



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2016 – JUNE 30, 2017



Our Mission

Puppet Showplace Theater is dedicated to presenting outstanding professional puppetry to diverse audiences through performances, workshops, and community outreach.

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A Letter from the Puppet Showplace Leadership Team

To our cherished friends and supporters:

We at Puppet Showplace pride ourselves on our ability to tell inspirational stories. The enclosed annual report shares a comprehensive look at the astonishing creative output brought about by hard working artists, generous donors, dedicated staff members, and passionate puppetry fans.

During the 2016-2017 season, we broadened our focus from presenting intimate, imaginative puppetry on our stage, to creating impactful, uplifting arts experiences within our greater community. We expanded off-site programming, deepened partnerships with community organizations, and took creative risks to engage our audiences in difficult conversations about social justice. We developed new education initiatives, and more than doubled the number of children from low-income families served through our ticket subsidy program. We launched new productions by local artists, and engaged our largest-ever creative team.

Our growth and stability have been enabled by consistent investment and caring support from our patrons. In FY 2016-2017, our revenue included growth in both earned and contributed income, including major investment from individuals, family foundations, and government agencies. Our core staff, who now have a combined 20 years of experience at the theater, have worked with our trustees to streamline operations while investing in artists.

Looking forward, our focus will be on mission-critical investments that honor our values and serve our audiences. With our eyes on the theater's 50th anniversary, we have set out a bold new strategic plan with a specific focus on diversity and inclusion, puppetry education, artist investment, and staff organization. We look forward to sharing our story with you every step of the way.

Sincerely,

Alison Plante President

alison Plante

John Lechner
President Emeritus

Roxanna Myhrum Artistic Director

Cat Meilus Managing Director

Mainstage Shows







Mainstage shows are the heart of Puppet Showplace Theater's programming. Weekly performances for youth and family audiences showcase an astonishing variety of puppetry styles, representing both traditional and contemporary puppetry arts. We feature more than two dozen of New England's finest touring puppet companies every year. Regular appearances by national and international guest artists add excitement and variety to our stage. Mainstage shows are grouped into thematic series, with 2016-2017 giving special focus to themes of friendship, curiosity, and exploration.

FY 2016-2017 MAINSTAGE SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

AUDIENCE

19,541

Mainstage Attendees

114

Field Trip Groups

86

Birthday Party Celebrations

ARTISTS

29

Professional Companies

18

Out of State Artists

2

World Premieres

PRODUCTIONS

299

Total Performances

48

Unique Productions

6

Boston Debuts







Mary Churchill Memorial Field Trip Program

MAKING PUPPETRY ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL



In 1974, visionary artist, educator, and entrepreneur **Mary Churchill** founded Puppet Showplace Theater as a welcoming home for New England's touring puppeteers. Mary was the theater's principal administrator and tireless benefactor until her untimely death in 1997.

In 2007, Puppet Showplace created the Mary Churchill Memorial Fund (MCMF) to honor her legacy of generosity and her commitment to making arts accessible to all. Each season, Puppet Showplace provides more than 1,000 **free and deeply subsidized field trip tickets** to school and camp groups in low-income districts across Greater Boston. The program costs over \$10,000 to administer, and is

made possible by contributions from audience members, trustees, foundations, and the ongoing generosity of the Churchill family.

FY 2016-2017 MCMF FIELD TRIP PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



1,718 Total MCMF Attendees



1,426 Children Welcomed



40 Schools and Camps Served



\$10,595 Total Amount Awarded

Education Programs



Puppet Showplace Theater's **Education Programs** engage audiences of all ages in the imaginative, interdisciplinary world of puppetry arts. **Adult classes** teach building and performance techniques while creating community connections to master puppeteers. **Workshops** teach craft and manipulation basics and give kids hands-on experiences both at the theater and at off-site locations. **Vacation Camps** offer fun arts activities for ages 5-10. **Teacher trainings** put professional techniques into educators' hands. **School Residencies** inspire interdisciplinary exploration and can be customized for any grade level, Pre-K to Graduate School.

FY 2016-2017 EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

15 Adult Classes

6 Weeks of Vacation Camp

3 Family Workshops

125 Adult Class participants

69 Campers

53 Family Workshop Attendees







Education Programs







FY 2016-2017 EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Introduced "Puppetry for Social Change," "Sock Puppet Pro," and other summer intensives.
- Pioneered a Women's Mask Ensemble class with international artist Avital Manor-Peleg.
- Launched a new partnership with HomeBASE after school program.
- Expanded enrichment programming with Brookline SmartVacations.
- Provided teacher trainings to K-8 educators in Boston, Brookline, and Newton.
- Appointed Honey Goodenough to new Resident Teaching Artist position.

STARS Residency: Trotter Innovation School

Every year, Puppet Showplace teaching artists spend 14 weeks with the William H. Monroe Trotter Innovation School's kindergarten classes in Dorchester, MA. Students write, build, perform, and film their own original puppet shows. The residency culminates in a screening of the students' shadow puppet films for families and friends. This residency is funded by the MCC STARS program.





FY2016 – 2017 University Collaborations

- Boston Conservatory Opera Program
- BU Questrom School of Management
- Emerson College
- Harvard Freshman Arts Program
- Massachusetts College of Art
- Montserrat College of Art
- University of Connecticut Puppet Arts Program

Incubator Program

The **Incubator New Works Development Program** supports Massachusetts-based artists in the creation of new works for youth and family audiences. Shows spend one year (or more) in development, with periodic showings for family test audiences and peers. Artists receive a production grant, rehearsal space, mentorship, and marketing support, culminating in an extended run during the "New Year, New Shows!" series. Incubator shows become part of the mainstage repertoire, and reach thousands more through touring performances.

FY 2016-2017 INCUBATOR PRODUCTIONS

Word Play by Good Hearted Entertainment

Friendly performers clown around with the alphabet in this literacy-inspired puppet show.







I Spy Butterfly by Faye Dupras and Max Weigert
Nature and imagination combine in this original story about how friends grow and change.







Incubator Anniversary

Since 2012, the Incubator New Works Development Program has launched nine outstanding new productions. To celebrate, Puppet Showplace hosted a retrospective exhibit in January 2017. Incubator shows have been featured at the National Puppetry Festival and at major national cultural organizations including the Atlanta Center for Puppetry Arts, New York City's Symphony Space, the Boston Children's Museum, and the Detroit Institute for the Arts.



The Incubator program is sustained by a generous bequest from the Sakharoff Family Trust.

Puppets at Night

Puppets at Night performances for adults and teens explore thought-provoking topics and experimental puppetry styles. Performers include award-winning international companies, stars of the fringe circuit, and groundbreaking emerging artists. Responding to urgent contemporary topics in public debate, the FY 2016-2017 productions grappled with race and identity, environmental justice, and the immigrant experience. Artists came from California, Iowa, Maryland, New York, and Québec.

FY 2016-2017 PRODUCTIONS



White Like Me by Paul Zaloom

An Existential Sing-Along by Doppelskope

An Evening of Crankies by Katherine Fahey,
Valeska Populoh, and John Lechner

Finding Home by Eulenspiegel Puppet Theatre

Beaver Dreams by Lost & Found Puppet Company

PUPPET SHOWPLACE SLAM

The **Puppet Showplace Slam** is Boston's only cabaret-style evening of puppetry for adults. Founded in 1996, the slam showcases shortform puppet theater and provides opportunities for artists from across the region to experiment with new ideas for enthusiastic and supportive audiences. Each slam includes work by master puppeteers, emerging artists, and interdisciplinary performers. The Heather B. Henson Fund provides critical sustaining support.



FY 2016-2017 PUPPETS AT NIGHT SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

419 Puppets at Night Attendees **64** Slam Performers

356 Slam Attendees **41** Slam Acts



Puppets at Night Partnership: Hand to God

Artistic Director Roxanna Myhrum and teaching artist Jonathan Little worked with SpeakEasy Stage Company to create the demon sock puppet character Tyrone in *Hand to God* (New England Premiere, Jan 2017).

Resident Artist



The **Puppet Showplace Resident Artist** position provides a unique opportunity for professional puppeteers to form a multi-year partnership with Puppet Showplace. Each supports the other's mission, vision, and financial stability. The Resident Artist acts as a creative ambassador to the communities we serve through their performances, classes, and creative collaborations.

Brad Shur was the theater's resident artist for 8 years, from

September 2009 to August 2017. During his residency, Brad created four original productions, all of which have now toured nationally. Brad revitalized, performed, and toured three shows by Resident Artist Emeritus Paul Vincent Davis, keeping the master puppeteer's legacy alive. A passionate and caring art teacher, Brad also worked hard to expand the theater's educational offerings, and developed numerous classes for students of all ages.



BRAD SHUR RESIDENCY HIGHLIGHTS 2009-2017



- Performed 9 different full length shows and maintained 7 in touring repertoire.
- Featured twice in Puppeteers of America National Puppetry Festival.
- Launched adult education program, and developed summer camp curriculum.
- Taught residencies for 10 schools in Greater Boston.
- Performed for thousands in Boston's First Night celebration.
- Collaborated with Public VR on digital puppetry / virtual reality research.
- Designed Halloween attractions Spooky Story Station & The Midnight Zoo.
- In FY 2016-2017, performed for 2,140 people at Puppet Showplace, and reached thousands more at touring destinations across the country.

THE PAUL VINCENT DAVIS AWARD

Master puppeteer Paul Vincent Davis was the theater's resident artist for over 30 years. Now retired from performing, Paul remains active as a teacher and mentor. The Paul Vincent Davis award recognizes New England-based puppeteers for artistic excellence, mentorship, and service to the puppetry community. In June 2017, Brad Shur received a special presentation of this award recognizing his extraordinary contributions to the Greater Boston puppetry community.



Special Project: The Midnight Zoo



In January 2016, The Franklin Park Zoo approached Puppet Showplace with a creative challenge: could we turn an unused corner of the zoo into a fantastical world in time for Halloween? The answer was a resounding "yes!"

The Midnight Zoo ran for 5 weeks during October 2016. Artistic Director Roxie Myhrum and Resident Artist Brad Shur led a team of designers, performers, and technicians to envision, build, and animate this immersive, interactive world.

MIDNIGHT ZOO HIGHLIGHTS

4,007 Attendees951 Busiest Single Night15 Total Performances

28 Performers + Crew

20 Creatures Created

14 Designers

7 Months production schedule

5 Weeks of outdoor shows

4 Hours continuous performing

"The experience was FANTASTIC. The actors and puppeteers, absolutely TIRELESS. Midnight Zoo was exciting, enchanting, mystical, spooky and suspenseful in all the right ways. Our children went to bed dreaming up what sort of puppet world and experience they could create themselves. Well done!"

Midnight Zoo Family Attendees, October 29, 2016









In spite of its artistic success, Zoo New England was unable to continue their sponsorship of this project. We hope to identify new community partners and sponsors to revive the project in future seasons.

The Year Ahead

In June 2017, Puppet Showplace staff and trustees held a strategic planning retreat to identify major priorities for the organization.

Highlights of the Strategic Planning Retreat:

- Diversity and Inclusion We desire to create active community engagement and dialogue around issues of representation and inclusion, and better reflect the diverse community we serve in our roster of artists.
- Education We plan to expand our educational programs to serve a wider age range and constituency at all skill levels and abilities.
- Artistic Investment To fulfill our role in sustaining professional puppeteers and cultivating new work, we plan to grow our resources and invest in artist compensation and development.

Initiatives in progress for FY 2017-2018 include:

- New Resident Artist In September 2017 our new resident artist Sarah Nolen began her work in Boston. Her new production is scheduled to launch in February 2018.
- Puppet Lab After School Program This educational program, set to launch in January 2018, is designed to serve older elementary and middle school students.
- Community Engagement Committee This board committee engages members and volunteers, promotes organizational partnerships, and participates in arts advocacy.
- Master Classes in Socially Engaged Puppetry Our 2017 education programs include workshops with master artists who engage directly with communities on major social justice issues.

Future Facilities Improvements and Investments

Another major area of investment will be the renovation and repair of our historic theater. The Massachusetts Cultural Council's Cultural Facilities Fund awarded us a \$20,000 grant to support upgrades to our climate control systems. We plan to raise an additional \$20,000 in matching funds during FY 2017-2018, and to complete the first rounds of renovations by summer 2018.







Financial Summary

Puppet Showplace Theater's recent growth has been built on a solid fiscal foundation that allows for calculated risks in pursuit of artistic innovation. Revenue streams are diversified across multiple strands of earned and contributed income. The staff and board's meticulous stewardship of the organization's resources, along with significant personal investment of time, talent, and treasure, resulted in a budget surplus for FY17.

We derived the summary financial data below from our audited financial statements for FY2016-2017. A complete copy of our audited Financial Statements is available upon request.

INCOME INCOME Performances, Educational Programs & Touring **Programming Revenue** Other Programming Income Performances, Educational Programs, Individual Contributions ■ Grants ■ Memberships Other (including store sales and rentals) \$71,992 Total Programming Revenue\$440,212 **Contributed Revenue** Individual Contributions (including gala tickets) ... \$60,997 Grants\$22,450 Memberships (including library memberships) \$25,880 Total Contributed Revenue \$109,327 **EXPENSES** ■ Programming **EXPENSES** Administrative Fundraisina **Operating Expense** Fundraising\$30,815 TOTAL EXPENSE\$529,453

Board of Trustees

Puppet Showplace Theater Trustees are passionate advocates for the theater's success and sustainability. Drawn from Brookline and communities across Greater Boston, trustees make financial contributions, volunteer their professional expertise, and commit to 3 to 6 years of dedicated service. They include parents and grandparents, professional artists and administrators, and life-long puppetry fans.



The Puppet Showplace Board of Trustees at the Evening of Enchantment Gala, June 2017

FY 2016-2017 BOARD

John Lechner, President (Needham, MA)

Art Director, Fablevision and President, Boston Area Guild of Puppetry

Edward Zlotkowski, Vice President (Somerville, MA) *Professor Emeritus & Service Learning Expert, Bentley College*

Alison Plante, Clerk (Brookline, MA)

Department Chair and Composer, Berklee College of Music

Maria Finison, Treasurer (Brookline, MA) *Administrator, Brookline Council on Aging*

Nora Sanders (Brookline, MA) *Independent Marketing Professional & Strategy Consultant*

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Attorney and Administrator, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Margueritte Murphy (Boston, MA) Service-Learning Advisor, Hobart & William Smith Colleges

Noreen Martin Herzog (Newton, MA) *Attorney, Corporate and Business Affairs*

Members & Volunteers

MEMBERS

Members make great puppetry possible! Membership revenue supports innovative programming, and members who regularly attend shows are vital sustaining members of our audience. Member events such as the annual Fairy Tale Tea Party bring together members and their families for fun community building activities.



FY 2016-2017 MEMBERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

188 Basic Members

82 Family Members

29 Puppets at Night Members

12 Enthusiast Members

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers help plan and implement dozens of events every year, from the annual Gala celebration to hands-on activities at free community events. In FY 2016-2017, Puppet Showplace held its first volunteer open house and orientation event, and streamlined volunteer sign-up procedures to grow participation. Looking ahead, the newly formed Community Engagement Committee will oversee Puppet Showplace Theater's volunteer recruitment and management.



FY 2016 - 2017 VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS

41 Gala Volunteers

20 Holiday Gift Wrappers

\$871 Raised by volunteers during holiday campaign

Thank You to Our Donors

We are very grateful to the following individuals, businesses, grantors, and community organizations for their generous support. The names listed here reflect contributions made between July 1, 2016 and June 30, 2017. If you notice an error, please notify us immediately and we will correct it in future publications.

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Heather Balchunas Suzanne Baumann

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Thank You to Our Donors

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Bantam Cider

Bergamot

Blue Man Group

Boston Philharmonic Orchestra

Boston Red Sox
Boston Swan Boats
Brattle Book Shop
Brattle Theatre
Brookline Booksmith

Cambridge Brewing Company

Celebrity Series of Boston

Central Square Theater

Charles River Canoe & Kayak

Cityside Bar

Commonwealth Shakespeare

Company

Concord Museum

Coolidge Corner Theatre

Cuisine en Locale Downeast Cider

Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art

FableVision Gallows Hill

Ghosts & Gravestones Boston

GrubStreet

Hair by Emily

Harding House

Harvard Museums of Science & Culture

Henry Bear's Park Brookline

Huntington Theatre Company

ImprovBoston

Irving House at Harvard
Isabella Stewart Gardner

Museum

Jackson Ski Touring Foundation

JetBlue J.P. Licks

Jump On In Boston

LaserCraze
Laugh Boston
Legal Sea Foods
Magic Wings Butterfly

Conservatory and Gardens

Mallory Parkington Portraits

Mass Audubon Society

MASS MoCA

The Museum of Fine Arts

Matt Murphy's Pub

MEM Tea Imports

Merrimack Repertory Theatre

New England Wild Flower

Society

Nichols House Museum

Old Town Trolley Tours of Boston

Peabody Essex Museum

Sana Belle

Serenade Chocolatier

SkyZone Indoor Trampoline Park

SpeakEasy Stage Company

Stoneham Theatre

The Boston Athenæum

The Center for Puppetry Arts

The Discovery Museums

The Fireplace

The Lyric Stage Company

of Boston

The MIT Museum

The Paint Bar

The Pekoe Group

The Preservation Society of

Newport County

Tower Hill Botanic Garden

Urban AdvenTours

Worcester Art Museum

Zoo New England

GRANTORS



















The Bilezikian Family Foundation

Puppet Showplace Staff

Core Staff

Roxanna Myhrum,
Artistic Director
Cat Meilus,
Managing Director
Paul Watkins,
Box Office Manager

Associates

Kathryn Ballinger, Box Office Associate **Charles Augustine**, Box Office Associate **Lakyn Arrick**, Box Office Associate

Affiliated Artists

Sarah Nolen,

Resident Artist (2017)

Brad Shur,
Resident Artist (2009–2017)

Honey Goodenough,
Resident Teaching Artist

John and Megan Regan,
Resident Company / Incubator Artists

Paul Vincent Davis,
Resident Artist Emeritus

Contractors

Amy Collier, Graphic Designer **Alicia Zipp**, Bookkeeper **Rick Bornstein**, Accountant

Summer 2016 Interns

Ana Baustin, Tufts UniversityElizabeth Pattyn, Amanda Gibson, Nicholas Stillman,Massachusetts College of Art and DesignShona Ortiz, Jason Zhao, Boston Latin School







Thank you to Sarah Leaf-Herrmann, Graham Gardner, Emily Duggan, Aspen Ridge, Olivia Carye-Hallstein, Caroline Dahlberg, and Rachel Roccoberton for their work this past year.

Thank You for Your Support!



CONNECT WITH US

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