

PROGRAMMING



MISSION & VISION

About Face Theatre advances LGBTQ+ equity through community building, education, and performance.

We envision an affirming and equitable world in which all LGBTQ+ individuals are thriving and free from prejudice and discrimination.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The staff and board of About Face Theatre honor and uplift that Chicago is the homeland of the original stewards and guardians of Chicagoland: the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi Nations. Their alliance is known as The Council of Three Fires, first formed in the year 796 of the common era at Mishimikinaak, also known as Mackinac Island, in Michigan. These peoples did, and do still exist. Without their committed stewardship, we would not be enjoying this place today.

We also recognize and acknowledge the enslaved Africans who have lived, been subjugated to free labor, and toiled the grounds where many theatres have been built and resurrected. This organization, and the people behind it, believe that Black Lives Matter. We cannot serve our mission to advance dialogue on gender and sexuality without including the voices of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) in everything we do and create.





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A Message From

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MEGAN CARNEY (SHE/HER)

The stories we tell can change the world. Our stories can inspire reflection and spark action that ripples far beyond the event onstage. This is why we believe that telling stories from a wide range of perspectives within the LGBTQ+ community is so vital to our work. This year we presented three productions that revealed the transformational power of overcoming hardships through community care, vulnerability, and love.

In Laced, a trio of friends persevered after experiencing a hate crime to find the strength to carry on together. In The Magnolia Ballet, a father and son grappled with loss to face their fears and begin to express their love for each other. In Gayme Changers, two teams battled to be the next social justice superstars but found they could all win by embracing mutual aid. These are the kind of stories that continue to reverberate in our lives and point the way forward.

Our move to a new producing home at The Den in Wicker Park was a joyful highlight of this past year. Each of our productions enjoyed sold out houses and positive reviews. Throughout the season we grew through new collaborations and programming that included the first full cycle of the Green Room Collective, a Directing Fellowship, and education workshops. You can learn more about these programs within this report.

Behind the scenes at About Face, we worked collaboratively as a staff and board to revise the mission, vision, and values with fresh language that better reflects the ideas that guide our work every day. The new mission has a focus on advancing LGBTQ+ equity as a way to underscore our collective belief that theatre can meaningfully contribute to long lasting, positive social change. As you'll see in these pages, the work of advancing LGBTQ+ equity shows up in everything we do from prioritizing healthy work schedules to addressing pay equity in contracts. The concept of equity acknowledges that we are not all the same and that by supporting our differences through intentional and caring processes, we can all rise together, making each other and our communities even stronger.

Thanks for being such an important part of the vast network of support that makes About Face Theatre a thriving organization. I look forward to seeing you at the theatre.

Megan Carney Artistic Director

A Message From

MANAGING DIRECTOR

LOGAN BOYD JONES (HE/HIM)

What a journey the past year has been! From moving to a new venue and returning to live production in full force to expanding the communities that make up About Face Theatre—we have so much to celebrate. Thank you for being part of this journey.

In our return to the stage this year, we set out with a goal to continue to make AFT a home for our artists and community members. In the early planning stages of the year, we recognized a need for contract artists to plan their lives on a longer timeline than had previously been the norm. The upheaval over the past couple of years left many independent contractors and artists stranded with very little security of knowing when their next job would land. We met that need by offering season-long contracts to designers and technicians whenever possible, allowing them to plan their lives with some assurance and regularity. Across the season, we created over 140 contract positions for 99 artists and staff members. Creating space for these artists to do their best work is truly one of the most rewarding parts of the work we do at AFT

In addition to deepening our engagement with individual artists this year, we continued to build upon our long-term goals to advance equity throughout the organization. AFT's mission was strategically reenvisioned this year to focus on the company's overall goal to advance LGBTQ+ equity through community building, education, and performance. This focus on building community showed up in

the ways that we work together and in the ways that we aim to make art and brave spaces accessible to everyone in our communities. A few years ago, AFT committed to eliminating longstanding practices that resulted in unsustainable work hours and inequitable wage gaps. This year, the company completed its third season of programming without wage gaps between union and nonunion artists, with a sustainable hourly wage for all contracts, and with schedules that capped at 8 hours per day and 5 days per week.

In an effort to remove financial barriers from participation in the arts, we instituted a pay-what-you-can ticketing policy this year. Audiences can now join us for any performance for as low as \$5. It is our hope that by eliminating a cost barrier, we can create a brave space for anyone to experience work that expands our collective understanding of LGBTQ+ issues and increases empathy for the complex lives and experiences within our communities.

None of this work would be possible without the strong support of the many, many people who make About Face Theatre the organization that it is. We are so grateful that you are part of this family.

LoganWon*e*ls Managing Director



THE PEOPLE OF ABOUT FACE

STAFF

Megan Carney Artistic Director

Mikael Burke

Associate Artistic Director

Logan Boyd Jones

Managing Director

Dave (Dylan) Toropov

Director of Individual & Major Giving and Special Events

Audrev Kleine

Operations & Production Manager

Charles Riffenburg

Marketing Manager & Graphic Designer

Kirsten Baity Sharon Pasia

Green Room Collective Participants

Ruby Muñoz

Bookkeeper

John Olson

Public Relations

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Co-Vice Chair. Development Chair Sheldon Brown

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ARTISTIC ASSOCIATES EMERITI

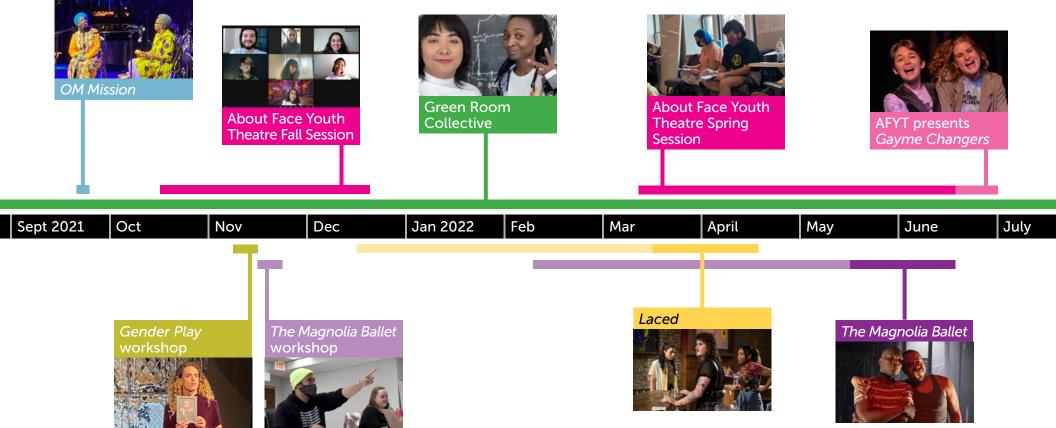
Amy Beck Alexandra Billings Precious Brady-Davis Joel Butler Megan Carney **Brad Cawley** Geoffrey M Curley Jane C. Cho Shelley Echerd Mark Emerson Mitchell Fain Steve Futterman Brian Goodman Sarah Gubbins David Hyman Kyle Hall

Ted Hoerl Eric Hoff Jessica Hudson Patricia Kane SK Kerastas Julia Fabris McBride James McKay Amy Matheny Jacob Padron Andre Pluess Dida Ritz Rebecca Rugg Tanya Saracho Arturo Soria **Daniel Stermer**

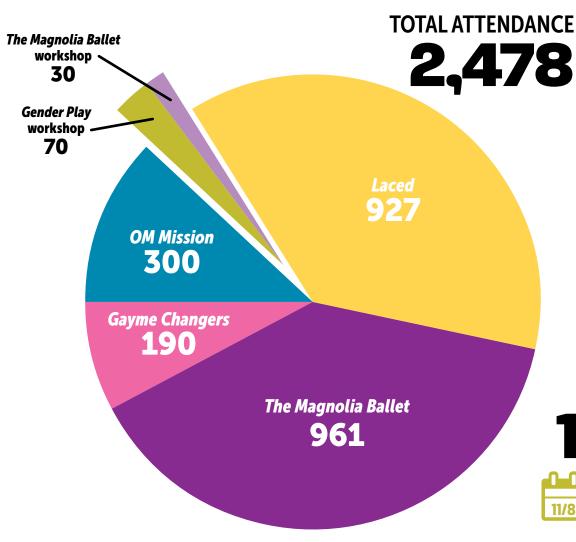
2021-2022 PROGRAMMING

SEASON 27 TIMELINE

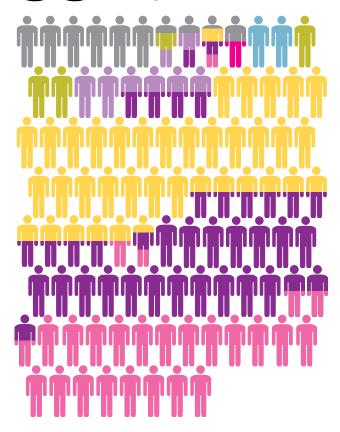
About Face Theatre was busy all year producing a wide range of compelling programs. From workshops to full productions, the work was thriving in our first year back to live production.



SEASON 27 AT A GLANCE



ARTISTS & STAFF EMPLOYED



10 SPECIAL COMMUNITY EVENTS























PROGRAMMING



MAKING MORE SUSTAINABLE THEATRE

When I was hired as Production Manager at the start of the season, the About Face team and I discussed our desire to make our production process "greener." The theatre industry as a whole can be pretty wasteful--we build a set for a run, and then 9-times-out-of-10 the whole thing will go into a dumpster the moment the show closes. We wanted to look for ways to reuse as much as possible, not only as a way to save on build materials, but as a way to make a dent in our relatively wasteful industry.

After we closed our first show, Laced, our strike team worked the entire day to save as much lumber from the set as possible. They, along with Technical Director Becca Venable, spent countless hours pulling screws out of 2x4s and luan and trimming unusable pieces covered in wood glue. We were able to save enough lumber that the majority of The Magnolia Ballet set was actually built using the Laced set! On top of reusing lumber, we also worked with our scenic painting team at Altman Art Haus to use leftover paint from some of the other theatres they paint for. This meant that instead of buying new cans of paint to paint the mural you saw in Laced, we worked on more of a barter system with other Chicago theatres, exchanging leftover paint from other productions.

When the About Face Youth Theatre ensemble started their workshop process, they wanted to focus on both mutual aide and sustainability.

With this in mind from the beginning, we set out to repurpose The Magnolia Ballet set to fit into the world of AFYT's show Gayme Changers. We removed the pieces from Steven Abbott's original design Magnolia Ballet that didn't work for AFYT, and everything we added was elements from past About Face shows. The fabric and flowers you saw incorporated into the set was re-used from past Wonka Balls, as well as the disco ball that appeared in Laced. The entire ensemble and AFT staff also collected recyclables during the rehearsal process to reimagine as set decoration.

One of the things that made me love theatre in the first place is the "make it work" moments. Sometimes you have time to take needle and thread to a broken zipper, and sometimes an actor will go on stage with a safety pin holding their dress together. Being able to apply this line of thinking on a bigger scale was not always easy, and I'm not even saying it was all that different to what lots of people are already doing. But it made a really big difference at the end of the season knowing that we making a more sustainable model for the future.

Audrey Kleine

Operations & Production Manager

INVESTING IN THE NEXT GENERATION

GREEN ROOM COLLECTIVE

In a theatre, the "green room" is a location backstage where the artists prepare for performance. The green room is a space for camaraderie and community, vulnerability and questioning. It's the place to experiment with big ideas and work out the details with others. The Green Room is often the last stop before you take the stage. The Green Room Collective program embraces these aspects to create a supportive platform to springboard young leaders in the LGBTQ+ community toward the advancement of their goals.

In About Face Theatre's Green Room Collective program, participants advance through a series of individualized skill building activities, engage in meaningful tasks that directly support AFT operations, and take actions toward their education and/or career goals. In this role, GRC members work on two main project areas that will be developed together with AFT staff and artists.

About Face Theatre's Green Room Collective felt like learning to ride my bike with training wheels, then riding with my mom holding on to the back of the seat. By the time I got to the end, it felt like when my mom let go and I didn't realize I was doing it on my own until I heard her cheering from down the block. I feel like I can ride with the big kids now so I think that this program did its job.

Getting advice from everyone on staff about their area of expertise taught me more about the theater industry than I learned in school or internships. Not only did people teach me how these jobs work but I actually got to try doing it myself. I now know what parts of theater-making excite me and where I need the support of others. GRC taught me how to get my work seen by the right people and what to look for in other companies. Now that I'm at the end of the program, I've already been invited back to About Face to work as the Intimacy Designer on their next play and I'm getting offers from other companies to work with them in various capacities. I know that I have what it takes to do my job well and I feel like I'm truly a part of the Chicago theater community.

Kirsten Baity (they/them)
Inaugural Green Room Collective Member





2021-2022 Green Room Collective participants Kirsten Baity and Sharon Pasia



OM MISSION

Written and performed by Shanta Nurullah and Zahra Baker

Presented September 25, 2021 as part of Chicago LIVE Again at Lake Stage in Polk Bros. Park on Navy Pier

For this free celebration of the return of live performance to Chicago, artists Shanta Nurullah and Zahra Baker expanded the performance they had created for About Face Theatre's online festival *KICKBACK*. Presented live for the first time, this musical exploration of Black lesbians from the Harlem Renaissance to present-day Chicago was full of little-known history and compelling storytelling.



WORKSHOP:

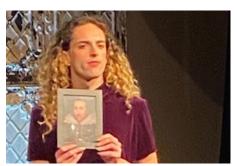
GENDER PLAY OR WHAT YOU WILL

Written and performed by Will Wilhelm, directed by Erin Murray.

Presented Nov 8, 2021 at The Den Theatre, 1331 N Milwaukee Ave, Chicago

About Face welcomed theatre artists Will Wilhelm and Erin Murray for a two-week residency developing *Gender Play*, a new solo show exploring Shakespeare through a gender imaginative eye. The workshop culminated in About Face's first public performance at our new performing venue, The Den Theatre. nine months later, AFT announced that *Gender Play* will receive a full production in the 2022-2023 season.









WORKSHOP:

THE MAGNOLIA BALLET

Written by Terry Guest,

Directed by AFT Associate Artistic Director Mikael Burke, Choreography by Jenn Freeman Featuring Terry Guest, Wardell Julius Clark, Eric Gerard, and Sam Boeck

Presented November 13, 2021 at About Face Theatre rehearsal space, 5252 N Broadway Ave, Chicago

Soon after the *Gender Play* workshop, AFT held a week-long workshop for *The Magnolia Ballet*, a Southern Gothic fable that melds high drama, dance, poetry, and spectacle to explore masculinity, racism, and the love between a queer kid and his father. This new play was developed by Terry Guest and About Face Associate Artistic Director Mikael Burke. Ahead of the show's premiere in at Phoenix Theatre in Indianapolis and local premiere by AFT in the spring of 2022, the artists used this workshop to develop the movement style and physicality of the play.

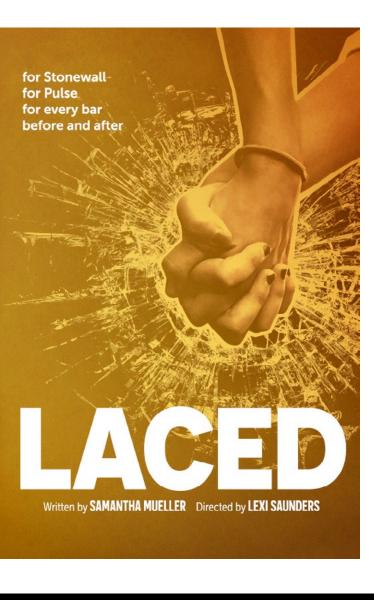








PROGRAMMING

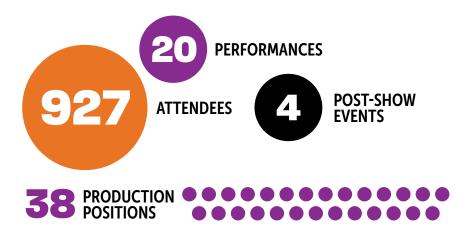


LACED

Written by Sam Mueller Directed by AFT Artistic Associate Lexi Saunders Featuring Mariah Copeland, Daniela Martinez, and Collin Quinn Rice

Presented March 17 - April 16, 2022 at The Den Theatre, 1331 N Milwaukee Ave, Chicago

Three bartenders arrive at their beloved queer bar to find that the establishment has been vandalized. As they try to piece together the events of the night before, the three friends grieve, riot, point fingers, and ultimately must decide: is it better to understand what and why this happened, or to just clean up and move on? Fiery, poetic, and up-to-the-minute contemporary, Laced is a timely story about the importance of gueer-positive spaces and of what it takes to come back together after your world has been shaken.



EVENTS AT THE SHOW

Thurs, March 21, 2022 Post-show conversation with Assoc. Sound Designer and Chicagobased DJ/ producer/writer Ariel Zetina.

Fri, April 1 & Fri, April 8, 2022 Post-show mixology with Asst. Director Jacinda Ratcliffe demonstrating drink recipes from the show.

Thurs, April 7, 2022 Post-show conversation with playwright Sam Mueller and director Lexi Saunders

REVIEWS

"Laced is a study of struggling with the aftermath of a violent, personal act. But it is also more: it is a show of faith in the power of human beings to come together even in the face of hatred"

-Chicago OnStage

"What makes *Laced* so engaging is the refrain that because of the existence of suffering, there must, must, must be happiness. Not just hope, but true joy and celebration."

-New City

"When each [character] speaks their own truth, we understand the complexities involved with identifying as being queer"

-Around the Town

"Laced portrays the need for happiness not as sentimentality or escape but as a hard-nosed and battle-ready response to a harsh world. Its characters' trials and triumphs show that joy can be thrown like a brick, like a molotov cocktail, like a party." RECOMMENDED

-New City

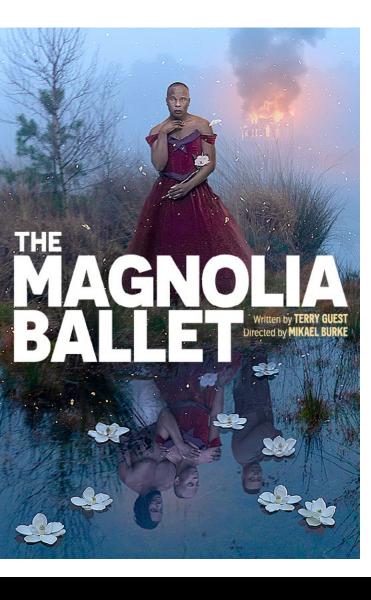
"The result is a play that tells us about the horrors of the violence we face but also offers us the hope of friendship, strength and community. It is the tonic we all need now."

-Theatre Raves







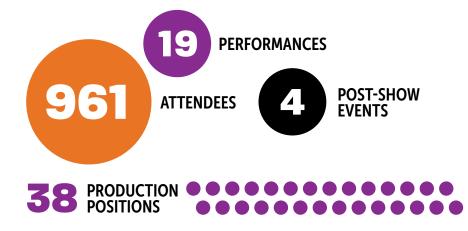


THE MAGNOLIA BALLET

Written by Terry Guest Directed by AFT Associate Artistic Director Mikael Burke Featuring Terry Guest, Wardell Julius Clark, AFT Artistic Associate Sheldon D. Brown, and Ben Sulzberger

Presented May 12 – June 11, 2022 at The Den Theatre, 1331 N Milwaukee Ave, Chicago

Ezekiel is a Black teenager with a secret. Every day he finds himself haunted by ghosts, ghosts that have plagued men in Georgia for generations, ghosts of racism, homophobia, and toxic masculinity. Ghosts that show up in the other men in his life, including his emotionally distant father. But when Ezekiel discovers a trove of forbidden love letters among his late grandfather's belongings, he has a realization: perhaps the only way to exorcise these multi-generational ghosts is to burn everything to the ground.



EVENTS AT THE SHOW

Thurs, May 19: BLACK OUT Performance

An environment designed for an all-Black-identifying audience.

Thurs, May 26, 2022 Post-show discussion

Post-show discussion with director Mikael Burke, playwright/actor Terry Guest & intimacy designer Kirsten Baity.

Thurs, June 2, 2022

Post-show discussion with director Mikael Burke and playwright/actor Terry Guest

Fri, June 3, 2022

Post-show discussion with danger & choreographer Jenn Freeman, aka Po' Chop.

REVIEWS

"About Face Theatre has never been shy about placing the queer experience front and center, a mission furthered by work like this. When theater is still, like popular media, so wrapped up in telling tragedies surrounding queer and Black bodies, we need plays like this." RECOMMENDED

-New City

"One of the enduring successes of About Face Theatre is producing work that feels current and raw and relevant across the broad spectrum of the LGBTQ+community. The Magnolia Ballet is another step forward in that tradition, one that had me thoroughly enchanted by its spell."

-Chicago Reader

"[Terry Guest is] a gifted writer, clearly, to watch and experience...

If you follow new American works, try and see this show before it exits The Den"

-Chicago Tribune

"The Magnolia Ballet is an exceptional show... Powerful and touching" HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

-Buzz Center Stage

"The unfaltering guidance provided by director Mikael Burke, his shapeshifting cast, intriguing scenery, Brian Grimm's evocative musical score and Jen Freeman's shadowy movement design only leave us wanting to contemplate [the show's] mysteries further."

-Windy City Times









GAYME CHANGERS

Devised by the About Face Youth Theatre ensemble, written by Kirsten Baity Directed by Vic Wynter

Featuring Elena Avila, Edgar Flores, Wilbur Grey, Kara Partisano, Lily Rubin, Nora Talaga, Sophronia Vowels, Theo Wampusyc, and Pen Wilder

Presented June 18-24, 2022 at The Den Theatre, 1331 N Milwaukee Ave, Chicago

In the season finale of the hit reality TV show Gayme Changers, contestants compete for the prize of \$4 million and the title of America's next Social Justice Superstars. But everything changes when an unlikely team exposes the billion-dollar truth hidden behind the spectacle. Created by and starring the About Face Youth Theatre ensemble, *Gayme Changers* is a new immersive comedy about climate change activism that blends reality TV with a dash of call to action.











YEAR-LONG WORKSHOPS AND DEVELOPMENT

About Face Youth Theatre (AFYT) returned to in-person programming and live productions this past year. In the fall 2021 session, program participants met virtually over Zoom and explored audio drama as a performing medium. The series culminated in the creation of an original audio drama centering on themes of climate justice and sustainability.

The themes explored in the fall carried into the spring 2022 session, which focused on writing, devising, and developing the script for an original play. Kirsten Baity and Sharon Pasia co-created a curriculum that focused on climate change and mutual aid. This spring session marked the first time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic that AFYT returned to in-person programming. 100% of participants in the AFYT ensemble self-identified as LGBTQIA+ both in terms of gender identity and sexual identity.

The work they did together culminated in the new play called Gayme Changers, that went on to a fully realized production in AFT's new producing home at The Den Theatre in June 2022.

I liked being surrounded by so many queer people, especially trans and nonbinary people, and not having to take on the emotional labor of explaining my identities!"

Everyone was always very supportive, and it gave us a chance to learn and grow and take chances. AND MAKE FRIENDS!!"

ff I really enjoy the community here. There's not a lot of places where I feel I can truly express myself, but I can here."



PROGRAMMING

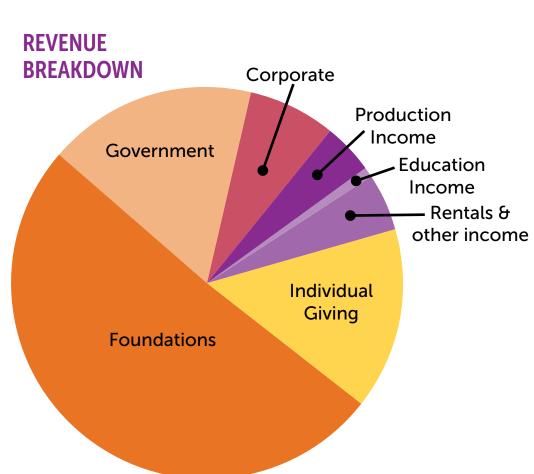


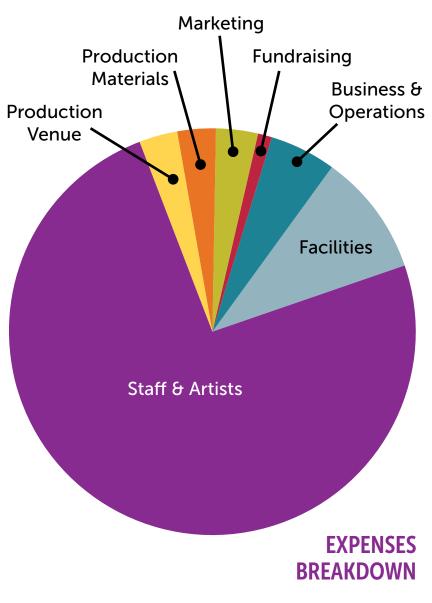


PROGRAMMING

2021-2022 **FINANCES**

2021-2022 FINANCIALS





STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS	FY2022
Cash Accounts Recievable Prepaid Expenses Security Deposits Fixed Assets	\$332,503 \$121,683 \$5,240 \$11,980 \$11,665
Total Assets	\$483,071
LIABILITIES	
Accounts Payable Loans Payable Security Deposits Payable Accrued Expenses	\$743 \$0 \$1,520 \$250
Total Liabilities	\$2,513
EQUITY	
Opening Balance Retained Earnings Net Revenue	\$30 \$308,061 \$172,467
Total Equity	\$480,558
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$483,071

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY

EARNED REVENUE	FY2022	
Production Income Education Income Rentals & Other Income	\$33,432 \$6,548 \$39,770	
Total Earned Revenue	\$79,750	
CONTRIBUTED REVENUE		
Individuals (Board) Individuals (Non-Board) Special Events Foundation Government Corporate	\$42,517 \$75,627 \$0 \$408,125 \$137,152 \$56,203	
Total Contributed Revenue In-kind Revenue	\$719,624 \$757	
Total Revenue	\$800,131	
Total Revenue EXPENSES	\$800,131	
	\$330,828 \$137,198 \$20,000 \$19,109 \$20,092 \$7,902 \$32,571 \$59,963 \$727	
EXPENSES Staff Personnel Production Personnel Production Venue Production Materials Marketing Fundraising Business & Operations Facilities	\$330,828 \$137,198 \$20,000 \$19,109 \$20,092 \$7,902 \$32,571 \$59,963	

^{*}Pre-audit financials for Fiscal Year ending August 31, 2022

ABOUT FACE THEATRE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

RJ Silva

Lauren Sivak

Steve Trubac

Moises Villada

Joshua Turnbull

DONORS

CORPORATE, FOUNDATION & GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS

Reflects donations made between September 1, 2021 and August 31, 2022.

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INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Reflects donations made between September 1, 2021 and August 31, 2022.

SUSTAINERS CIRCLE

About Face Theatre would like to thank the Sustainers Circle, a community of donors who pledge a recurring monthly or quarterly donation in support of the Theatre and its mission to advance the national dialogue on sexual and gender identity.

Rob Abernathy	Alan Eddington	Amy Hutchison
Jim Andrews	Xavier Esters	Bill Michel
Dave Bentlin	Pat Ewert	Maria Plaxco
Victoria Carney	August Garritano	Lauren Sack
Judge Tom Chiola	Howard Heyman	Paul Semper

FOUNDERS SOCIETY

With a generous annual contribution or monthly gift totaling \$1,000 or more in a year, Founders Society members support today's LGBTQ+ artists creating About Face Theatre's performances and touring shows, as well as our youth ensemble and education initiatives.

\$10,000+	\$1,000-\$4,999		
Nan Schaffer	Rob Abernathy	Kathe Elwell	Scott McCausland
	Geoffrey Anderson	David Germaine	Bill Michel
\$5,000-\$9,999	Mr. Jim Andrews	Sean Gill	Maria Plaxco
	Derek Blin	Prof. James A. Glazier	Charles Rhee
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Logan Jones

\$500-\$999

Lisa Bowden Grea Cameron Karrie and Kyle Carlin Parvesh Cheena Victor L Corder John D'Emilio William Toby Eveland Pat Ewert Garv Gephart Niall and Katie Hardiman Jeff Hautzinger Howard Heyman Amy Hutchison Mariel Iverson E. Patrick Johnson John Kander Kevin McGirr John Morse Clark Pellett Roche Schulfer **Bob Schwartz** Paul Semper Bernadette Smith Edmund Talideh

\$100-\$499

John Callen

Michael Carney

Suzanne Carrier

Anonymous x8 James L Alexander Chris Baer Peggy Bagley Lynne Baker Jack Barber Maureen Barry Jane Beachy Dave Bentlin Jeff Berry Roger Bialcik Bernice Bigelow Andrew Szegedy-Maszak & Flizabeth Bobrick Mark Brewer Gail Browder Tim Brynda

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\$1-\$99

Spencer Wood

Anonymous x 38

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Starr
Richard Stuckey
Lori Sulzberger
Nilsa Shepsle Sweetser
Chas Swedberg
John Thompson
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