MATRIX THEATRE COMPANY

ANNUAL REPORT

2017

A YEAR OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ANNUAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 13, 2018
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM
AT SEMCOG OFFICES
Matrix Theatre Company’s work has never been more important than it is today. We are proud of the fact that what began in 1991 as a theatre of hope and a meaningful vision of transformation continues to prove that creativity is an essential power. For that, we are recognized as the premier organization that teaches, creates, and produces transformative, social justice theatre in Detroit.

As many of our beliefs come under siege from federal policy changes, we are proud to continue to provide and create inclusive theatre where unheard voices and stories are heard, because we believe that every voice matters.

This past year left us with much to celebrate. Our 2016-2017 Mainstage Theatre season brought in our largest audiences ever. 2.5 Minute Ride received two Wilde awards and a four-star review from the Detroit Free Press. Dream Deferred: Detroit, 1967 broke all attendance records and received local, national, and even international media attention. The School of Theatre enjoyed one of its most successful summers as it continued its partnerships with the likes of Go Comedy! Improv theatre, and our youth partnered with Campus Martius Events to perform at the opening of the new Beacon Park. International travel and training in stage management and lighting were new additions to their Matrix experience.

As is typical with any small nonprofit, we also experienced challenges in our 26th year. As traditional funding sources became scarce for all organizations, it became even more critical to create alternative funding streams for Matrix. With the support of a dedicated staff and board of directors, we created three new opportunities. In addition to our annual appeal which saw an increase in donations this past year, and our second annual gala, which brought in much-needed funds, we created a Donovan’s Pub fundraiser to appeal to the younger crowd. In March, we raffled off Hamilton Chicago tickets, sold Artistic Director Megan Buckley-Ball’s specially prepared egg rolls, and held a silent auction which resulted in $3,000. In addition, we created the Producers Circle and the Friends of Matrix Membership. Both are showing early signs of success.

To date, we have more than 100 Friends of Matrix Theatre Company members and have raised over $20,000 in our effort to recruit producers for our Mainstage shows!

With this new funding, we are able to continue our impactful work and be an anchor in the southwest Detroit community. We are committed to our work which gives voice to those issues that are critical to the safety and well-being of all people. We continue to raise awareness of the plight of those who find difficulty in having their voices heard.

Thank you for joining us for another successful year at Matrix Theatre Company.

Jessica Pappas, Board Chair
Kate Brennan, Interim Executive Director
About Matrix Theatre Company

MISSION
To build community, improve lives, and foster social justice, Matrix Theatre Company teaches, creates, and shares theatre as an instrument of transformation.

VISION
Matrix Theatre Company is a cultural anchor in southwest Detroit, nationally recognized as a socially-engaged theatre that transforms individuals and revitalizes community through theatre.

GOALS
Matrix Theatre Company seeks to nurture creative potential, develop positive self-identity, develop a sense of responsibility, teach playwriting as a form of self and community expression, and provide an outlet for participants to tell their stories. The professional Matrix Theatre, while sharing these goals, also seeks to create community-conscious theatre that engages its audiences through the introduction of new thoughts, ideas, and dialogues. It is our objective to produce high-quality, professional theatre that begins or furthers issue-based conversations and build upon the sense of community that will strengthen society’s resolve toward social justice.

OVERVIEW
Matrix Theatre Company is focused on the powerful vision of transformation and believes that creativity is an essential power, the practice of which changes lives and transforms the world. In the years since its founding in 1991, it has remained focused on that singular vision.

Matrix Theatre Company operates the Matrix Theatre and the Matrix School of Theatre. It is inclusive in practice and purpose: the theatre and the school engage all ages, all ethnicities, and all abilities.

Fundamentally a theatre of hope, Matrix Theatre Company offers a powerful vision of community transformation: a place where the essential dignity of every human is recognized and where every story and life is honored as a source for art-making.
Matrix School of Theatre continues to show positive results with respect to resilience, persistence and problem-solving skills. Nearly 70 percent of our youth showed an increase in literacy skills!

ARTS-INFUSED EDUCATION
Matrix provided arts-infused education to public, private, and charter schools in Detroit. We used theatre to strengthen learning English as a second language, English language arts, earth sciences, history, economics, and more. We also provided community workshops and classes to more than 30 organizations including Go Comedy!, Methodist Children’s Home Society, and the Detroit Zoo.

MATRIX TEEN COMPANY
Last year, teens each created their own original play with renowned playwright Noah Haidle. They gained unique insight from Noah and the plays included such topics as healthy relationships, diversity, and community concerns. Remaining months were spent creating Audition Awakening, their spring performance. They learned stage management, backstage crewing, lighting, and sound design. A teen was in the booth running the entire show!

Matrix youth learned to advocate regarding public policy when Hollywood actor Justin Bartha, who previously worked with the Teens on Are You Passing?, asked teens to record short videos. The videos described the importance of Matrix Theatre in their lives and he used them in his testimony to Congress on the importance of the NEA’s support to small nonprofits.

Our teens traveled to Warsaw, Poland with breaking walls, an international youth arts organization, where they engaged in cultural programs and devised an original production describing our role as global citizens and the importance of inclusive cultures. One Matrix teen has been invited to serve as an ambassador and will join the 2018 delegation as a group leader when they travel to Santiago, Chile.

SUMMER CAMPS
Matrix directed five summer camps in 2017, including three at Ferndale’s Go Comedy! Improv Theater.

The onsite campers, ages 8-10, created and performed their dark comedy highlighting the ills of corporate greed. Campers aged 11-14 spent week one writing and engaging in community-building activities, and a second week rehearsing and performing original campfire vignettes based on overcoming their insecurities. The IHM Sisters funded four special field trips including a visit to the Detroit Opera House. By request, we performed at the opening of the new Beacon Park in downtown Detroit.

Our community work included programming with Alternative for Girls, the Campbell Branch Library, and LaSED. Projects included original performances, individual pieces written and performed based on Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, and the creation of shadow puppets to talk about Latin American identity.
“With only a single chair as a prop, the Matrix uses all of its black box magic to put this story across. Director David Wolber deserves credit for some clever blocking that constantly asks the audience to use its imagination. Atop the excellent stagecraft and solid storytelling, the success of 2.5 Minute Ride ultimately falls on Alexander...[and she] is spot on.”

- John Monaghan, Detroit Free Press

“It’s hard to imagine a more perfect play to kick-off Matrix Theatre Company’s new season than Sizwe Bansi is Dead. The play is ideally suited to the intimate performance space and is aligned with its ongoing mission to foster social justice.”

- Patrice Nolan, encoremichigan.com

“The play, “Intentions” by Abby Fenbert, was excellent, both the writing and acting. This was my first time at “the Matrix,” and I was glad to have been introduced to this “little gem of culture” in our city. I look forward to attending other productions.”

- Lucy McMurtrie
The 2016-2017 Season was Matrix Theatre Company’s most successful, with significant increases in revenue and patrons for its Mainstage and 2nd Stage productions. Mainstage production single ticket sales doubled. Flex Pass sales brought in an additional $2,665. Second Stage ticket revenues added $4,319, resulting in total 2016-2017 ticket revenue of $31,317, an increase of nearly $10,000. 2,229 patrons attended performances, and we employed a total of 61 artists. We initiated “Pay What You Can” night, in an effort to eliminate economic barriers between audiences and live theatre performance.

Satire and social justice were on full display for the season’s play selections with insightful stories, compelling historical perspectives, and satirical comedy.

*Sizwe Bansi* is Dead written by Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona told the story of a man living under apartheid rule in South Africa whose only hope for supporting his family meant relinquishing his very name.

2.5 Minute Ride by Lisa Kron received a rare four-star review by the Detroit Free Press. Directed by David Wolber, this one-person show, part Holocaust survival story, part comedy, part drama, received two Wilde Awards: Best Performance in a One-Person Show to Luna Alexander and Best One-Person Show.

Directed by Molly McMahon, *Intentions* by Detroit native Abby Fenbert, was a satire about intentional living and the lengths to which we go, for both our principles and our desires.

The season’s blockbuster, *Dream Deferred: Detroit, 1967*, was based on audio interviews recorded by Dr. Xavier Nicholas. This original production, co-created by Nicholas, director David Wolber and Matrix Theatre Artistic Director Megan Buckley-Ball, broke all attendance records as audiences experienced the voices and stories from this seismic moment in our shared past that still reverberates today. *Dream Deferred: Detroit, 1967* received local, national, and international media attention. This was the highest grossing play in Matrix history.

Matrix continued its 2nd Stage programming with Radio Campfires which were funded by Doris Duke Charitable Foundation as part of an audience-building program. The Matrix Teen Company presented its original show, *Writers’ Blocks*, and the School of Theatre wrote and performed *Audition Awakening*. Kate Brennan’s Cabaret, *Ol’ Blue Eyes*, performed in September, raised $2,400.
“Dream Deferred is both instructional and mesmerizing. It’s a must-see show for anyone who cares about Detroit and its history... it presents a dark chapter in our past. The perspectives are diverse, but the lesson is clear. When we treat groups of people as “others” – when we encourage anger, hate, and resentment – we fuel social combustion. When we listen to each other’s stories, as we do in this compelling Matrix Theatre production, we are reminded of how much we have in common. That’s something we can all take to heart.”

-Patrice Nolan, encoremichigan.com
Matrix Theatre Company’s Sources of Income

**EARNED INCOME**

- School of Theatre: 27%
- Mainstage: 19%
- Individual Contributions: 17%
- Special Events: 6%
- Other: 4%
- Grants: 19%
- Grants (Government): 27%

**EXPENSES**

- Artistic: 26%
- Employment: 28%
- Admin Contracts: 20%
- Admin: 19%
- Other: 7%
“Matrix education programming had a profound impact on a particular scholar who was shy and would not participate or would shut down or act out when asked to participate. By week 3 of the Matrix program, this scholar was the most engaged of them all! Thank you for the wonderful opportunity! We hope to work with Matrix in the future.”

-Jazmine Robinson, Boys Hope Girls Hope/Detroit

“It was a great adventure for me, as well, to see my students doing something different while learning and expressing their ideas and knowledge. This will be a great addition to the classroom during the school year. Thank you very much for the opportunity of being a part of this. I look forward to working with you next school year.”

-Amelia Rivas, Academy of the Americas High, 9th Grade
Matrix Theatre Company continues to be deeply and profoundly engaged in the creation of a vibrant, just, and humane culture within the city of Detroit. Our commitment to building a powerful and sustainable organization can be found in our vision statement.

As a cultural anchor of southwest Detroit, Matrix Theatre Company will provide the highest quality and most inclusive programs, facilities, and performances as it strives to become a nationally recognized model for socially engaged, community-based theatre production, playwriting, and education.
“I just wanted to send you and Matrix Theatre a thank you for your work with my students over the past few weeks. I saw growth out of many students, with quite a few becoming more vocal and opening up significantly through the programming. You had a real impact.”

-Josh Sabo, Teacher at Cody DIT High School, 10th Grade

“I can’t wait to see you tomorrow, introduce new people to your incredible workshops, and just be at Matrix. I always feel spiritually filled up when I am there!”

-Ethan Lowenstein, Director, Southeast Michigan Stewardship Coalition
Matrix Board and Staff

Current Board

Jessica Pappas, President
Suzanne Sattler, IHM, President Emerita
Joseph Heaphy, Vice President
Susan Stetler, Secretary
Derek Edwards, Treasurer
David Anderson
Mary Thereza Centlivre
Michele Dragisity
Nicole Calhoun-Huddleston
Burney Johnson
Mylika Johnson
Lynn Stevens Naoum
Lisa Varnier
David Vivio

Current Staff

Kate Brennan, Interim Executive Director
Megan Buckley-Ball, Artistic Director
Colleen Cartwright, Director of Education
Erica Menchl, Administrative & Operations Coordinator
David Wolber, Development Consultant
Andrea Kannon, Admin. Associate & Box Office Manager
Diana Predhomme, Bookkeeper
“One thing my daughter really enjoyed about Matrix was the diversity of the students in her class. She was excited to meet and work with students from different cultures, students with different ideas and kids her age from different schools. It’s not something she experiences very often where we live. This is part of the reason we are signing up for classes again. We love Matrix Theatre!”

-Sonia Harb, parent
Collaborations and Partnerships

Academy of the Americas (Middle and High School)
Advanced Technology Academy
Alternatives for Girls
American Indian Health and Family Services
Berkley High School
Birmingham Alternative High School
Black and Brown Theatre
Bowen Branch Library of the DPL
Boys Hope Girls Hope
breaking walls
Build On
Campbell Branch Library of the DPL
Center of Music and Performing Arts Southwest (COMPAS)
Congress of Communities
Conley Branch Library of the DPL
Covenant House Academy
Cranbrook High School
Cristo Rey High School
Detroit Institute of Technology at Cody
Detroit Youth Development Resource Center
Ford Resource and Engagement Center (FREC)
Go Comedy!
Grace In Action
Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit
Greater Detroit Agency for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Henry Ford Community Programs
Hillel Day School
Living Arts
Martin Luther King Jr. High School
Mercy Education Project
Methodist Children’s Home Society
Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion
Neighborhood Services Organization
Neinas Elementary School
Partnership for Youth
People’s Community Services
Repair the World
Riverdale County School
Roberto Clemente Recreation Center
Ruth Ellis Center
Southeast Michigan Stewardship Coalition (SEMIS)
Southwest Holiday Fest
St. Ambrose Church
The Jewish Fund
Vista Partnership
Voyageur Academy
Voyageur College prep
VSA Michigan
Western International High School
“Partnership for Youth is a proud partner of Matrix School of Theatre... They are leaders in the youth development space and have proven their impact in the schools, and with the youth, they serve every day. It is a pleasure to be in partnership with them.”

-Terry Whitfield,
Partnership for Youth Project Coordinator, 2016-17
Matrix: By the Numbers

2,900 School of Theatre Audience Reached

8 Professional Development Workshops Attended

31 School of Theatre Artists

2,229 Mainstage Audience

56 School of Theatre Programs

61 Mainstage Artists

1,092 School of Theatre Youth Participants

21 Local Teacher Trainings Attended

950 School of Theatre Direct Hours of Service

300 Youth Development Leaders and Adult Educators Trained
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