

DOBAMA THEATRE



2019/2020 ANNUAL REPORT



FROM THE

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Dear Dobama Supporters,

The 19/20 Season had more than its fair share of challenges. The year started with a bang, thanks to a microburst storm that left the theatre without power for a week of performances, and it ended with an unsettling quiet as the season concluded prematurely due to a global pandemic. The statewide shutdown required closing Dobama's hit production of *Dance Nation* after its opening weekend, suspending the final show of the season, and cancelling our 60th Anniversary Gala at Playhouse Square. Yet amidst the myriad

challenges that Dobama Theatre faced to begin its sixth decade of producing Off-Broadway repertoire, there is much to celebrate in the vital work produced this year.

Dobama's artists and staff were able to produce five important new plays that were both artistically and financially successful. We continued to invest in the theatre's unique and invaluable education programs, providing high-level training to the next generation of professional actors through the Dobama Emerging Actors Program and expanding the resources for young playwrights in our Marilyn Bianchi Kids' Playwriting Festival. We made theatre accessible to new audiences as evidenced by significant increases in our Membership and Pay-What-You-Can program.

When the pandemic hit, Dobama faced many challenges. But we faced those challenges together. We focused on keeping our community safe and finding new ways to connect while we were apart. With all its challenges, the 19/20 season was a year of celebration, caring, resiliency, and reflection. Like everything we do at Dobama, this was made possible by the support of the incredible community that we serve.

While Dobama Theatre, like most arts organizations, faces a time of uncertainty, we are using this time of pause to focus on how we can be of use in the community, how we can continue to pursue our mission, and to examine the theatre's systems and practices to create a better Dobama. The work we've done in the months that our stage has been dark will make us stronger as we move forward together. After the safety of our community, Dobama's top priority is the sustainability and resiliency of the theatre. Our mission is essential. Thanks to dedicated staff and the support of our community, Dobama will emerge from this moment a more focused, and more equitable organization.

With Love and Respect,

Nathan Motta
Artistic Director

106

*total performances
during the 19/20 Season*

25%

*of members were new
for the 19/20 Season*

12%

*of total 19/20 audiences
used Pay What You Can*

25%

*free or discounted tickets
during the 19/20 Season*

60
YEARS



STUPID F*CKING BIRD

CLEVELAND PREMIERE

SEPTEMBER 6-29, 2019

Stupid Fucking Bird

sort of based on THE SEAGULL

by Anton Chekhov

by Aaron Posner

Director: Nathan Motta

Featuring: Joseph Lyle Dunn, Sarah Durn, Josh Innerst*, JP Peralta, Laura Perrotta*, Michael Regnier, Sara Young

Scenic Design: Laura Carlson Tarantowski

Lighting Design: Wes Calkin

Projection Design: T. Paul Lowry

Sound Design: Richard Ingraham

Costume Design: Tesia Dugan Benson

Props Design: Vanessa Cook

Stage Manager: Megan Mingus*

Asst. Director: Kelly Smith

Asst. Stage Managers: Elizabeth Cammett, Alex Stroming

* Member Actors' Equity Association

Synopsis: STUPID FUCKING BIRD is a hilariously irreverent remix of the classic play that stages a timeless battle between young and old, past and present, in search of the true meaning of it all. This trailblazing adaptation is full of original songs and witty banter.

Left to right: Sara Young, Laura Perrotta*, Joseph Lyle Dunn, Sarah Durn, Josh Innerst*, Michael Regnier, JP Peralta



"We are witnessing a play within a play. [Director] Motta takes the notion one step further by sending actors who leave a scene to chairs lining the stage; they watch the action as an extended part of the audience, emphasizing even more the theatricality of the experience. The message is clear: Though theater can explore our agonies and ecstasies, it isn't real life."

ANDREA SIMAKIS, *The Plain Dealer*

"An absolutely brilliant production... There is no regard whatsoever for the fourth wall, which is exhilarating... 'Stupid F**king Bird' serves up two-and-a-half hours of intelligent, well-acted, risk-taking theater guaranteed to engage and entertain."

BOB ABELMAN, *Cleveland Jewish News*



Left to right: JP Peralta, Sara Young

2019 BEST DIRECTOR
CLEVELAND CRITICS CIRCLE

CON: We need bigger hearts! We need wider minds and better ideas and we need them *now!*

WAKEY, WAKEY

OCTOBER 18-
NOVEMBER 10, 2019

MIDWEST PREMIERE

Synopsis: This new play features a guy named Guy who knows, like all of us on some level, that he is about to die. Guy engages the audience in a conversation about life and what is worth celebrating, what is worth treasuring, and what is worth letting go in this moving and hilarious play.



"It is [actor Jason] Martin's ... ability to frame this conversation as a most generous, noble and agonizing gesture by Guy that makes us want to listen to each and every word. Added theatricality and a sense of Guy's fluctuating realities comes courtesy of wonderful projected imagery and immersive lighting and sound, designed by T. Paul Lowry, Marcus Dana and Derek Graham, respectively."

BOB ABELMAN, *Cleveland Jewish News*

"This powerfully concentrated work is bound to elicit a cornucopia of reactions from each show's collection of audience members. Some will understand while others... will think that they have gone through a drug free acid trip. No matter what the response, everyone who sees this show will be changed in some way. This is the distilled essence of good theater."

MARK HORNING, *Talkin' Broadway*

**2019 BEST ACTOR - JASON MARTIN
CLEVELAND JEWISH NEWS**

Wakey, Wakey by Will Eno

Director: Christopher Mirto

Featuring: Jason Martin*, Katrice Monee

Scenic Design: Laura Carlson Tarantowski

Lighting Design: Marcus Dana

Projection Design: T. Paul Lowry

Sound Design: Derek Graham

Costume Design: Melody Walker

Props Design: Vanessa Cook

Stage Manager: Joel Rathbone*

Asst. Director: Bryanah Austin

Asst. Stage Managers: Elizabeth Cammett,
Alex Stroming

* Member Actors' Equity Association

GUY: Take care of each other.



Left to right: Katrice Monee, Jason Martin*

THE OLD MAN AND

THE OLD MOON

REGIONAL PREMIERE

DECEMBER 6, 2019–
JANUARY 5, 2020



Left to right: Emmy Brett,
Tim Keo, Gabe Reed

The Old Man and the Old Moon

by PigPen Theatre Co.

Directors: Melissa T. Crum, Nathan Motta

Featuring: Amy Bransky, Emmy Brett, Josh Innerst*,
Tim Keo, Jourdan Lewanda, Kieran Minor, Treva Offutt,
Gabe Reed

Scenic Design: Benjamin Needham

Lighting Design: Marcus Dana

Sound Design: Richard Ingraham

Costume Design: Angelina Herin

Stage Manager: Megan Mingus*

Asst. Director: Alex Stroming

Asst. Stage Managers: Elizabeth Cammett,
Rebekah Ferro, Arianna R. Marino

* Member Actors' Equity Association

"The Gaelic-inspired tunes, the shadows, the homemade sound effects that include the lapping of waves on a shore and the dripping of light from the moon ... add layers to the evening's joyful entertainment. So does the multitalented and abundantly charming cast, whose unflaggingly enthusiastic buy-in to this entire enterprise engages the audience from the get-go and holds our attention for 100 minutes."

BOB ABELMAN, *Cleveland Jewish News*

"The moon has sprung a leak and drips globules of liquid light. Enchantingly, the effect is achieved not with digital projections but with a bedsheet and a flashlight ... the musicianship is strong and voices sweet."

ANDREA SIMAKIS, *The Plain Dealer*



Left to right: Kieran Minor, Emmy Brett, Amy Bransky, Jourdan Lewanda, Gabe Reed,
Josh Innerst*, Tim Keo, Treva Offutt

Synopsis: An Old Man must abandon his job of filling up the moon every night to cross the seas and find his lost love. This new play with music featured actors playing instruments, sound effects created live on stage, and elaborate shadow puppets in an adventure with theatre magic that appeals to the child in everyone.

MATHESON: There is no force on earth ... that comes even near close to matching the power of memory. Memory – that's the most powerful thing.



SKELETON CREW

JANUARY 24–
FEBRUARY 16, 2020

CLEVELAND PREMIERE



Synopsis: In a struggling Detroit automotive plant, a few remaining workers are trying to figure out how to move forward if the plant goes under. Part of Dominique Morisseau’s acclaimed cycle of plays set in Detroit.



Left to right: Lisa Louise Langford*, Ananais J. Dixon*

“The space is brought to life in all its grungy, naturalistic dreariness by set designer Aaron Benson, right down to the duct tape holding together an ugly, ancient couch. And Morisseau’s characters are so well-drawn and specific – and so well played by each member of the superb, four-person ensemble – we find ourselves held rapt by them and rooting for them almost from the get-go.”

ANDREA SIMAKIS, *The Plain Dealer*

“Director Nina Domingue infuses this production with a palpable urgency that drives the play forward, gives momentum to this superb ensemble, and makes it difficult for an audience to look away.”

BOB ABELMAN, *Cleveland Jewish News*

FAYE: I was scared shitless... but somethin’ in me knew what I was made of. I was gonna survive cuz I had to.

Skeleton Crew

by Dominique Morisseau

Director: Nina Domingue

Featuring: Ananias J. Dixon*, Robert Hunter, Lisa Louise Langford*, Mary-Francis Miller, Sidney Edwards (understudy)

Scenic Design: Aaron Benson

Lighting Design: Wes Calkin

Sound Design: Derek Graham

Costume Design: Melody Walker

Props Design: Vanessa Cook

Stage Manager: Joel Rathbone*

Asst. Stage Managers: Bryanah Austin, Rebekah Ferro, Arianna R. Marino

* Member Actors’ Equity Association



Left to right: Robert Hunter, Mary-Francis Miller

2016 OBIE AWARD WINNER

DANCE NATION

MARCH 6-29, 2020

CLEVELAND PREMIERE



Dance Nation

by Clare Barron

Director: Shannon Sindelar

Choreographer: Caitlin Reilly Miller

Featuring: Wesley Allen, Delee Cooper, Carolyn Demanelis, Sidney Edwards, Avani Hamilton, Anne McEvoy, CorLesia Smith, Mariama Whyte*, Tom Woodward*, Calista Zajac

Scenic Design: Cameron Caley Michalak

Lighting Design: Marcus Dana

Sound Design: Erik T. Lawson^

Costume/Props Design: Inda Blatch-Geib

Stage Manager: Megan Mingus*

Asst. Director: Alex Stroming

Asst. Stage Managers: Bryanah Austin, Elizabeth Cammett, Arianna R. Marino

* Member Actors' Equity Association

^ Member IATSE 829



Left to right: CorLesia Smith, Avani Hamilton, Anne McEvoy, DeLee Cooper, Tom Woodward*, Mariama Whyte*



Left to right: Calista Zajac, Mariama Whyte*, Delee Cooper, Wesley Allen

Synopsis: *DANCE NATION* features an army of preteen competitive dancers who are plotting to take over the world. This exciting portrait explores both the exhilaration and the raw terror of being a kid through a group of thirteen-year-olds played by a cast of adult actors.

"Directed by Shannon Sindelar with the diligence and scary energy of a routine choreographed by ['Dance Moms' star Abby Lee Miller] herself ... [the] production exerts the power of a spell, able to strip away the years, taking you back to when you were 13 and thought you'd die if the thing you wanted more than anything didn't happen ... Cast members deliver bold, unselfconscious performances, whether casually chatting, topless, in a dressing room, learning to masturbate or getting a first period."

ANDREA SIMAKIS, *The Plain Dealer*

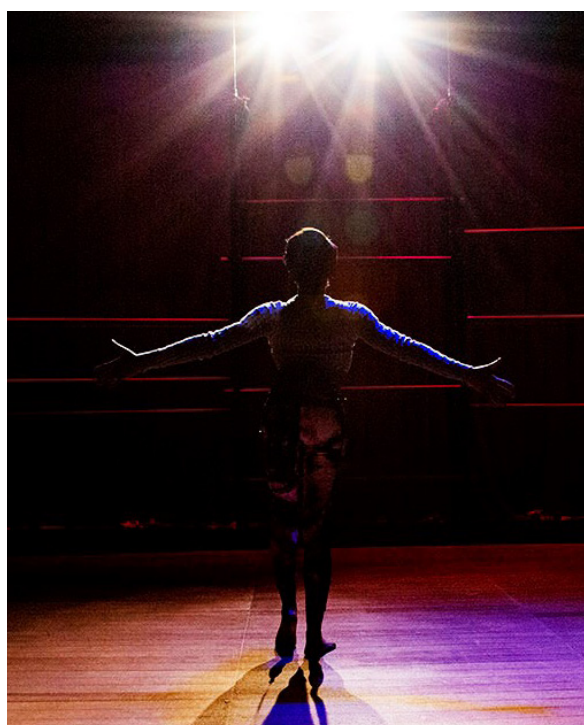
"The girls dance. They share their passions while sharing girlish rumors and confidences. They soar and they hurt. And that's the early teen life we experience with them for a couple hours. Yeah, you'll remember."

CHRISTINE HOWEY, *Cleveland Scene*

2019 PULITZER PRIZE FINALIST

ASHLEE: What am I going to do with all this power?

2019 REGIONAL AWARDS



BEST DIRECTOR

Nathan Motta
Stupid Fucking Bird
Cleveland Critics Circle

RISING STAR

Calista Zajac
The Nether
Cleveland Critics Circle



BEST DESIGN

T. Paul Lowry, Projections
The Nether
Cleveland Jewish News



BEST ACTOR

Jason Martin
Wakey, Wakey
Cleveland Jewish News



OTHER RECOGNITION

NOMINEE - *Stupid Fucking Bird*
Best Non-Musical Production, Cleveland Critics Circle

NOMINEE - Laura Perrotta, *Stupid Fucking Bird*
Best Actress - Non-Musical, Cleveland Critics Circle

NOMINEE - T. Paul Lowry, *The Nether*
Best Projection Design, Cleveland Critics Circle

NOMINEE - Richard Ingraham, *Stupid Fucking Bird*
Best Sound Design, Cleveland Critics Circle

YEAR IN REVIEW - *Stupid Fucking Bird*
Best Adaptation, *The Plain Dealer*

YEAR IN REVIEW - *The Nether*
Most Memorable Moments, *Cleveland Jewish News*

COVID-19 **RESPONSE**



The pandemic has had an unprecedented effect on the global community and Dobama is no exception. Due to government orders and important CDC recommendations given to contain the disease and keep people safe, Dobama's hit production of *Dance Nation* was forced to close after its opening weekend. The final show of the season - *The Other Place* - was suspended indefinitely, the Marilyn Bianchi Kids' Playwriting Festival performances were cancelled, and the theatre's 60th Anniversary Gala at Playhouse Square was cancelled just 24 hours before it was scheduled to take place.

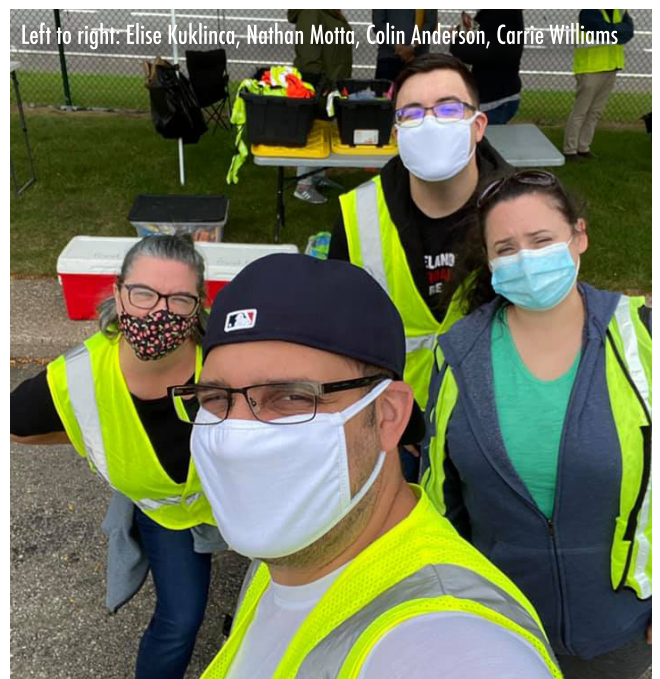
The Dobama Board of Directors was forced to confront the financial realities resulting from these cancellations. The Board considered many options and came to the painful conclusion that current and projected operations simply could not allow Dobama to sustain the current professional staffing levels. Consequently, the Board of Directors was forced to reduce those expenses by laying off the Managing Director at the end of June, instituting a 20% cut to the salaries of the Artistic Director and General Manager, and reducing hours for the Patron Services Manager by half.

Given the uncertainty surrounding the ability to present group events in confined spaces, the continuation of social distancing policies, and the economic impact of the pandemic, Dobama leadership has decided to produce a 20/21 Season of virtual programming in place of the planned mainstage season. Dobama's next mainstage show will be no earlier than Fall 2021, and may be later depending on the availability and distribution of a safe and effective vaccine. In any event, Dobama continues to serve its community and pursue our vital mission while full productions are on hold.

In this challenging moment, Dobama Theatre has three important commitments. Our first priority is the safety of our artists, staff, audience, students, supporters, and the greater community. Second, we will do all we can to ensure that Dobama Theatre comes through this difficult situation as a strong organization, so we can open our doors to audiences again when it's safe to do so. And thirdly, any artistic programming or content Dobama produces will be done professionally, tied to our vital mission, and both representative of, and accessible to, the entirety of our shared community in Northeast Ohio.

Dobama Theatre also committed to using this time while the Dobama stage is dark to examine our core values, mission, business model, operations, and future vision. We will do all we can to emerge from this difficult situation a stronger, more focused and equitable arts organization.

We remain optimistic about the theatre's future. Someday the pandemic will be behind us, and Dobama will once again bring professional productions of important new plays to our region. In the meantime, let's stay healthy, be safe, and take care of each other.



MARILYN BIANCHI KIDS' PLAYWRITING FESTIVAL



From the Education Director

Since 1979, the **Marilyn Bianchi Kids' Playwriting Festival (MBKPF)** has been an integral part of Dobama Theatre's mission.

Every year, Northeast Ohio students in grades 1 through 12 are invited to submit their short, original plays to the MBKPF. Out of the 230 entries that we received this year, 20 playwrights were declared winners. In a typical year, those winners' plays receive a production on the Dobama stage in June.

This year we served approximately 60 students in playwriting workshops, primarily in grades 3-6. Through a partnership with Lake Erie Ink funded by the Cedars Legacy grant, we were able to work with students in several elementary schools and Heights Libraries.

The Festival performances and winner ceremony is usually a joyful, lively culmination of the year's events, and being unable to gather safely meant this year's celebration looked fairly different. But the Festival was still a resounding success and we are excited to expand the program in 20/21.

Sincerely,

Carrie Williams
Education Director



230

*plays submitted
to the Festival*

14

*free playwriting workshops
offered in schools and the
community*

25

*schools submitted plays
to the Festival*

DOBAMA EMERGING ACTORS PROGRAM

\$5,400

*awarded in scholarship
for DEAP tuition*

73%

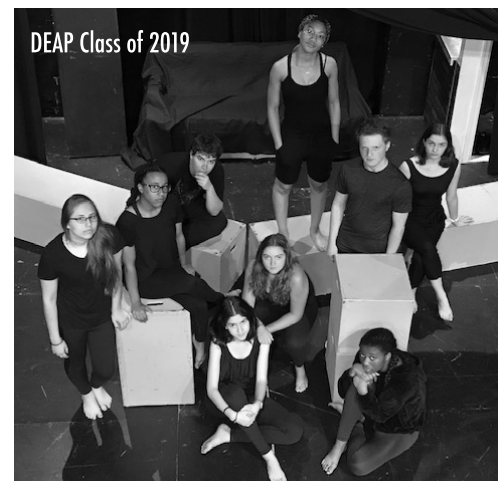
*of students received
financial aid*

24

*total classes in
acting technique*

Dobama Emerging Actors Program (DEAP) is an auditioned, four-week, summer acting program for serious young actors who want conservatory-level, technique-based theatre training. The program was founded in 2010 by Artistic Director Nathan Motta. Each summer, local acting professionals who teach at universities in the Cleveland area provide instruction, and students are able to apply their classwork directly to the performance of a classic, heightened-text play directed by a local professional. Students are accepted to the program regardless of their ability to pay tuition, eliminating financial barriers to access.

In July 2019, there were 9 participants. DEAP's professional teachers constructed a curriculum designed to prepare the students for success in collegiate acting programs and auditions while refining their communication skills and developing their range as performers. In July 2019, the DEAP students presented 4 workshop performances of the Greek tragedy *Elektra* at the end of program, directed by Katie Lupica, a former Artistic Directing Fellow at the Cleveland Play House.





From the General Manager

The 60th Anniversary Season was one of the most unique in Dobama's history. This was true in terms of programming, vision and values, and the creation or continuation of community partnerships. It was also true in terms of our sustainability, with canceled performances leaving a dip in our typical earned revenue figures.

As part of Dobama's ongoing commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and intersectionality, we remain proud of our union affiliation with the Actors' Equity Association and the protections we provide to all arts professionals. This includes paying non-union artists a more liveable wage, an important investment in the community.

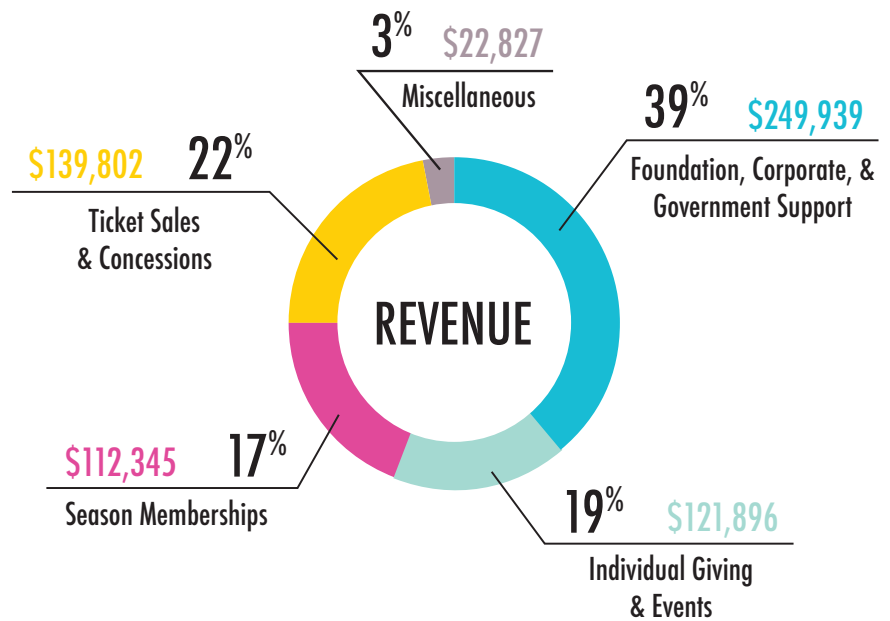
When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Cleveland, we committed to the health of our staff, artists and patrons by canceling the remainder of the season and our 60th Anniversary Gala. To offset these losses, we sprung into action: cutting costs, applying for PPP and EIDL loans through the government, and asking patrons to consider donating unusable tickets. Beyond these efforts, the unparalleled generosity of our supporters brought Dobama comfort, strength, and resilience for the path ahead.

Be well and take heart. We look forward to welcoming you back.

Onward,

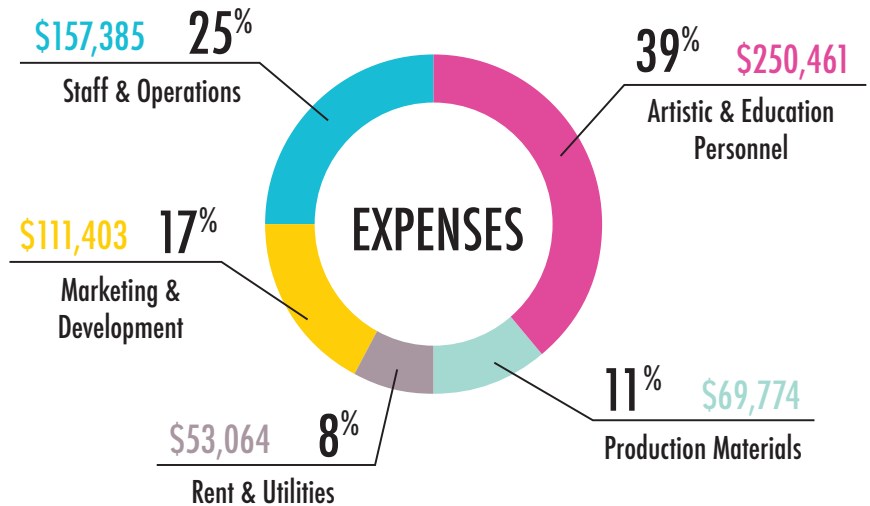
Colin Anderson
General Manager

FINANCIALS



42% Earned

58% Contributed



73%

Programming

21%

Administrative

6%

Fundraising

According to financials audited by Koester, DiSalvo, and Fried. Full audited financial statements available upon request.

THE PREMIERE CLUB

Dobama Theatre thanks the following members of The Premiere Club, Dobama's individual giving program. Premiere Club members receive exciting benefits and play an invaluable role in helping Dobama bring our audiences first-rate professional theatre. For more information on The Premiere Club and its great benefits, please visit dobama.org. This listing includes donors from July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy. Please call 216.932.6838 with corrections.

*denotes Dobama board members

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Producer \$5,000 - \$9,999

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Darwin Steele

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Barbara Colombi
Tom and Anita Cook



Left to right: DeLee Cooper, Avani Hamilton, Tom Woodward*, Anne McEvoy, Mariama Whyte*, CorLesia Smith, Calista Zajac, Wes Allen

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 Ensign and Lana Cowell
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Left to right: Sarah Durn, Joseph Lyle Dunn, Sara Young, JP Peralta

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\$5,000 - 19,999



David and Inez Myers
 Foundation

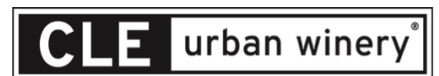
\$2,000-4,999



\$150 - 1,999

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- Montlack Realty
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- Progressive
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- Sequoia Realty
- Taste
- Walter Haverfeld

In-Kind



DOBAMA THEATRE'S MISSION

is to premiere the best contemporary plays by established and emerging playwrights in professional productions of the highest quality. Through educational and outreach programming, Dobama Theatre nurtures the development of theatre artists and builds new audiences for the arts while provoking an examination of our contemporary world.

DOBAMA STAFF

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Paulina Martz

Isabella Schiavon

Olivia Scicolone

Alex Stroming

Sara Young

CLEVELAND'S *OFF-BROADWAY* THEATRE

DOBAMA
T H E A T R E

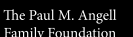
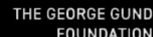
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