guest leaves a message on the wall of the Marx Theatre.



Artistic Director’s Circle members Diane and Dave Moccia make the first marks on the Marx Theatre wall at their spring event.

# DIRECTING THE FUTURE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Construction continued on our new, state-of-the-art Mainstage Theatre Complex, featuring Moe and Jack's Place – The Rouse Theatre, set to open March 2023.

## WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT IN MOE AND JACK'S PLACE – THE ROUSE THEATRE:

- **Expanded Artistic Capabilities:** This new theatre will consist of a proscenium stage and fly technology that will increase opportunities for producers to try out Broadway-bound shows before they move to New York City.
- **Added Comfort:** The Rouse Theatre will feature more legroom and better chairs.
- **Better Sightlines and Acoustics:** The sound quality and unimpared views will speak for themselves.
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# LEADING LADIES CELEBRATED THEIR NINTH SEASON



This season marked the return of in-person events for the Leading Ladies after 18 months of virtual meetings and get-togethers. The program brings together women who love and support theatre, and the group has become the Playhouse's largest production sponsor. The Ladies experience exclusive, behind-the-scenes access to theatrical production and artistry, and enjoy artistic social events throughout the season.

## LEADING LADIES EVENTS

### PROPS TO THE LEADING LADIES!

Theatre artist Kathryn Miller gave members an inside look at the craft of hand props, from babies to pies to a bear-skin rug. Miller, a former Playhouse production team member, is the Technical Theatre Specialist and Resident Properties Master at University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

### A DIRECTING MASTERCLASS: INCIDENT AT OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP

Producing Artistic Director Blake Robison, with the assistance of cast members Barbara Chisholm and John Plumpis, demonstrated a director's approach to blocking, stage movement, intention and characterization, and how directors and artists work together to bring a script to life on stage.

### THE BIG EVENT: STEEL MAGNOLIAS

Before attending an exclusive dress rehearsal of *Steel Magnolias* in March, the Leading Ladies enjoyed dinner, drinks and mingling at the Playhouse. Catering was provided by local favorite The Perfect Brew and featured a signature pink cocktail, The Shelby.

### A LEADING LADY SPOTLIGHT: BECOMING DR. RUTH

Anne O'Sullivan, who portrayed Dr. Ruth Westheimer in our spring production of *Becoming Dr. Ruth*, engaged members in a revealing conversation about her craft. She shared insights about her artistic experiences in theatre, her approach to embodying the subject of the play and meeting with Westheimer in preparation for the role.

## STATS

**\$87,500** raised to sponsor *Steel Magnolias*

**139** members

**2 program co-chairs:** Terry Lemmerman and Nancy Lippincott

**4** unique social and educational events



Photo of Susan Ingmire, Margo Ross, Lisi George and Jean Crawford.



Leading Ladies chat and enjoy dinner at the October 2021 PROPS to the Leading Ladies event.



Event photos by Mikki Schaffner.

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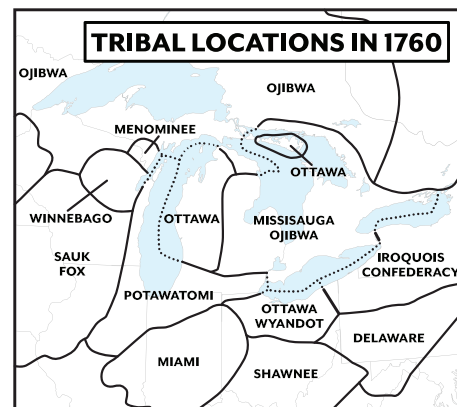
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As a step toward honoring the truth and achieving healing and reconciliation with those Indigenous peoples who were affected most by the Doctrine of Discovery\* and broken treaties, we acknowledge the traditional Shawnee and Myaamia (Miami) lands on which we now stand, and on which the city of Cincinnati was built.

\*The Doctrine of Discovery is a principle of international law dating back to the late 15th century that specifically sanctioned and promoted the conquest, colonization and exploitation of non-Christian territories and peoples. Hundreds of years of decisions and laws continuing right up to our own time can ultimately be traced back to the Doctrine of Discovery — laws that invalidate or ignore the rights, sovereignty and humanity of Indigenous peoples in the United States and around the world.



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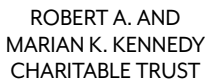
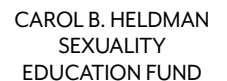
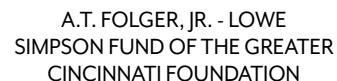
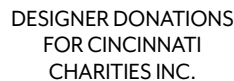
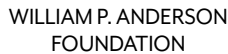
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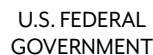


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We are grateful for our Red Carpet Experience donors who treat their guests to an intimate, behind-the-scenes experience that also supports the Playhouse. Thank you!

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The Playhouse acknowledges the following Partner Companies, Foundations and their employees who generously participate in the Annual ArtsWave Community Campaign at the \$100,000+ level. Your support helps make our community vibrant and connects people all across our region through the arts. Thank you!

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# CORPORATE PARTNERS

The Playhouse is grateful for our Corporate Partners and their dedication to supporting the Greater Cincinnati community.

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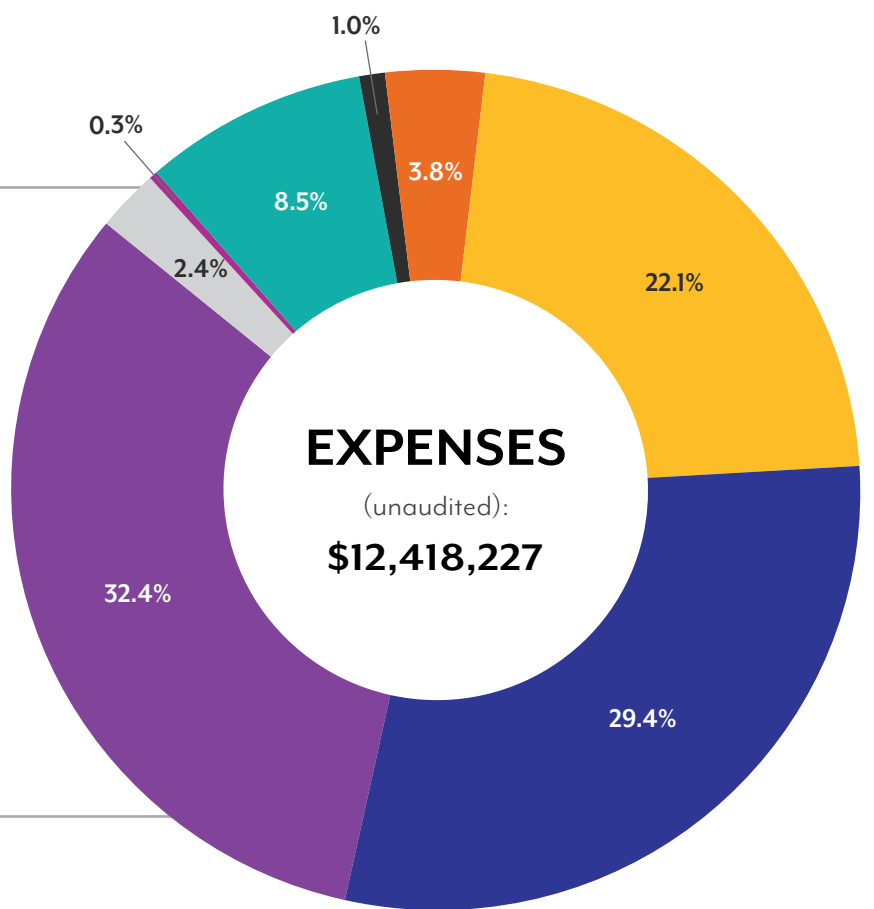
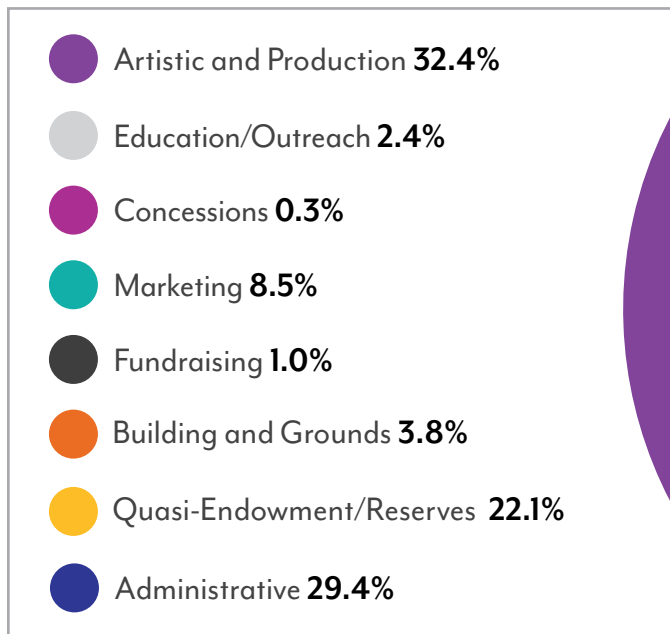
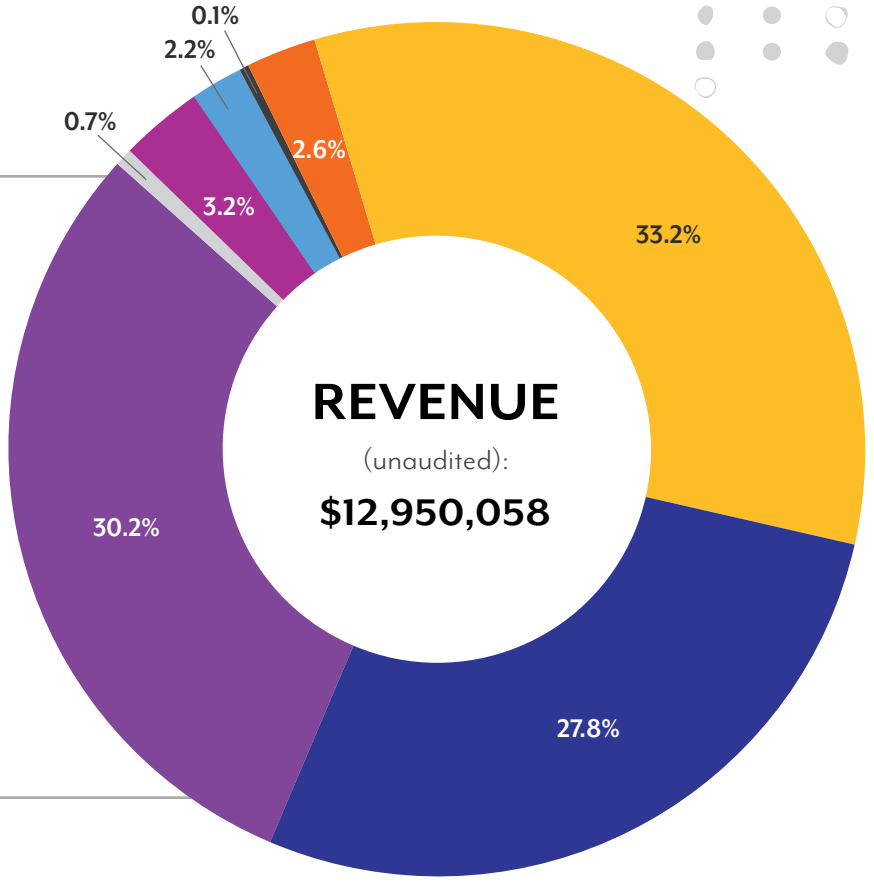
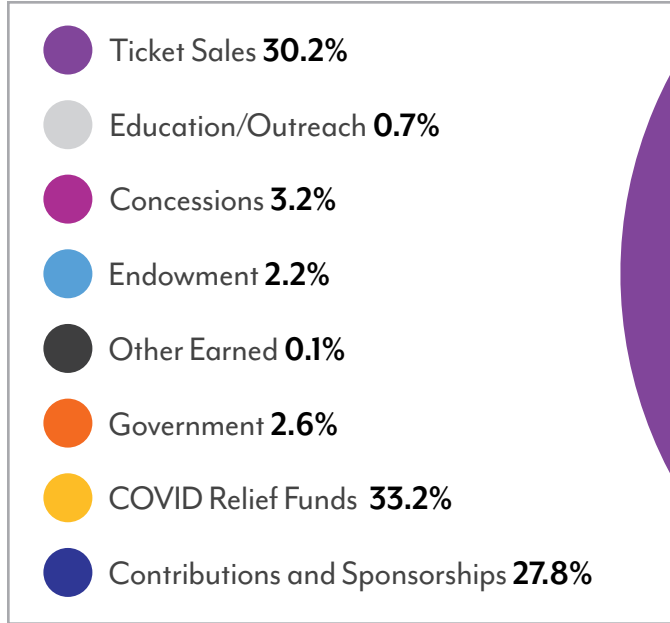
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# FINANCIAL REPORT

2021-22 Season



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