



OUR COMMUNITY
YOUR PLAYHOUSE

LETTER FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Playhouse Friend,

It is said that "a friend in need is a friend indeed." How true that has proven to be over the past year, my first as Board president of your Playhouse.

In the face of a global pandemic that shuttered our Marx and Rosenthal Shelterhouse theatres, you stepped up to ensure that playwrights, artists and the stories they collaboratively tell were available in a variety of virtual and socially distant settings. I cannot thank enough the 1,257 donors whose support of our annual fund made this possible.

Moreover, you also helped to bring our dream of a new, 21st-century theatre complex a giant step closer to reality. On June 5, we officially broke ground on The Rouse Theatre. Thus far, more than 1,000 individuals, foundations and companies have contributed to the Capital Campaign, with over 60 gifts of \$100,000 or more, a testament to the broad reach and generous spirit of the Playhouse family. But we're not quite done! As we enter the final phase of our fundraising efforts, we ask for your continued support and advocacy. If you've not yet contributed, we hope you will do so. If you're already a campaign donor, help spread the word among your family and friends. There's still time to be a part of this transformational project!

The past year has arguably been the most challenging in the 61-year life of Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. The Playhouse has successfully met this challenge, thanks largely to our history of strong financial stewardship. This is the legacy of Managing Director Buzz Ward, who stepped down from that role on June 30 after 29 years of extraordinary leadership. Thank you, Buzz. Your contributions to, and impact on, our theatre are immeasurable.

On behalf of the Playhouse Board of Trustees, I thank you all and look forward to welcoming you back to the theatre this fall.

Best,

Ellen G. van der Horst Board President

Allen Grander Host

LETTER FROM BLAKE AND BUZZ

Greetings!

What can we say other than THANK YOU! This has been a year unlike any other — one that we certainly didn't expect to play out as it did. But through it all, you, our Playhouse family, have stuck with us as we have learned how to navigate the "new normal" during a global pandemic. You have joined us for Zoom events and online mysteries, braved corn mazes with us, tuned in for pod plays and other art from home, supported online arts education activities for students around the Tristate, provided your generous support, and been a part of our careful reopening with our special event series in the Marx Theatre. As we look ahead to the return of productions to our stages next season, we want you to know how much we appreciate each and every one of you.

A year without live theatre has illuminated how much we as humans need to gather and share our stories with one another. When we return to the stage, our thoughtfully curated and well-rounded 62nd season of programming will continue to showcase a variety of perspectives and viewpoints. From popular musicals that allow you to share joy with those around you to groundbreaking new work that will spark important community dialogue, theatre is a medium that will help us rediscover our collective humanity as we begin to gather in person again.

On behalf of the entire staff, we look forward to celebrating with you — together at the Playhouse — this fall for the opening of *The West End* in the Marx Theatre. In the meantime, please know how grateful we are to all of you!



Blake Robison Artistic Director



Buzz Ward
Managing Director

CONTINUED IMPACT IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Each year, ArtsWave raises millions of dollars to support more than 100 arts and community organizations across our region. Through their Blueprint for Collective action, a strategic plan for creating community through the arts, they work through five focus areas to make our region an amazing and vibrant place to live. The Playhouse is proud to partner with ArtsWave to deepen this investment in our community — especially during the pandemic, restrictions on gatherings and stay-at-home orders during the 2020-21 season.

Thanks to the support and resources provided by ArtsWave while our stages were dark, we were able to draw upon the profound power of the arts to keep our community connected and spread joy in the midst of uncertainty.



ARTS **DEEPEN ROOTS**

36 Off the Grid activities.

1,195 people reached.

70 local artists and teaching artists hired.

ARTS FUEL CREATIVITY AND LEARNING

41,455 students participated in all education and community engagement programs.

3 outreach tour virtual productions. **103** virtual performances.



of recorded drama workshop videos.

Teaching Artist Julia Gomez reads Go, Dog, Go! during a Bringing Books to Life virtual workshop



GREATER CINCINNATI CLASSROOMS

received a free Education Membership.

Teaching Artists Craig Branch and Ariana Moses during a virtual Drama Club workshop.



ARTS PUT **CINCINNATI** ON THE MAP



ARTS BRIDGE **CULTURAL DIVIDES**

3 Upstanders Onstage: Performances for Social Change events performed to a total of

215 audience members and featured 20 artists using their art to create dialogue and effect change in the world.

The Playhouse was one of **24** theatres across the country to partner with The Breath Project; **3,600** people nation-wide participated.

ARTS ENLIVEN NEIGHBORHOODS

3 virtual Off the Hill productions.

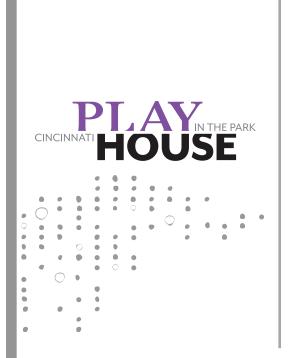
35 community partners.

9,814 estimated viewers.



COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESS (DEIA)

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. We stand with the Black community and communities of color, and with the diverse artists who make art in our city.



WE WELCOME

ALL RACES AND ETHNICITIES

ALL RELIGIONS

ALL GENDER IDENTITIES

ALL COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

ALL SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS

ALL IMMIGRANTS

ALL ABILITIES AND DISABILITIES

ALL SPOKEN AND SIGNED LANGUAGES

EVERYONE.

AN UPDATED PLAN

In pursuit of the above commitment, Playhouse leadership, staff and Board revisited our DEIA plan this season, which was originally made public and official in 2018. After measuring current benchmarks, we used discussion forums, conversations and surveys to carefully listen to various stakeholders, artists, audiences and community members. The resulting, updated commitment and action items can be found at cincyplay.com/DEIA. The action items reflect goals for programming, audience, outreach and all who are connected with the Playhouse — management, staff, trustees, volunteers and vendors. Work on these action items has already begun, including the first round of DEIA trainings for our staff and Board, which were held in the 2020-21 season.

PARTNERING WITH THE BREATH PROJECT

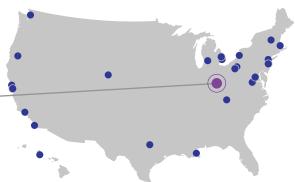
This season, we were proud to partner with The Breath Project to create a national archive of 8-minute-and-46-second works from multidisciplinary theatre artists of color. The archive acts as a living time capsule and a tool for teaching and advocacy. The Playhouse worked with The Breath Project's co-founder and artistic director, Gamal Abdel Chasten, who performed in our 2020 world premiere *americUS*.

A selection of works was curated from the archive into a virtual festival, held online Oct. 24 and 25, 2020. It featured **24** world premieres, and **3,600** people participated nationwide.

The Playhouse was one of **24** theatres across the country to partner with The Breath Project through creative input, outreach and artistic resources.

"Theatre has the incredible power to heal and bring people together. We believe the powerful pieces being presented by BIPOC artists as part of this virtual festival should be seen by everyone. We were excited that the work of some very talented Cincinnati-based artists, who have Playhouse connections, were included."

— Piper N. Davis, The Breath Project's Cincinnati-based curator



For more information on The Breath Project, visit **thebreathproject2020.com**

PRESENTING A CHRISTMAS CAROL: A RADIO PLAY ON WVXU







The Playhouse's annual performance of *A Christmas Carol* is a Cincinnati holiday tradition that's lasted 30 years. Due to the challenges posed by the pandemic in 2020, we had to make the difficult decision to cancel the live, in-person production of this enduring classic. But through some hard work, creative thinking and a little bit of Christmas magic, we re-imagined our annual telling of Charles Dickens' tale and proudly brought a oneman radio broadcast to the comfort of homes around the Tristate this past holiday season.

Actor Bruce Cromer — who has performed in the Playhouse's production of *A Christmas Carol* for 22 years and has starred as Ebenezer Scrooge since 2005 — brought Dickens' classic story to life in a collaboration with Cincinnati's WVXU-FM radio station. On Dec. 23 and 24, Cromer performed a tour-de-force reading of Dickens' novella to thousands of listeners. The broadcast was met with raves and appreciation from fans.

This special presentation was made possible by a generous sponsorship from our friends at Macy's, who have been a title sponsor of our special matinee performance for students since 1991. We were overjoyed to partner once more in providing thousands of households across the Tristate with access to this cherished tradition. The experience would not have been possible without Macy's steadfast support.

Audiences can still access the recording of A Christmas Carol: A Radio Play, for free, on the WVXU website and at **cincyplay.com/carolradio**.

INVESTING IN BRAND NEW STORIES

New work has always been a cornerstone of Playhouse programming, bringing world premiere productions to life onstage and making it possible for acclaimed playwrights to create brand new work for our stages. Recent successful productions the Playhouse both commissioned and premiered include americUS by Universes, Cincinnati King by KJ Sanchez and Native Gardens by Karen Zacarías. Before its cancellation, the 2020-21 season was set to feature two commissions: Deborah Zoe Laufer's Rooted and Keith Josef Adkins' The West End — now scheduled for the 2021-22 season.

This season, with stages dark, Artistic Director Blake Robison was able to spend more time working with Playhouse-commissioned playwrights on their original works-in-progress. It was a silver lining, of sorts, to have time to nurture the stories so that they're pitch-perfect for Cincinnati audiences.

"We were not just treading water. There has been a lot of work happening in preparation for the post-pandemic era," said Robison. "Look at these commissions that we're lining up, look at these great stories we're planning to tell. We're taking the time to invest in playwrights and new plays very seriously."

CURRENTLY COMMISSIONED PLAYWRIGHTS:



Keith Josef Adkins

The West End



Nathan Alan Davis

Title TBA



Deborah Zoe Laufer

Rooted



Theresa Rebeck

The Scarlet Letter



Karen Zacarías

Shane

We published an in-depth article about the process of a commission in our *Prologue* publication and on our website at **cincyplay.com/new-stories**.

Playhouse commissions are made possible by the Jerome Fey Endowment for New Plays. The funding provided not only pays a playwright to write a new play, it also allows for the readings, workshops and script development necessary to prepare it for full production. Then, the commissions are brought to life as world premieres with support from The Rosenthal Family Foundation and The Harold & Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust. Many of these plays have gone on to numerous subsequent productions around the country.

KEEPING STUDENTS AND FAMILIES ENGAGED

Theatrical productions and school enrichment workshops designed specifically for children and families are integral to the Playhouse's annual programming. When we had to cancel our in-person educational programming, we reimagined our traditional content to provide creative outlets and meet the needs of students and their families.

SUMMER THEATRE CAMP AND PERFORMANCE ACADEMY, JUNE 2021

After offering virtual summer camp in 2020, we returned to in-person summer camps this year, held both at the Playhouse and in Mason. In June, **211** young people ages 6 to 17 explored fantastical worlds, storybook lands, our favorite books and movies, and so much more.

ACTING CLASSES, WINTER 2020-21

Like our summer camps, our acting classes for young people ages 5 to 14 aim to build confidence, strengthen their communication skills and develop a sense of community, all while having fun! This season we offered two courses:



8 children (grades 3-6) attended **3** virtual sessions and **5** in-person sessions.



8 children (grades 5-8) attended **4** virtual sessions and **4** in-person sessions.

VIRTUAL ENRICHMENT WORKSHOPS

To provide essential arts education programs during the pandemic when students needed creative outlets more than ever, the Playhouse recorded and shared over 197 hours of videos of drama workshops and activities. Education Memberships, provided free of charge to 45 Greater Cincinnati classrooms, gave teachers and parents access to a virtual video catalog and supplemental academic resources. We now have a full and growing library of content that teachers and parents can access depending on their students' unique needs and interests that will remain available after we return to in-school activities.



WORKSHOPS

Grades K-2

13 Bringing Books to Life

Grades 3-6

10 Dramatic Interpretation 8 Public Speaking

Grades 6-12

9 Dramatic Interpretation7 Public Speaking

All Grades

4 Enrichment Day 17 Drama Club 8 Read Aloud Education programming and touring plays supported by:

THE ROBERT AND ADELE SCHIFF FAMILY FOUNDATION, LINDA AND GARY GREENBERG, GRADISON FOUNDATION, THE CHARLES H. DATER FOUNDATION, THE P&G FUND OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI FOUNDATION and THE JOHN A. SCHROTH FAMILY CHARITABLE TRUST.







This week @beechwood_tiger 4th and 5th graders got to virtually collaborate w/ @CincyPlay! What a fun way to meet some of our academic standards and bring in the arts at the same time!



Mrs. Gasser's Class and Toby Parton

OUTREACH TOURING PLAYS

Each year, the Playhouse partners with schools, community arts centers and other community venues to bring three plays "off the hill" to students and families throughout the Greater Cincinnati area.

This season, we went virtual with professionally filmed productions of *The Wind in the Willows*, *The Snowy Day and Other Stories by Ezra Jack Keats* and *Dragons Love Tacos*. We are grateful to Optic Lizard Productions — a Cincinnatibased photography and videography company — whose generosity, talent and hard work made filming possible!

Accessibility has remained a goal of our education programs; we were thrilled to offer American Sign Language (ASL) versions of all our Outreach Tour productions to schools and communities alike.







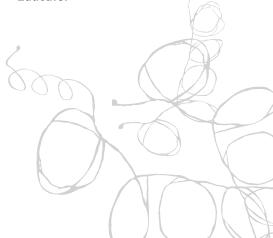






"We had the absolute best time. Our students and families loved the performance. We commend the actors on their performances and the Playhouse on safety measures taken. We thought the gloves and masks were so creative and cute!"

— Educator



GO OFF THE GRID — WITH THE PLAYHOUSE!

This season, we went Off the Grid with our YP engagement program by hosting outdoor adventures and socially distant film screenings, programming virtual interactive mysteries, and commissioning artists to pursue new forms of storytelling for our audiences.

Off the Grid program supported by:



THE WILLIAM BAUDE-MAURICE OSHRY FUND OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI FOUNDATION

POD PLAYS

The Pod Plays project makes creative use of technology, storytelling and outdoor space. Each play is an audio-based story that users can download for free and listen to through their cell phone or tablet. They're designed specifically to unfold like the popular radio dramas of the 1930s and '40s. Listeners are guided through the designated outdoor space as the story unfolds, interacting with the same views, spots and markers as the characters in the streaming audio story.



THE AVIATORS

Written by Trey Tatum Location: Alms Park Kaylan and Cece explore Alms Park and all of its hidden gems while working on a

project about flight and the history of aviation.



RICHIE AND BLANCHE

Written by Isaiah Mikel-Reaves Location: Purple People Bridge A mother and son reunite after five years of estrangement on the Purple

People Bridge and take in the beautiful sites and views of the Ohio River and Cincinnati Skyline.



THE EDGE OF TOWN

Written by Deuces II
Location: Wyoming, OH
The Edge of Town is the story of a Black
male as he navigates this world and

searches for truth and hope by reflecting on the past, present and future. His journey includes walks through downtown Wyoming and along Oak Street and a visit to the City building, which once housed the African American School.

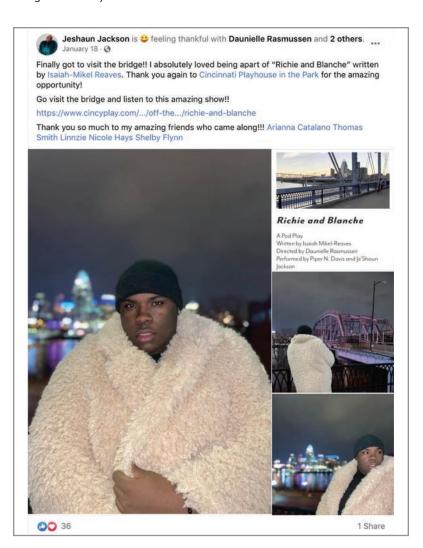


AKIN

Written by Carolyn Guido Clifford Location: Eden Park

A young woman undergoes an unexpected change and must relocate to Cincinnati to live with her aunt, and Eden Park

plays a key role in the development of their relationship.



CHILDREN OF THE CORN MAZE

Written by Trey Tatum | Saturday, Oct. 24 Burger Farm and Garden Center

With fun nods to horror and thriller favorites from Stephen King to *Ghostbusters*, a twisted tale unfolded as audiences walked the haunted trail in this immersive, theatrical experience. Participants set out on 45-minute tours in groups of 10, and the festive event also featured a Kids Pumpkin Party for children ages 4 to 12 with Halloween-themed movies and arts and crafts activities.

NANCY BREW ZOOM DUNNIT

Written by Margot H. G. Manburg Nov. 12 and 13, Feb. 17, 18, 19 and 20

Who doesn't love a good mystery? In this interactive whodunnit hosted via Zoom, armchair detectives logged in from home to track down the culprit of a crime. Participants broke out into teams, observed scenes, tracked clues and interacted with characters to solve a mystery, virtually.

SHADOWCAST SERIES

Dreamgirls: Thursday, Oct. 1

Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle: Thursday, Dec. 3

Girls Trip: Thursday, Feb. 4

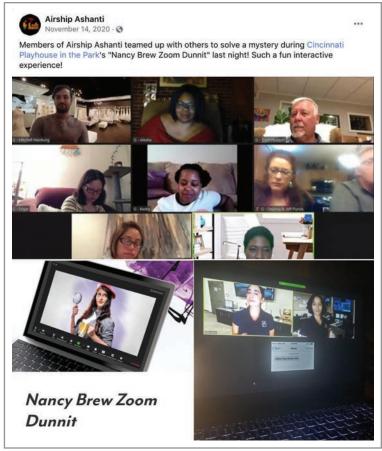
Mean Girls: Thursdays, April 1 and April 8

Shadowcast film viewings feature actors reenacting cult classic films in front of an audience as the movie played on the big screen behind them — a la *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. This season, the Playhouse hosted a series of socially distanced, shadowcast events of fan-favorite movies at the Mariemont Theatre.



Dreamgirls Shadowcast event.







Dreamgirls Shadowcast event.

THE RETURN OF IN-PERSON PERFORMANCES!

This spring, the Playhouse was thrilled to welcome audiences back into the Marx Theatre — with socially distanced seating — for a series of performances featuring nationally recognized theatre artists. Thank you to Schueler Group for making this special event series possible through their sponsorship.

HIGHER AND HIGHER: A ROCK 'N SOUL PARTY WITH CHESTER GREGORY

April 30 – May 4

Sponsored by **DIGI AND MIKE SCHUELER**

Broadway star and recording artist Chester Gregory electrified audiences with his remarkable talents, lending his voice to the music of Sam Cooke, Otis Redding, James Brown and more.





Blake Robison welcomes the socially distanced crowd

Our Patron Services staff.

"It was a great experience from the beginning to the end. The welcoming of the staff who shared a sincere genuine, 'Welcome back' made such a difference it was true HOSPITALITY!" — *Patron Survey*

"Loved every minute! Thank you for the welcome at the door and upon entering the theatre...Last night was a reminder of how you do such a great job of making every guest feel like family. Can't wait to come back!!" — Patron Survey

THE SKIVVIES: LIVE AND LITERALLY IN-PERSON!

May 26 and 27

Lauren Molina and Nick Cearley, singer/actor/musicians who are known for their comedy-pop, "undie"-rock, delighted audiences by performing stripped down arrangements of eclectic covers and eccentric originals. But, not only was the music stripped down — cello, ukulele, glockenspiel, melodica — the Skivvies literally stripped down to their underwear to perform!

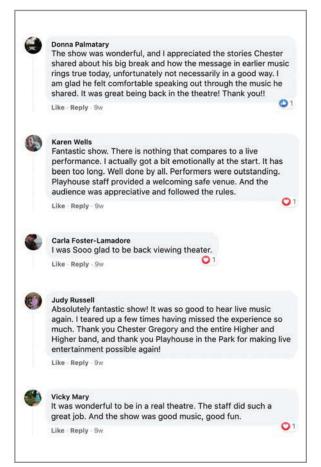
AN EVENING WITH THE BENGSONS

June 25 and 26

Married folk-rock duo The Bengsons presented a collection of their songs in this entertaining concert-style, theatrical memoir.

SPECIAL EVENT SERIES PRESENTED BY

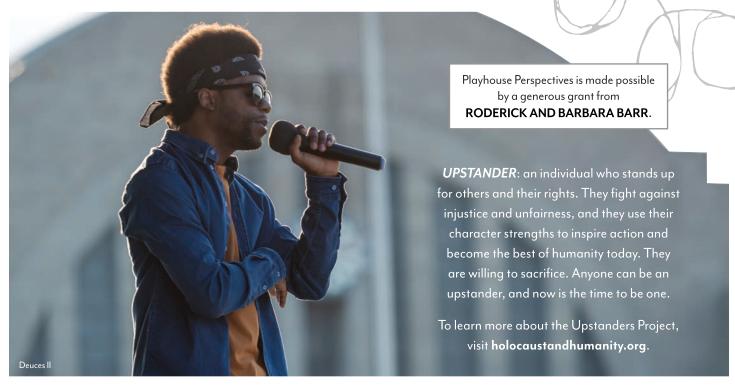








UPSTANDERS ONSTAGE: PERFORMANCES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE SERIES



The Playhouse partnered with The Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanities Center (HHC) and Cincinnati Music Accelerator to present *Upstanders Onstage: Performances for Social Change.* Presented as part of the Playhouse's Perspectives series and in conjunction with the HHC's Cincy Upstanders Project, this outdoor series of events was held in the parking lots of Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, Cincinnati Art Museum and the Mayerson JCC over the course of three evenings in May.

A total of **215** attendees gathered for these live, outdoor events featuring an eclectic mix of scenes, monologues, spoken-word poetry and music performances by **20** local theatre artists, musicians and poets who are using their art to create dialogue and effect change in the world.

During each performance, artists encouraged audience members to join in by singing or adding call-and-response, host Piper N. Davis helped to provide deeper context for each piece, and by the end of each evening audiences were dancing in their seats. Attendees were also encouraged to participate in interactive activities via their phones, which included creating vision statements, identifying perceptions, and choosing activities to continue the work of being an upstander into the future.







Photos by Mikki Schaffner.

BUZZ WARD BECOMES MANAGING DIRECTOR EMERITUS



Managing Director Buzz Ward has had an unprecedented and incredible 29-year tenure leading Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. As the longest serving executive in the Playhouse's history, much of the theatre's ongoing success can be attributed to him — having managed it for nearly half its 61 years. He has presided over 29 consecutive seasons with an operating surplus — an unrivaled record in the American regional theatre — that has resulted in the financially strong organization the Playhouse is today. During his time, he oversaw the production of over 300 mainstage shows, and the theatre won two Tony Awards: the first

in 2004 for Best Regional Theatre and the second in 2007 for Best Revival of a Musical for *Company*. In 2012, he was awarded the Governor's Award for the Arts in Arts Administration.

Buzz arrived at the Playhouse in 1992. He served as Executive Director under the late Producing Artistic Director Ed Stern until 2012. He was then named Managing Director and Co-CEO with the arrival of current Artistic Director and Co-CEO Blake Robison. At the end of June, Buzz retired from his role as Managing Director and transitioned into the Playhouse's first-ever Managing Director Emeritus.

"Nobody can replace Buzz. His keen financial skills and visionary leadership have brought national acclaim to the organization," says Robison.

Thank you, Buzz, for serving Cincinnati audiences with remarkable work, enriching our artistic community and making significant contributions to the American theatre!





Producing Artistic Director Ed Stern with Buzz Ward in 1992 and in 2012.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2020-21 FISCAL YEAR

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WHO WE ARE

Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park is our region's preeminent professional theatre.

WHY WE'RE HERE

We tell stories that entertain, engage, inspire, challenge and connect our audiences.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

We are passionate leaders in the advancement of the arts.

We believe audiences deserve productions that are both artistically bold and wildly entertaining.

We create dialogue that resonates with our community and inspires others to join the conversation.

We warmly welcome audiences from all backgrounds, cultures and walks of life to our shows on and off the hill.

We are exuberant ambassadors of our craft, our colleagues and our organization.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN AND GROUNDBREAKING







Photos by Messer Construction.

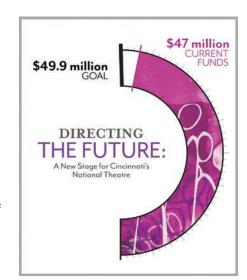
A THEATRE FOR EVERYONE

The Playhouse is in the midst of constructing a new, state-of-theart mainstage theatre and creating a premiere theatre complex to achieve the following goals:

ENHANCE THE PATRON EXPERIENCE	INCREASE ARTISTIC CAPABILITIES	GROW AUDIENCE AND DEEPEN IMPACT
· Increased accessibility	• Upgraded production facilities	Attract new and diverse patrons
Comfortable seating with more legroom Optimal stage views Improved entrance, exit and parking	Modern technology Attract nation's top talent Develop co-productions and tryouts of Broadway-bound productions	Expand space for educational programs Expand theatrical partnerships nationwide

COMPLETING THE VISION

- •\$49.9 million dollar goal
- · Over **1,000** campaign donors
- Over **60** donors have given gifts of **\$100,000** or more



BUILDING AN ICONIC COMPLEX

Site work has finished on the new complex and the official groundbreaking ceremony was held in June 2021.

The project budget is currently at \$49.9 million:

PROJECT BUDGET		
Construction & Architect Costs	\$46,786,000	
Financing & Fundraising Costs	\$2,626,000	
Transition Expenses	\$500,000	
Total	\$49,912,000	

EXPANDED IMPACT

The Playhouse's new theatre complex will ensure Cincinnati's place as a leading national arts and cultural destination and provide key benefits for our broader community.



ECONOMIC IMPACT* – \$97.7 million in positive economic impact over 50 years; \$2 goes to the community for every \$1 spent on the project.



COMMUNITY CONNECTION – New building will be inclusive and accessible inside and out.



NATIONAL RECOGNITION – Enable Broadway producers to try out Broadway-bound shows at the Playhouse before they move to New York City.

*Study completed by the University of Cincinnati Economic Center.



GROUNDBREAKING - JUNE 5



Hardhats and shovels to break the ground at our Groundbreaking Celebration.



Lead Donors Moe and Jack Rouse break ground.



Attendees signed a beam that will be in The Rouse Theatre.



Playhouse Artistic Director Blake Robison with Board Trustees Austin Schiff and Al Vontz III at our Groundbreaking Celebration.



Playhouse Managing Director Buzz Ward, Capital Campaign Co-Chairs Rob Reifsnyder and Woody Taft, Board Trustee Jerry Shroat, Lead Donor Jack Rouse, Board President Ellen G. van der Horst and Director of Development Bethany Doverspike at the Groundbreaking Celebration.



Capital Campaign Co-Chair Woody Taft speaking to attendees at our Groundbreaking Ceremony.

LEADERSHIP DONORS

MOE AND JACK ROUSE THE ROSENTHAL FAMILY FOUNDATION



THE ROBERT AND ADELE SCHIFF FAMILY FOUNDATION

DIGI AND MIKE SCHUELER

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THE HAROLD C. SCHOTT FOUNDATION

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CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DONORS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

This list includes gifts of \$500+ given to the Capital Campaign through July 30, 2021.

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