



STUDIO
THEATRE

2018-2019

ANNUAL REPORT



FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR DAVID MUSE

FRIENDS,

As I look over the productions that comprised our 18-19 season, I'm struck first of all by what a full year it was. We produced eight plays as part of our regular programming, and then curated and produced a mini-season of six additional productions in a new series we called SHOWROOM.

Also striking is the thematic range—and contemporaneity—of those productions. Studio produced plays about: modern Jewish identity, motherhood today, race and privilege in college admissions, climate change, money in politics, cultural appropriation of Black artists, student movements in post-apartheid South Africa, and the complications of race and identity inside the Latinx community.

It was a busy year as well on the institutional front. We began to build a more robust community engagement initiative, taking a production on our first-ever community tour, deepening relationships with a core group of community partners, and hiring the theatre's first-ever Community Engagement Manager. Inspired to think about summertime programming in a new way, we converted the Milton theatre into a little cabaret and piloted an all-new series of presented work. And on top of it all, after a months-long nationwide search, we welcomed a new Managing Director, the indefatigable Rebecca Ende Lichtenberg.

This document attempts to capture and quantify some of the madness that was last season at Studio. For whatever role you play in making it all possible, our collective thanks.

YOURS,

David

DAVID MUSE



“I was honored to join David in the middle of the 40th anniversary season to co-lead Studio Theatre. As a long-time admirer of Studio’s work, I’m thrilled to have the opportunity to help build on its legacy of producing innovative art with the highest level of craft, developing and introducing new work to the local and national community, and nurturing the next generation of artists and arts professionals.”

Rebecca

**REBECCA ENDE LICHETENBERG
MANAGING DIRECTOR**

STUDIO THEATRE: 40 YEARS OF DARING



A Raisin in the Sun, Lorraine Hansberry



North Shore Fish, Israel Horovitz



Murder Ballad, Julia Jordan and Juliana Nash



Wig Out!, Tarell Alvin McCraney



The Children, Lucy Kirkwood

- 1978** Joy Zinoman launches Studio Theatre's pilot season in a shared space on Rhode Island Avenue. Its first production is *The Rimers of Eldritch* by Lanford Wilson.
- 1979** Studio moves to a long-term home on Church Street, building a theatre in a former warehouse for hot dog carts, where it continues to produce theatre until 1987.
- 1987** Studio leases space in its current building at 14th and P, opening the Mead Theatre with *North Shore Fish* by Israel Horovitz, starring Sarah Marshall. Studio also produces its first Special Event this season.
- 1988** The inaugural season of 2ndStage, an outgrowth of Studio's Conservatory and a training ground for early-career actors and directors. Over 27 years, 2ndStage produces 88 plays.
- 1997** Studio purchases the building at 14th and P and builds a second theatre, the Milton, allowing it to alternate shows between theatres and extend successful shows.
- 2004** Studio expands and renovates a three-building performance and training complex, adding the Metheny Theatre and Stage 4, bringing its total number of intimate theatres to four.
- 2010** Founding Artistic Director Joy Zinoman retires and David Muse becomes Studio's second Artistic Director. Annie Baker's *Circle Mirror Transformation* is the first play he directs in this role.
- 2011** With the world premiere of *Lungs* by Duncan Macmillan, Studio inaugurates Studio Lab, a new work laboratory that invited living playwrights into the work of Studio Theatre for the first time.
- 2014-15** Juliana Nash and Julia Jordan's *Murder Ballad* is the final production in the Special Event series, and one of Studio's first experiments in environmental staging, setting the audience in the middle of a working bar.
- 2015** Studio launches Studio X, a consolidation and expansion of work in Studio's Lab, Special Events, and 2ndStage programming. Studio X is purposefully eclectic, encompassing plays that benefit from particularly intimate or immersive stagings, and some of Studio's world premiere projects.
- 2016** Studio produced Joshua Harmon's *Bad Jews* for the first time in 2014-2015; breaking box office records, extending its run for seven weeks, and becoming the highest-grossing production in Studio history. In 2016, Studio brought the production back for a special remount.
- 2018-19** Studio's 40th season features a few familiar faces—Sarah Marshall in her 27th Studio production, the return of Joshua Harmon with *Admissions*, and even a name-check of 14th Street. It also features two world premieres and *SHOWROOM*, a cabaret series that was altogether new for Studio.

YEAR IN REVIEW



SEP 12 - OCT 21

IF I FORGET

WRITTEN BY STEVEN LEVENSON
DIRECTED BY MATT TORNEY

“ONE OF THE GREATEST JEWISH PLAYS OF THE CENTURY”

—DC Metro Theater Arts

Studio's 19-20 Main Series began with the DC premiere of Steven Levenson's *If I Forget*, set at a tipping point in the nation's capital—the year 2000, as the Oslo accords are failing, real estate on 14th Street is booming, and the Fischer family is falling apart. Bethesda native Levenson (*Dear Evan Hansen*, *Masters of Sex*) traces the fault lines of contemporary Jewish identity in this political and deeply personal play, which was directed by Matt Torney.



NOV 14 - DEC 16

CRY IT OUT

WRITTEN BY
MOLLY SMITH METZLER
DIRECTED BY JOANIE SCHULTZ

“FUNNY AND SHARP”

—The Washington Post

Cry It Out by Molly Smith Metzler continued the season's exploration of social dynamics, as two new mothers from different backgrounds forge a friendship over the absurdities of parenting infants, and discover that hard choices can look very different from one family to the next. Directed by Joanie Schultz, who also directed Studio's hit 2016 production of *Hand to God*, *Cry it Out*'s unflinching and hilarious look at parenting and class struck a nerve.

JAN 16 - MAR 24

ADMISSIONS

WRITTEN BY JOSHUA HARMON
DIRECTED BY MIKE DONAHUE



**“SMART DIALOGUE, DYNAMIC PERFORMANCES,
AND SIGNATURE STUDIO THEATRE FLAIR”**

—*Broadway World*

Studio had a moment of life imitating art when the Varsity Blues scandal broke during the run of Joshua Harmon’s scathing comedy *Admissions*, a cautionary tale about unexamined privilege, exposing the insufficiency of good intentions and surface-level advocacy. The production, directed by Mike Donahue (*Curve of Departure*, *The Wolfe Twins*) and featuring Studio stalwart Sarah Marshall, extended a full five weeks beyond its initial run.



QUEEN OF BASEL
MAR 6 - APR 7
WORLD PREMIERE
WRITTEN BY HILARY BETTIS
DIRECTED BY JOSÉ ZAYAS

“MESMERIZING, COMPELLING, UTTERLY BRILLIANT”

—DC Metro Theater Arts

Queen of Basel, Hilary Bettis’s bold adaption of *Miss Julie*, was the first of two world premieres in Studio’s 18-19 season. Directed by José Zayas, *Queen of Basel* re-imagines Strindberg’s iconic play about class and sex at Art Basel, Miami’s week-long party for the rich and famous. Julie is the daughter of a hotel magnate, hiding from the paparazzi and dependent on Venezuelan cocktail waitress Christine and her Afro-Cuban fiancé, John, as all three struggle for dominance in a toxic mix of power, desire, and desperation.



MAY 1 - JUN 9
THE CHILDREN
WRITTEN BY LUCY KIRKWOOD
DIRECTED BY DAVID MUSE

“A QUIETLY TECTONIC ECO-DRAMA”

—Washington City Paper

Studio closed out the Main Series with Artistic Director David Muse’s production of Lucy Kirkwood’s urgent and unsettling eco-thriller *The Children*. Set on the British coast in the aftermath of a nuclear disaster, Kirkwood’s chamber drama offered up three tour de force performances alongside a poignant and complex consideration of what responsibility the adults of today bear for future generations.

STUDIO

X

The 2018-2019 Studio X series began with a touring production of *The Fall*, a vibrant, music-filled piece. Devised by eight University of Cape Town students, all people of color who participated in the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements firsthand, *The Fall* chronicled the struggle to shape social change, the personal toll of activism, and the potential of collective liberation work to transform a campus (or at least a community).



THE BAXTER THEATRE CENTRE AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN PRESENTS

THE FALL

CREATED BY THE CAST

OCT 18 - NOV 25

**"YOU'LL APPRECIATE THE SENSATION THAT YOU
WERE THERE, TOO, AT A FLASH POINT IN THE
TORTURED EVOLUTION OF A TROUBLED LAND"**

—*The Washington Post*

KINGS

BY SARAH BURGESS
DIRECTED BY MARTI LYONS

DEC 12 - JAN 13



“A SENSATIONAL PERFORMANCE...ONE OF THE YEAR’S BEST”

—DCist

Timed for just after the swearing in of the 2019 Congress, Studio produced *Kings* by Alexandria, VA native Sarah Burgess, directed by Marti Lyons (*The Wolves*), a swamp tour of the Beltway powerbrokers that fuel Burgess’s hometown, a razor-sharp comedy about lobbyists, lawmakers, and the destructive influence of money on power.

P.Y.G. OR THE MIS-EDUMACATION OF DORIAN BELLE

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
TEARRANCE ARVELLE CHISHOLM

APR 3 - APR 28

WORLD PREMIERE



“[A] POP-SAVVY NEW SATIRE”

—The Washington Post

Tearrance Arvelle Chisholm wrote and directed the comical, in-your-face world premiere *P.Y.G. or The Mis-Education of Dorian Belle*, which follows a white Canadian pop star and his reality TV makeover by Black and Alexand, two Black hip-hop artists from Chicago. Inspired by Shaw’s *Pygmalion*, Chisholm’s play was a blistering and entertaining look at cultural and racial appropriation in a fictionalized exchange of ideologies, vernacular, and alleged street cred.

Jeff Hiller in **BRIGHT
COLORS AND BOLD
PATTERNS**



JUN 28 - AUG 30

Over the summer of 2019, Studio presented **SHOWROOM**, a new curated performance series. Anchored by two one-person shows—*Every Brilliant Thing*, Duncan Macmillan's participatory theatre piece about all the brilliant reasons life is worth living, and *Bright Colors And Bold Patterns*, Drew Droege's bittersweet, hyperverbal, tragicomic look at gay assimilation and gay fabulousity—the series also included limited-run entertainments: two queer performance artists at the top of their game, a cult-status storytelling program, and participatory speechmaking in the karaoke vein.

EVERY BRILLIANT THING by
Duncan Macmillan, with Jonny
Donahue, directed by Jason
Loewith

DIANA OH IN CONCERT

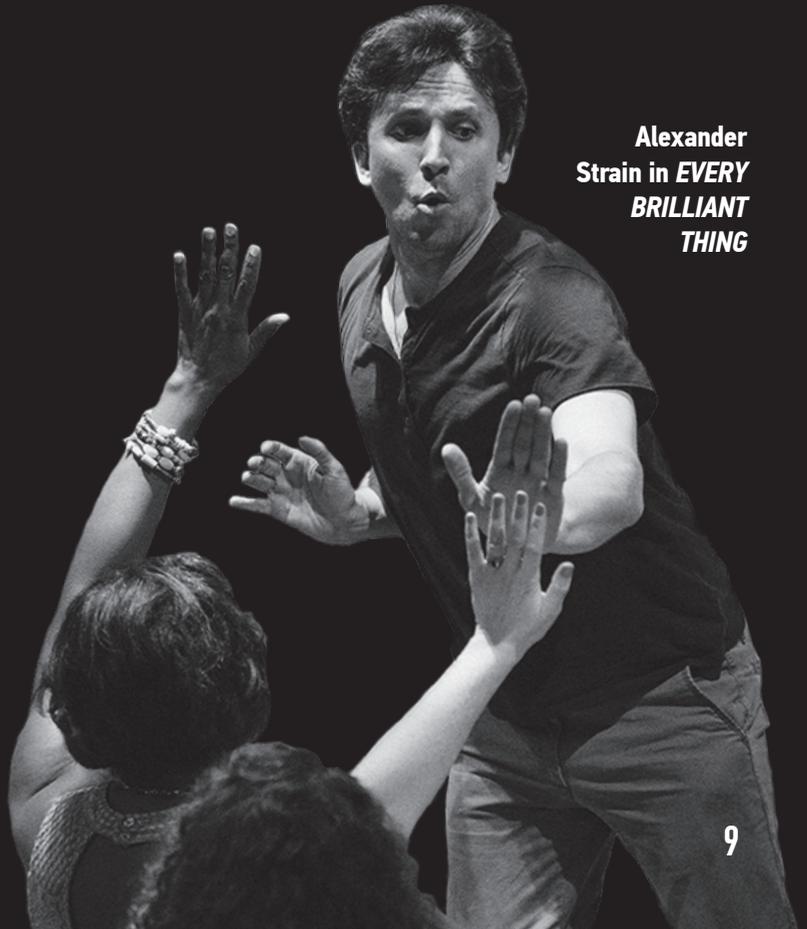
SPOKAOKE by Annie Dorsen

**BRIGHT COLORS AND BOLD
PATTERNS** by Drew Droege,
directed by Michael Urie

MORTIFIED

**WERK! A CABARET
CELEBRATING BLACK WOMEN**
curated and performed by Lady
Dane Figueroa Edidi

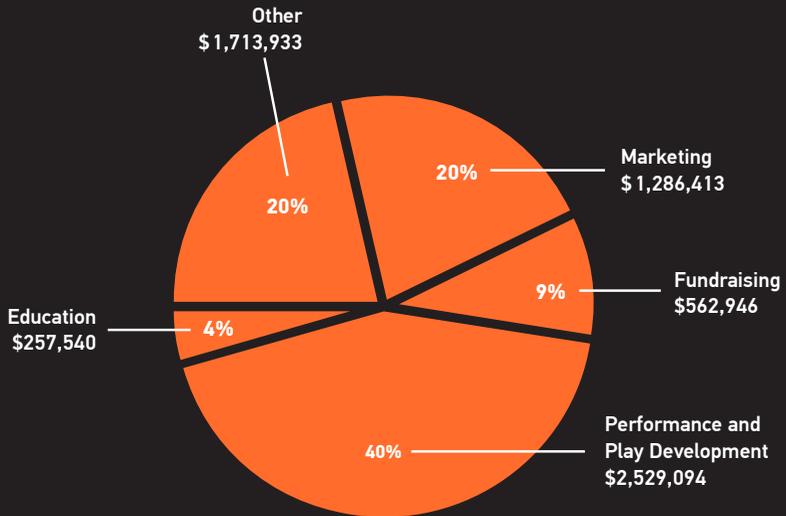
**Alexander
Strain in EVERY
BRILLIANT
THING**



FINANCIAL

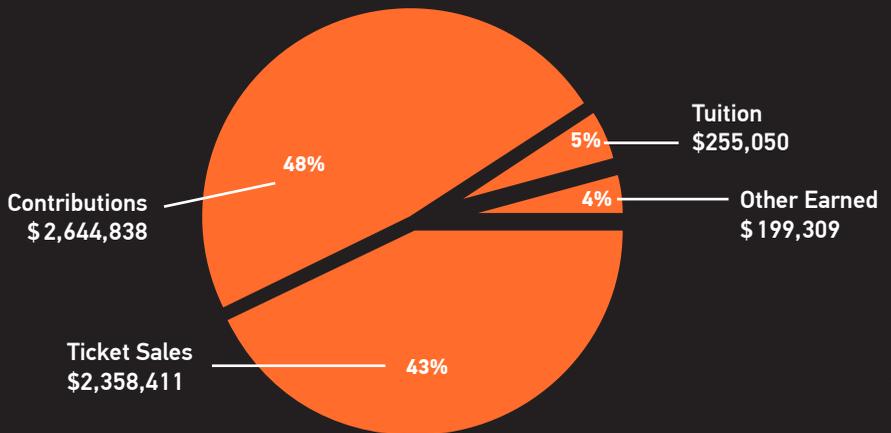
ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENSES

TOTAL = \$ 6,349,927



ANNUAL OPERATING INCOME

TOTAL = \$ 5,457,608



2019 BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS	
\$7,033,249	Current Assets
\$14,742,893	Fixed Assets
\$1,885,748	Other Assets
\$23,661,890	TOTAL ASSETS

INSIGHTS

In recent years, steady expense growth outpaced income growth and led to a series of operating deficits. Studio recognized that this situation must change and focused on rescaling costs to account for attainable growth and prudent operating deficit reduction. As part of a multi-year effort to create a balanced budget, the Theatre cut expenses by 12% for FY20, which reduced the budgeted deficit by 64%. Concurrently, as Studio plans for major renovations to its building, specific changes will be made to significantly enhance its ability to grow earned income.



OUR AUDIENCE

Number of performances:

380

Number of weeks extended:

8

Number of community members who saw *The Fall* tour:

750

Number of audience members:

60,346

Student Matinees:

5

experienced by

445 students

OUR COMPANY

Number of performers:

41

Full-time staff:

35

Number of designers:

51

Number of apprentices:

14

Conservatory faculty:

18

Number of part-time staff:

102

OUR COMMUNITY

Free or deeply discounted tickets distributed to lower barriers to access:

11,800

Free rental and event space donated for community use:

\$217,000

Accessible performances:

21





STUDIO R&D IN THE 40TH SEASON

Studio R&D is Studio Theatre's incubator for new plays, new relationships, and new modes of collaboration. Encompassing the full range of Studio's commissioning and new work development activities, Studio R&D supports artists through both the writing and development of their work, offering commissions, residencies, and artistic retreats. Studio R&D provides artists the resources and tools they need to create and allows Studio to introduce aesthetically diverse new work into the international repertoire.

In our 40th year of producing powerful contemporary theatre, Studio's support for new work continued to take many forms. Studio commissioned seven artists: playwrights James Fritz, James Ijames, Steph Del Rosso, and Emily Schwend, as well as directors Carl Cofield, Lila Neugebauer, and Eric Ruffin.

Studio produced two world premieres in its 40th season: *Queen of Basel*, Hilary Bettis's bold reimagining of August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, and Tarrance Arvelle Chisholm's *P.Y.G. or The Mis-Education of Dorian Belle*, a sly and theatrical look at appropriation and white allyship. Studio provided the playwrights with workshops before rehearsals and hosted each playwright throughout rehearsals, as well as publishing the scripts in book form, mailing them to other producers in the US and abroad who might be interested in producing the work—and making it available for purchase.

Additionally, Studio hosted directors and playwrights for creative residencies, facilitating research, organizing meetings with subject matter experts, and even arranging a walking tour to inform the work of its commissioned artists. The theatre also produced readings of early drafts, letting artists hear their work as it came together, and read and discussed drafts of works as they took shape.

ENGAGEMENT

Through engagement programs Studio Theatre provides avenues for underserved communities to access theatre and for audiences to engage more deeply with the works it produces. During the 2018-2019 season, Studio reached 21,960 individuals through a variety of engagement avenues, including accessible performances (sign interpreted, audio described, and captioned), free and subsidized ticket programs through Ward Nights and community partnerships, and post-show discussions.

A hallmark of Studio's audience engagement, 20 post-show discussions invited patrons behind the scenes of productions in the 2018-2019 season. Facilitated by Studio's Artistic team, post-show discussions—which include talkbacks with actors, conversations with artists, and panels with thought leaders—enrich an audience's experience and invite them to contribute to conversations around a play's themes. Among those in the 2018-2019 season were *Remembering the Holocaust: A Conversation about If I Forget* featuring a historian from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and *The Fall: Monuments and Memory*, a discussion with Georgetown University professor Dr. Chandra Manning about the history and legacy of monuments to the American Confederacy.

Studio has five core, long-term partnerships with DC cultural and educational organizations: Duke Ellington School of the Arts, Howard University, N Street Village, Us Helping Us/DENIM, and Whitman-Walker Health. Studio collaborates with each partner to facilitate engagement opportunities. In the 2018-2019 season, for instance, Studio hosted Duke Ellington's Fall Showcase, which culminated with a two-day performance for hundreds of invited guests from the school's student and faculty community.

In October 2018, for the first time in its history, Studio took its work into the community, touring *The Fall* to three partner venues for free public performances, reaching 750 students and community members.

EDUCATION

Originally founded as a conservatory, Studio Theatre believes strongly in the power of exposure to arts and arts administration.

Through the Student Matinee program, Studio hosts DC public and public charter high school students for free performances that include pre-show workshops and post-show discussions. In the 2018-2019 season, 445 students saw performances of *The Fall*, *P.Y.G. or The Mis-Education of Dorian Belle*, and *The Children*.

The Apprenticeship Program equips motivated young professionals with the skills and experience to thrive in the theatre industry. The year-long immersion pairs 14 early-career professionals with opportunities in Studio's artistic, administrative, and production departments. Apprentices receive free housing in a Studio-owned building, stipends, and the support to fully experience DC's dynamic theatre community.

Alumni of the 2018-2019 Apprentice class went on to graduate school, freelance, work both in overhire at Studio and full-time at DC-area theatres Round House Theatre and Ford's Theatre, and as resident props artisan at renowned dance company Pilobolus.

The 2018-2019 season was also the final year that the Studio Theatre Acting Conservatory operated as a part of Studio, before forming its own independent entity. During its final year, the conservatory taught 235 students, 13 of whom received full scholarships to the Youth Ensemble.

THANK YOU

Thank you to our 2018-2019 donors who helped bring the work of Studio Theatre to life and supported our work on stage, in the classroom, and in our community.

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