

PORTLAND PLAYHOUSE

Annual
Report

Season 16
2023-2024



OUR MISSION

is to celebrate the complexity of the human experience.

OUR VISION

is a world awakened by the wonder of theatre.

PORTLAND PLAYHOUSE PRACTICES ANTI-RACIST THEATRE

Racism is institutionalized in the American theatre industry. We are dedicated to changing these structures and systems of oppression. We resolve to carry out this work on all levels of our organization, and to advocate for and create change in our larger community.

Our goal is to continually create a community of care.

PORTLAND PLAYHOUSE IS LOCATED IN THE HEART OF PORTLAND'S KING NEIGHBORHOOD

We honor the Chinook, Multnomah, and Kathlamet Nations, as well as the many additional tribes on whose ancestral land we sit. We are housed in what was once the home of Mt. Sinai Baptist Church, where a Black congregation convened for several decades, and which remains culturally significant to many Black families in our community. We honor the spirit, history, and lives of the people who used this building for fellowship, praise, and worship.

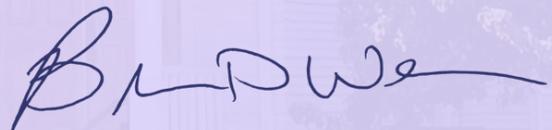
A LETTER FROM FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR BRIAN WEAVER

Life is precious. It's easy to get swept along in the details, tasks, routines and to do lists that fill our days. Our minds flit from the past to the future, looking back to remembered grievances, slights, triumphs, replaying conversations (both real and imagined) and then leaping forward to next week's meetings, vacations, and occasionally our larger hopes and dreams.

Theatre is a practice of living in the present moment. We come together in a room full of strangers and loved ones (partners, friends, kids, dare I say a first date?). Together we celebrate, we fight for change, we laugh, we cry, and we breathe. And we honor these precious moments. Life, together.

Season 16 was full of joy and longing. We centered stories of youth empowerment and this thread carried through *Matilda*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Passing Strange*. This thread carried through our community programs: intentionally multi-generational, we brought together kids, parents, chosen family, grandparents and great-grandparents. It carried through our education programs: free summer camp for Portland Public School kids, the Fall Festival of Shakespeare, and in school residencies, where we created a sense of belonging and focused on building strong social bonds among youth.

In everything we did, we lifted up the value of being together and the joy, strength, and sometimes challenges, of being part of a community. Thank you for being part of the Playhouse gatherings and for practicing presence with us. We are here for each other in this precious, messy, wonderful, silly, and profound life.



PLAYHOUSE STAFF

Ramona Lisa Alexander, Community Programs &
Associate Artistic Director
Kay Colburn, Development Associate
Charles Grant, Producing Director
Thyra Hartshorn, Director of Production
Hayley Durelle Hilmes, Development Director
Voni Kengla, Box Office Associate
Alix Kolar, Finance & HR Director
Mia Lewis, Events & Front of House Manager
Ela Roman, Marketing & Communications Director
Brian Weaver, Producing Artistic Director

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Stephen Robinson, Chair
Greg Hinckley, Vice Chair
Andrew Clarke, Treasurer
Alex Colas
Dr. Angela Freeman
David Greenberg, PhD
Dr. Eleanor Gil-Kashiwabara
Maude Hines
Andy Riccetti-Eberly
Pancho Savery
Shauncey Mashia Stelly
Michael Weaver



ROALD DAHL'S MATILDA THE MUSICAL

October 4 – November 5, 2023
June 7 – 30, 2024

Book by Dennis Kelly
Music & Lyrics by Tim Minchin

Directed by Brian Weaver
Music Directed by Eric Nordin
Choreography by Kemba Shannon

- Remounted in spring after a sold-out fall run
- 64 total performances
- Reached 4,924 audience members
- 19% of tickets were purchased by first-time buyers

Critical Acclaim

"I just read the news that Portland Playhouse's Matilda: The Musical is now sold out. And well it should be! This ambitious production... is totally enchanting." —Krista Garver, *Broadway World*

Audience Applause

"There were a few tears, lots of laughs, and lots of excitement from my 5 year old daughter watching her first play. She talked about the experience the entire drive home."



A CHRISTMAS CAROL

November 21 – December 30, 2023

By Charles Dickens
Adaptation by Rick Lombardo
Original Music by Anna Lackaff and Rick Lombardo
Music Arrangements by Anna Lackaff

Directed by Charles Grant

- This was our 10th year producing *A Christmas Carol*
- Reached 3,923 audience members
- 42 performances
- BIPOC performances were at 97% capacity

Critical Acclaim

“Directed brilliantly by Charles Grant, [this production] exceeds expectations in every way... the music is incredible, and the acting moved me to tears more than once (skip the mascara, trust me).
—Meg Ashby, PDX Parent

Audience Applause

“Our experience reinforced the importance of sharing a communal experience, the joy of live theater, and... the reminder of that spark of human transformation that is possible with unconditional love.”



PASSING STRANGE

April 17 – May 26, 2024

Book and Lyrics by Stew
Music by Stew with Heidi Rodewald
Created in Collaboration with
Annie Dorsen

Directed by Rodney Hicks
Music Directed by Kennedy Varrett
Choreography by Muffie Delgado Connelly

- Served 2,073 audience members
- 34 performances
- 18% of tickets were purchased by first-time buyers
- 90% of subscribers attended

Critical Acclaim

“The directing and casting choices here infuse the play with new energy, and push it to the edges of current struggles for expression.” –Darleen Ortega, Oregon Arts Watch

Audience Applause

“It was a roller coaster ride of the senses and a real life experience of self-transformation. I felt my own story come alive from watching this production.”

BUILDING EQUITY

FINANCIAL ACCESSIBILITY

831 \$5 Arts for All Tickets
855 \$25 Access Tickets
1361 Pay-What-You-Will Tickets

Access initiatives account for **22%** of total ticket sales

Audience Applause

"You make your performances very accessible under the Arts for All program... In fact, Arts for All is just one way you make your theater financially accessible. It's obvious that this is a core aspect of your mission and I deeply appreciate that."

BIPOC PERFORMANCES

In Season 16, we continued to create audience spaces that center the experience of patrons who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color (BIPOC).

Each production included 3 or more BIPOC performances, which included pay-what-you-will tickets, pre-show mixers, post-show discussions, and a theatre-going experience where the majority of the audience self-identified as BIPOC.

Our collaborators and partners included: Painted Entertainment, Albina Vision Trust, Everybody Has Song, Montrell Chillin' the Poet Goss (may he rest rest in peace), Courageous Coyote, Pacer Champion Against Bullying, Bishop and Sons, Word is Bond, Miss'ipi Chef, Youngest DJ in Portland DJ Jaysii, Alice Price, and Art Mentor.

KEELA JOHNSON, CULTURAL CONSULTANT



Keela Johnson is a creative cultural consultant contracted to support our antiracist theatre practice. Keela supports Portland Playhouse in creating more equitable work spaces, with providing resources for casts and production teams, and with community activity development and facilitation. She has also facilitated all-staff trainings on a range of topics, including disrupting micro-aggressions, and building healthy communication systems.



APPRENTICESHIP

In Season 16, five artists participated in our apprenticeship: a paid, pre-professional training program for emerging theatre-makers.

Kathryn, Dylan, and Monika worked with us in a range of capacities from August 2023 through June 2024. As a culminating project, Kathryn and Monika presented solo performances, with Dylan providing design and production support.

In mid-May we welcomed two more production apprentices recruited from Florida A&M University's theatre department. Jacoby and Nya were instrumental in our re-mount and four-week run of *Matilda: The Musical*, which closed at the end of June.

This program was made possible with support from the Braemar Charitable Trust, JW & HM Goodman Foundation, Hearst Foundation, Raymond Foundation, and our general operating support funders.

Above: Monika Miliiani and Kathryn Hasson perform their solo shows, 2024. Photos by Kirk W Johnson.
Below: Nya Holms and Jacoby Jenkins at Multhnomah Falls; Dylan Nebeker testing a set piece. Photos by Thyra Hartshorn.





PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS

Fall festival students cheer on their peers. Photo by Brud Giles, 2019.

FALL FESTIVAL OF SHAKESPEARE

Our teaching artists lead middle and high school students through a exploration of Shakespeare's plays. By removing the language barrier Shakespeare can often create, we level the playing field for students with varied abilities and reading levels. Participants create their own full-scale productions to perform for public audiences at the Fall Festival of Shakespeare at the Winningstad Theatre in downtown Portland.

280	Students
6	Schools
25	Teaching Artists
10	Weeks

PPS SUMMER PARTNERSHIP

We partnered with Portland Public Schools to operate a 5-week-long after-school program for students enrolled in PPS' Summer Acceleration Academy at James John Elementary School. Teaching Artists led groups of 12-20 students in structured indoor and outdoor free-times, along with more formal theatre/storytelling and music classes.

114	Students
1	School
11	Teaching Artists
5	Weeks

AFTER SCHOOL DRAMA

During the 2023-2024 school year, we partnered with Grout Elementary and St. Andrews Nativity School to provide students with free after-school drama programs.

22	Students
2	Schools
3	Teaching Artists
18	Weeks

"Pls do this again next year!!" –Student Feedback



Left: BIPOC Night mixer, *A Christmas Carol*. Center: Art as an Outlet. Right: Haute Holiday Bizarre. Photos by Kenyahta Sikes.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

ART AS AN OUTLET

8 Workshops 88 Participants

We partnered with Kenyahta Sikes (Painted Entertainment) to offer Art As An Outlet, facilitated by Nneka Denise (wRite To Heal Project). Art as an Outlet is an art therapy program designed to support healing from life-altering experiences such as abandonment, domestic violence, generational trauma, grief, racism, illness, and sexual assault.

HAUTE HOLIDAY BAZAAR

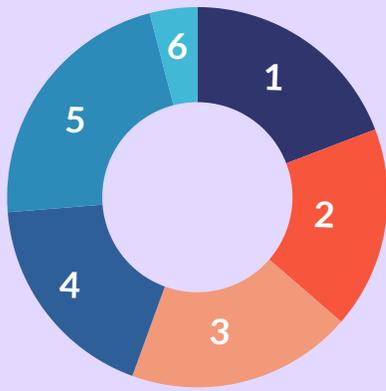
18 Vendors 250 Attendees

For four Sundays in December we hosted local small & micro businesses in our studio for a holiday market. To drive foot traffic, the market was open before and after matinee performances of *A Christmas Carol*. Vendors sold art, accessories, home goods, accessories, toys, food & drink, and more.

SHARING SPACE

36 rentals of the theatre / community studio
12 community groups used our spaces for free
3 lobby installations by local artists

REVENUE



1. Government Grants (19%)
2. Foundation Grants (17%)
3. Education Services (19%)
4. Individual Gifts (18%)
5. Ticket Sales (23%)
6. Miscellaneous Income (3%)

REVENUE

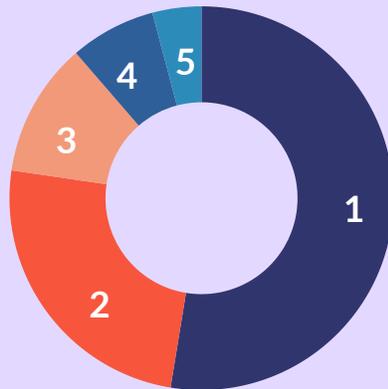
\$2,121,869

EXPENSES

\$2,209,901

EXPENSES

1. Artistic & Community Programs (48%)
2. Education Programs (24%)
3. General Operations (11%)
4. Fundraising (7%)
5. Marketing (4%)



We ended Season 16 with a small deficit. While we exceeded our ticket sales and individual giving goals, foundation support was lower than expected and our expenses increased more than we anticipated (by over 10%).

You can find our 990 Forms on our website, and our audited financial statements will be available this winter.

Top: Delphon (DJ) Curtis, Ellis Robinson, and Ben Tissell. Bottom: Lester Purry and Ben Tissell. A *Christmas Carol*, 2023. Photos by Kirk W. Johnson.



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Portland Playhouse has made some extensive commitments to **creating a more equitable and humane theater industry**, adopting specific antiracist and workplace health practices and aspiring to create a “culture of joy” that “center[s] diverse people and perspectives.”

—Darleen Ortega,
Oregon Arts Watch