



GRAND RAPIDS  
CIVIC THEATRE

*Your Theatre, Your Voice*

CIVIC THEATRE 2017 / 18 ANNUAL REPORT

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Board members as of 6/30/18

# ENDOWMENT

The Grand Rapids Civic Theatre Endowment Fund stands at \$2.7 million, providing 5% of our annual operating budget. The endowment is a critical component to our financial sustainability, providing a perpetual base of financial support for Civic Theatre. Future goals include increasing the endowment to a total of \$12 million through implementation of a Planned Giving program.

# CIVIC THEATER IN NUMBERS



## ON THE STAGE

90 PERFORMANCES

650 TICKETS DONATED

*We are open  
363 days a year!*

795  
*Individuals Auditioned*

53,698  
*Tickets Sold in 2017/18*

50  
*First Time Actors*

12% INCREASE IN TICKET SALES



## SCHOOL OF THEATRE ARTS

**STUDENT ENROLLMENT  
INCREASED 25% OVER  
PAST TWO YEARS**

**1** *In Every* **10** *Students*  
*Receives Scholarship Assistance*

**112** *Classes Offered*

**1,600** *Students Enrolled*

*Distributed \$20,000 in  
scholarships thanks to the  
generosity of donors*



## OUR VOLUNTEERS

**750** *Volunteers*   **66,086** *Volunteer Hours*

*Value of volunteer hours  
donated: \$1.63 million*



## TRAVELING TROUPE

**5,000+** *Traveling Troupe  
Audience Members*

**18** *Traveling Troupe  
Performances*

## OUR TRAVELING TROUPE VISITS

*Grand Rapids Public Schools  
Wyoming Public Schools  
Grandville Arts and Humanities Cook Center  
Helen DeVos Children's Hospital  
Grand Rapids Public Library  
Greenville Community Center  
Boys & Girls Club*

## WHAT'S THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY THEATRE?

*In a society where more and more of our interactions occur online or across mobile devices, theatres are an integral gathering spot for community members.*

At the theatre, we can put down our phones and our tablets and join together in a unique experience – sharing stories and experiencing a collective joy.

As a community theatre, we reflect the voices of our community – all voices. By creating new partnerships and increased opportunities for access, we're proud of the growth Civic Theatre has begun in creating a more welcoming theatre that individuals of all ages and backgrounds can call their community theatre.

As you read the following stories, we hope that behind each volunteer's voice you hear not only the impact of Civic Theatre on their lives, but our gratitude for your impact as a donor. Without you, there would be no Civic Theatre. Thank you for support, and helping bring the voices of our community to the stage.



**BRUCE TINKER**

Executive & Artistic Director



**MATT VICARI**

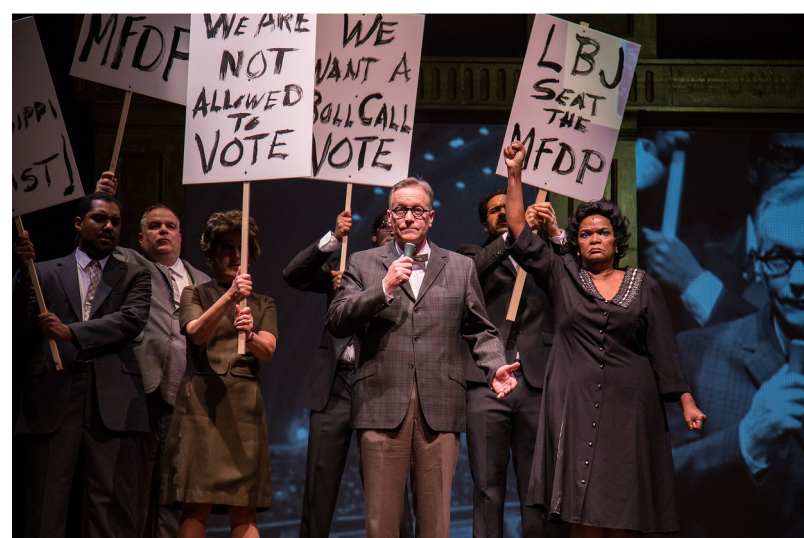
Chair, Board of Directors







## WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE LINE FROM THE SHOW?



JON MARCH CHOSE:

*"All my life as a Southerner, I have had to bite my tongue on this issue [racism] until my mouth was full of blood. But not anymore. What's the point of being President if you can't do what you know is right?"*

- FROM HIS CHARACTER LYNDON B JOHNSON



EDDIE STEPHENS CHOSE:

*"The arc of the moral universe bends towards justice but very slowly!"*

- FROM HIS CHARACTER MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

## FRESH VOICES FROM THE PAST

*This year, Grand Rapids Civic Theatre was proud to be the first community theatre in the United States to perform All The Way.*

Fresh off the stage from Broadway, this powerful piece on President Lyndon B. Johnson and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s fight to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was especially relevant to our nation today. By bringing this story to the stage, Civic Theatre encouraged community conversation and reflection on the themes of race, collaboration, and justice.

Volunteering over 150 hours across the three-month process of rehearsals and performances, over thirty talented volunteers gave their time and talent to this show. The opportunity to bring the voices of these powerful figures to life for modern audiences was an exciting challenge for the *All The Way* cast – exploring the dramatic, difficult, and often dark-side of a deeply important time in our nation's history. For Jon March (Lyndon B. Johnson) and Eddie Stephens (Dr. King), the opportunity of *All The Way* was more than just another acting credit.

"No public official has had a bigger impact on my life than LBJ. Due to Johnson increasing our involvement in the Vietnam War, I served three years in the United States Air Force, and the names of several of my high school

classmates are on that wall in Washington D.C. Much of my professional life as an employment trial lawyer involved the Civil Rights Act of 1964," shared March. "I knew I wanted to audition for the part as soon as *All The Way* was announced, and I worked harder preparing for this audition than any audition in the past."

For Stephens, playing Dr. King also held special significance. "I was born in Alabama, and was living there as a child during the time period *All The Way* focuses on. This is much more than a play to me," said Stephens.

**"THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST CRITICAL PIECES OF THEATRE IN A LONG TIME, AS IT PROVIDES VERY HONEST AND OPEN INSIGHTS INTO THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THOSE CRITICAL TO THE PASSING OF ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PIECES OF LEGISLATION IN THE HISTORY OF THIS COUNTRY."**

Civic Theatre is grateful to the donors and volunteers who made *All The Way* possible. Together, we created a show that entertained, educated, and challenged our community to dive deeper into this historic moment and reflect on it's implications today.

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## INCREASING ACCESS WITH COMMUNITY NIGHT

*Civic Theatre hosted our first-ever Community Night during All The Way. A free performance allowed over 750 individuals to experience this powerful story. By removing cost as a barrier, new audience members of all ages were able to connect with Civic Theatre -- many for the first time.*





*“Civic Theatre is as close to a Broadway show as you can get without it actually being Broadway.”*

BUD THOMPSON



*“I ask you today, to support the Civic, in its mission of transforming people’s lives. You never know whose life you are going to change, but it might be someone, just like me.”*

STATHI AFENDOULIS



*“Civic Theatre pushes our community to look at a variety of views of our world and tackles sensitive topics such as sexism, ageism and racism with grace and tact.”*

KEN PARRISH

*“We believe every child is an artist with unique and special gifts to offer. Our job is to provide a space where they can thrive, grow, and create art.”*

ALLYSON PARIS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR







*"My favorite part of taking classes at Civic Theatre is that it's a comfortable atmosphere to learn, grow, and fail."*

GRCT STUDENT



*"The first show I experienced at Civic was Annie. I was nine, and my mom and I sat in the very back row of the balcony. I still remember being captivated by the evening. Last December, I brought my daughter to see Annie at Civic. We only lasted through the first act (she is four, and wiggly), but I love that I could introduce her to theatre in this way and at this place."*

ALYSSA BAUER



*"Civic Theatre is timeless. It has inspired countless individuals, viewers and performers alike, and will continue to do so with each new production that it hosts."*

DAVID BROWN





## RISEING VOICES OF THE FUTURE

*If you attended Annie, you may remember the radiant voice of Ellie Brower as she gave us all hope for a brighter ‘tomorrow.’ A rising star, exciting news is on the horizon for Ellie as she takes her talents and the lessons of Civic Theatre to her first national tour in November 2018.*

As a young child, Ellie’s very first Broadway CD was the *Annie* soundtrack. She would practice singing her favorite songs in front of her stuffed animals, wowing them with her talent. At age five, she had her first exposure to theatre through Civic’s School of Theatre Arts. Her father Todd Brower, who had taken classes himself as a young child at Civic Theatre, recognized within Ellie a creative curiosity that would blossom through theatre. From those initial classes, her love of theatre



continued to grow, eventually leading her to land the title role in our 2018 production of *Annie*.

“Being involved at Civic Theatre has taught Ellie to be more independent, self-confident, and a hard work ethic. She has learned how to see a commitment through to completion, and how to take and use feedback constructively,” said Todd. “There is a sense of community at Civic Theatre that extends

beyond the theatre walls, and it has given Ellie a better appreciation for this special place that we live.”

This year, Ellie will take the skills she learned at Civic Theatre to the next level as she joins the First National Tour of *NOËL the Musical*, opening in November 2018. Ellie will be the understudy to the title character of Noël as well as in the ensemble, and is one of only two children on the tour.

“I support Grand Rapids Civic Theatre as a donor because I have seen first-hand how important the opportunities it provides are for enriching both our community and the people and families in it,” shared Todd. “Knowing how memorable performing in a show at Civic Theatre was as a child, it is such a treat to now get to see up close the next generation have those same experiences they will always remember. When I think about how many families throughout our area are impacted in such a positive way, it motivates me to want to be sure this remarkable place is here for generations to come.”

Over 1,500 students of all ages are impacted through Civic Theatre’s School of Theatre Arts each year. Thanks to the generosity of donors, over \$20,000 in scholarships was dedicated last year to make sure more in our community can grow in creativity, collaboration and confidence through our classes. Your support enables every student to find their voice.

**“I WAS SO SHOCKED AND EXCITED  
WHEN I GOT THE CALL THAT I WOULD  
GET TO ACTUALLY BE ANNIE — JUST  
LIKE I USED TO IMAGINE WHEN I WAS  
SINGING IN MY ROOM! WE ARE SO  
LUCKY TO HAVE CIVIC THEATRE IN  
OUR COMMUNITY, AND I LOVE THAT MY  
DAD USED TO COME HERE AND DO THE  
SAME THINGS WHEN HE WAS YOUNG.”**

*Ellie Brower (Annie)*







# EXPANDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

*As an audience member, your voice is one of the most important aspects of each performance. Through your laughter, tears, applause, and commentary, audience members make sure no two performances are alike. At Grand Rapids Civic Theatre, we're expanding our community engagement efforts to welcome new audience members to the theatre on a daily basis.*

In October 2017, over 70 families joined us to add their unique voices to the theatre, and experience the magic of theatre for the first time with our inaugural Low Sensory Night during *Seussical the Musical*.

*Seussical the Musical's* messages of acceptance and appreciation of every individual was the motivation to create a special evening for those with diverse sensory needs. Community partners, sponsors, and volunteers rallied to bring the idea of Low Sensory Night from dream to reality in October 2017.

**"LOW SENSORY NIGHT WAS A BLESSING IN SO MANY WAYS," SHARED ONE PARENT WHO ATTENDED. "MY CHILD WITH SENSORY ISSUES WAS ENTHRALLED. IT WAS FABULOUS TO BE IN A NON-STRESSFUL ENVIRONMENT THAT WAS SO WELCOMING. THANK YOU!"**

Special elements used to create an inclusive performance for those with diverse sensory needs included:

- Reduced noise and lights during the performance
- Volunteers to greet families and give welcome tours
- Complimentary parking to reduce stimuli between the car and theatre
- A welcome packet sent to each family in advance, including theatre maps, character descriptions, and show information

- Cool-down zones with fidget spinners and other items outside the auditorium where children and their families could relax

"My 10-year-old daughter is on the autism spectrum and has ADHD, anxiety, and DMDD. Going to a show was never an option for us because my daughter can't sit still and has outbursts," shared one parent who attended. "With Low Sensory Night, my family was able to enjoy the show, and my daughter sat for an hour and half! Thank you again."

Civic Theatre volunteers went above and beyond to make this evening a success. Over 27 volunteers were on hand to give tours, help families find the cool-down zones, and more. *Seussical the Musical* cast and crew voluntarily gathered for a special rehearsal to adjust their stage blocking and learn more about how to create inclusivity through their performance.

"Low Sensory Night encompassed the true magic of theatre, as we saw individuals completely engaged with a performance – something many family members stated was atypical," shared Jenna Pope, Low Sensory Night Coordinator. "It was truly a wonderful evening watching the attendees express their enthusiasm for the show and beg to stay in the theater after the production ended."



# LOOKING FORWARD

*As Civic Theatre approaches our 100-year anniversary, we are dedicated to ensuring our organization remains a vibrant cornerstone in the West Michigan arts and cultural landscape for the next century.*

## ACCESS

We are committed to evolving as the needs of our community change, while finding new ways to connect with those who call West Michigan home. We strive to remove barriers to ensure everyone has access to quality, imaginative theatre arts and education.

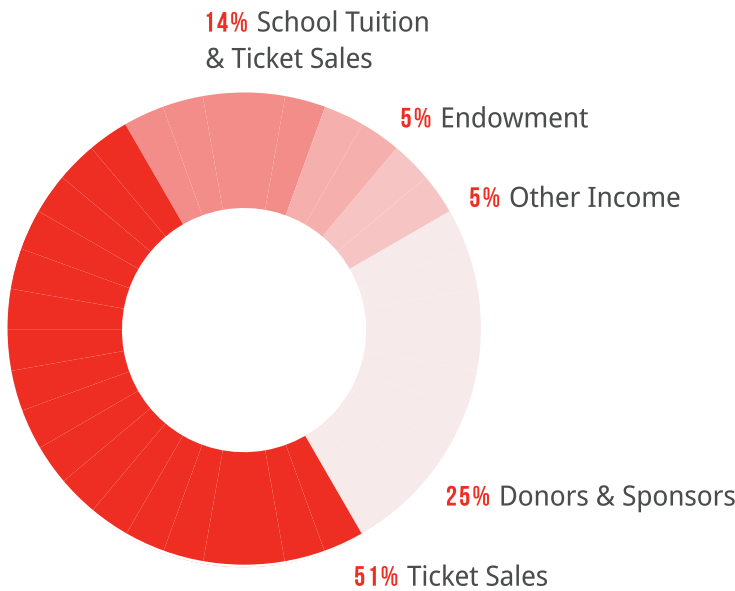
## LEARNING

We value learning, both formal and informal. Whether teaching in our School of Theatre Arts, sharing new skills through volunteer opportunities, or enriching minds and hearts through our productions, Civic Theatre offers everyone an opportunity to learn, grow, and broaden their horizons.

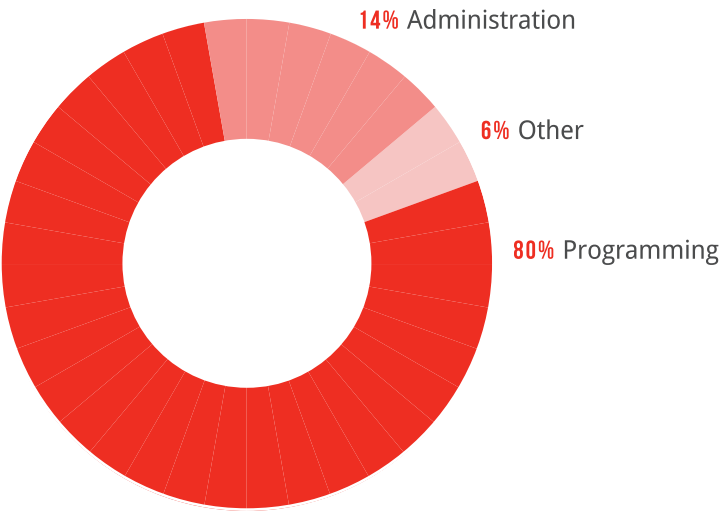
## EXCELLENCE

As one of the nation’s largest and oldest community theatres, Civic Theatre is known for quality programming, first-rate educational offerings, and meaningful volunteer engagement. In continuing to pursue excellence in every facet of our organization, we will inspire current and future West Michigan generations to dream bigger.

# INCOME



# EXPENSES





# INCREASING THE IMPACT OF OUR HISTORIC HOME

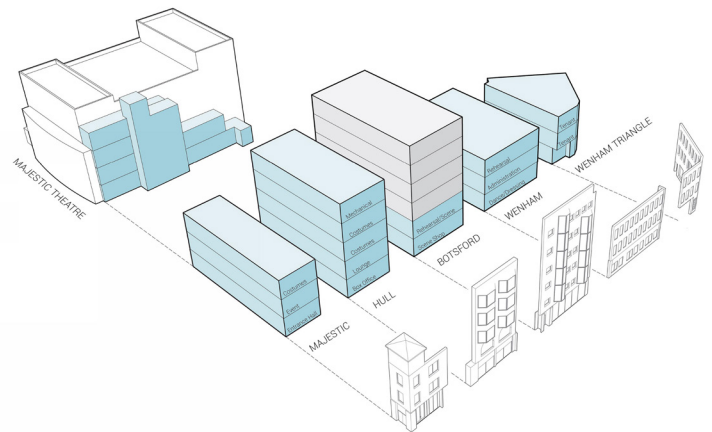
*In 2016, Grand Rapids Civic Theatre partnered with ProgressiveAE to conduct a comprehensive Facilities Needs Assessment. We undertook the exhilarating challenge of how to best utilize our downtown home to serve the ever-growing need for community theatre education and engagement opportunities.*

Having completed our Facilities Need Assessment in the 2017-18 season, Civic Theatre is excited to move forward in implementing fresh visions for our historic home. Built on a firm understanding of our vision for the future, infrastructure updates will allow us to engage even more in our community through theatre arts.

"The location and physical facilities housing Civic Theatre are now better understood, enabling us to see how the facilities can be transformed to better support operations surrounding education, performance, and volunteerism," shared Jim Horman, Principle at ProgressiveAE.

**"THESE CHANGES WILL MAKE CIVIC THEATRE MORE SUSTAINABLE, AS WELL AS SUPPORT A HIGHER LEVEL OF INSPIRATIONAL LEARNING."**

The Facilities Needs Assessment, the design process, and the beginning of our transformation have been facilitated by a special allocation from the State of Michigan. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Governor Snyder, Senate Majority Leader Arlan Meekhof, and the local legislators led by Senator Dave Hildenbrand that made this possible.



## OUR SEASON SPONSORS



**Beusse & Porter  
Family Foundation**



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