



2019 - 2020

ANNUAL REPORT



Cover: Brenda Barrie and Jasmine Bracey in *Roan @ The Gates*.
Above: Jacquelynne Jones and Ensemble member Ian Paul Custer in *The Spitfire Grill*.
Photos by Michael Brosilow.



Tom McElroy and Artistic Affiliate Denzel Tsopnang in *Five Presidents*.
Photo by Michael Brosilow.

[The following text is a dense, continuous block of text, likely a scan of a document page. It contains numerous words and phrases, many of which are repeated or appear to be part of a list or index. The text is mostly illegible due to the quality of the scan and the density of the characters. It appears to be a list of names or terms, possibly related to a historical or scientific study. The text is organized into several columns, suggesting a table or a structured list. The words are often small and closely packed together, making it difficult to read. The overall appearance is that of a very old or poorly preserved document.]



AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

Season 34—"Then & Now"

A Prophetic Lens

We deeply appreciate your continued interest and support in American Blues Theater. Your belief in our artistic programming and community service encouraged us through an incredibly challenging time. Season 34's theme ("Then & Now") seems aptly prophetic for 2020. We can only describe the year through a pre-pandemic and COVID-19 lens.

From July through December 2019, we presented 3 mainstage productions (*The Spitfire Grill*, *Five Presidents*, and *It's a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago!*) and 3 special events by our talented American Blues artists ("Guitars at the Grill", "MooniE for President", and "It's a Wonderful Party"). Each production and event received rave critical acclaim and praise. Those shows alone exceeded our box office projections for the year. We were rehearsing, building scenery and gathering production materials, or performing 26 out of 26 weeks. In addition, we provided 69 community service events and were on target to serve 4,000 Chicago Public School students in those six months.

It is no wonder we started 2020 with great optimism. We presented the Chicago premiere of *Roan @ the Gates* by Artistic Affiliate Christina Telesca. Ironically, this ripped-from-the-headlines story included social distancing (before the term was common), struggles of tele- and digital communications, distrust of the American government, and letting go of personal relationships that conflicted with one's principles. We closed on schedule and restored to bare stage by March 3.

Fourteen days later, we disinfected the office. We naively packed a few supplies to work remotely and assured each other we'd be back in the office soon. Between March - May 2020, along with the rest of our performing arts industry, we cancelled upcoming events, festivals, fundraisers, and productions. We leaned on each other and scrambled to bridge fiscal gaps.

Then, we watched in horror as George Floyd and countless other Black citizens were murdered on American streets, in playgrounds, while jogging, and sleeping in their beds. We grieved for Black, Brown, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) who lost their lives to racist violence and hatred. We stood in solidarity and supported calls for equity and social justice. As a predominantly white organization, we reflected on our privilege and participation in America's troubling history of white supremacy. We understood the 400+ year system was not *broken*; it was executing exactly as it was designed.

We committed to becoming an anti-racist organization. To fulfill our mission of presenting American stories to the Chicagoland community, we agreed to further diversify and amplify the stories we tell and how we do it. Appropriately, this season gave us 20-20 vision. We saw the change we aspire to be.

GWENDOLYN (WENDY) WHITESIDE

Artistic Director



American Blues Ensemble members at a May 12, 2020 Ensemble meeting via Zoom. Top row (L to R): Gwendolyn Whiteside, Ed Kross, and Heather Meyers. Second row (L to R): Steve Key, Michael Mahler (& Dara Cameron off-camera), and Elyse Dolan. Third row (L to R): Ian Paul Custer, Matthew Brumlow, and Jared Gooding. Forth row (L to R): Editha Rosario, Kevin Kelly, and Manny Buckley. Fifth row: Christopher J. Neville, Marty Higginbotham, and John Mohrlein. Sixth row (L to R): Austin Cook, James Leaming, Carmen Roman, and Warren Levon. Bottom row (L to R): Suzanne Petri, Joe Foust, and Dawn Bach.

32

ENSEMBLE MEMBERS

(as of June 30, 2020)



10

MEMBERS RESIDE
OUTSIDE CHICAGO



7+

TYPES OF
ARTISTIC DISCIPLINES
REPRESENTED AT BLUES

(acting, directing, writing,
designing, stage & production
management, composing, & more)

ABOUT AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

Winner of American Theatre Wing's prestigious National Theatre Company Award, AMERICAN BLUES THEATER is a premier arts organization with an intimate environment that patrons, artists, and all Chicagoans call home. **American Blues Theater explores the American identity through the plays it produces and communities it serves.** American Blues Theater follows three guiding values both on and off its stages—to be **accessible, responsible, and true.**

We are Chicago's **second-oldest AEA Ensemble theater.** As of 2020, our theater and artists received 221 Joseph Jefferson Awards and nominations that celebrate excellence in Chicago theater and 40 Black Theatre Alliance Awards. Our artists are honored with Pulitzer Prize nominations, Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards, Emmy Awards, and numerous other accolades. Our artists work throughout the nation - including Broadway and regional theaters - and loyally return to our stage.

For over thirty years, American Blues has created essential productions for Chicago. Our performances of *It's a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago!* have entertained over 60,000 patrons since 2002! We produce 4-5 mainstage productions annually. **We choose classic American plays and musicals, as well as world and Chicago premieres** from internationally-renowned writers that explore the American identity. We provide a free, integrated arts education program, *The Lincoln Project*, to Chicago Public Schools and the surrounding communities. **We serve nearly 4,000 students annually.** Our teaching artists provide mentorship throughout the students' academic careers.

We are committed to developing new work for the American canon. Our **Blueprint Development** program includes commissions, workshops, and staged-readings. Our world premieres receive multiple productions across the nation. We present the nationally-recognized **Blue Ink Playwriting Award and Festival** and produce the annual **The Ripped Festival** of 10-minute plays.

We believe it is an honor and duty to serve our community. We raise awareness of other non-profit organizations' commendable causes through creative collaborations. We hold food drives, distribute promotional materials, offer free post-show discussions, provide complimentary tickets, honor military personnel, hold exclusive performances for underserved communities, and raise awareness for children's surgeries. We donate proceeds from "Pediatric Previews" to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.

American Blues Theater is your Chicago home for bold, exceptional, and relevant performances. Your ticket purchases and donations help us make Chicago the first city in all our hearts.

"Feels like home." – *The Wall Street Journal*

"One of our favorites in Chicago!" – Dean Richards, *WGN*

"Ensemble founded one of Chicago's most venerable off-loop theaters." – Chris Jones, *Chicago Tribune*

MAINSTAGE PRODUCTIONS - "HOME SWEET HOME"



Jacquelyne Jones and Donterrio Johnson
in *The Spitfire Grill*.
Photo by Michael Brosilow.

6
WEEKS



28
PERFORMANCES



1,844
PATRONS

CHICAGO REVIVAL

JULY 12 - AUGUST 17, 2019

Based on the film by Lee David Zlotoff

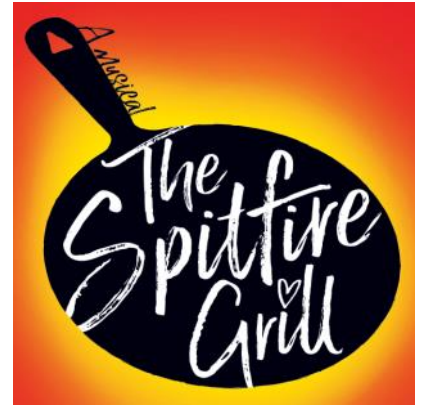
Book and music by James Valcq

Book and lyrics by Fred Alley

Directed by Tammy Mader

Music Directed by Malcolm Ruhl

A feisty parolee follows her dreams, based on a page from an old travel book, to a small town in Wisconsin and finds a place for herself working at Hannah's Spitfire Grill.



AWARDS & REVIEWS

Joseph Jefferson Award nomination for Music Director (Malcolm Ruhl)

Joseph Jefferson Award nomination for Performer in Principal Role—Musical (Jacquelyne Jones)

Joseph Jefferson Award nomination for Performer in Supporting Role—Musical (Dara Cameron)

Joseph Jefferson Award nomination for Performer in Supporting Role—Musical (Catherine Smitko)

"Luminous production...a musical revelation!" – WTTW

"Must-see [show] that absolutely shines! Pitch perfect in every way." – Chicago Theatre Review

"Satisfaction guaranteed with this unpretentious two-hour labor of love." – Stage and Cinema

"The cast is a knockout." – Chicagoland Musical Theater Review

"Stellar performances." – PicksInSix

"Superb revival." – Third Coast Review

"Highly recommended" – Let's Play

"Necessary today...reignites that spark of hope in our hearts." – Chicago on Stage

"Jones & Cameron are immensely talented singers and sophisticated actresses." – Chicago Tribune

"Best plays in Chicago" – Picture this Post

"Beautiful...joyous!" – Around the Town Chicago

"Heartfelt" – Northwest Herald

COMMUNITY SERVICE

We offered complimentary tickets to Alternatives Girl World and Connections for Abused Women and Their Children. We partnered with the Family Institute at Northwestern University. In addition, we ran a clothing drive for Suits for Success—a nonprofit organization that donates clothing to parolees for job interviews. We raised funds for Season of Concern and donated proceeds of "Pediatric Previews" to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.



THE FAMILY
INSTITUTE
at Northwestern University



MAINSTAGE PRODUCTIONS "THEN & NOW"



Ensemble member James Leaming
and Martin L'Herault in *Five Presidents*.
Photo by Michael Brosilow.

7
WEEKS



32
PERFORMANCES



3,211
PATRONS

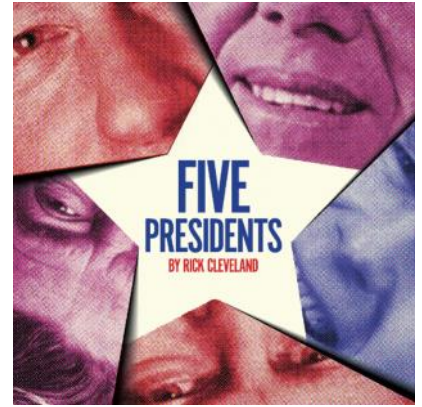
CHICAGO PREMIERE

SEPTEMBER 9 - OCTOBER 19, 2019

Written by Ensemble member Rick Cleveland

Directed by Ensemble member Marty Higginbotham

There was only one day in history when all five of these U.S. Presidents were in the same room at the same time: the holding room prior to entering the memorial service for President Richard Nixon. This is a once-in-a-life occurrence as imagined by "The West Wing" and "House of Cards" writer Rick Cleveland.



AWARDS & REVIEWS

Joseph Jefferson Award nomination for Performer in Supporting Role—Play (James Leaming)

"If you like 'The West Wing', you'll have a good time. 80 entertaining minutes!" – *Chicago Tribune*

"Recommended – fine cast!" – *Chicago Sun-Times*

"Superbly staged" – *Chicago Theater Reviews*

"Remarkable, humorous, and honest play." – *Chicago on Stage*

"Fascinating! Takes the pulse of history" – *Stage & Cinema*

"Cleveland's dialogue is exactly on target for each president." – *Windy City Times*

"A-list Ensemble" – *Chicago Reader*

"Every wisecrack at morality in the White House is salt in [the] wound." – *Newcity Chicago*

"Skillful interpretations...thoughtful, nuanced, and satisfying." – *PicksInSix*

"Brilliant playwright – a success!" – *Let's Play at Chicago Now*

"Five stars (out of 5). Cast to perfection!" – *Around the Town Chicago*

"Clever" – *Splash Magazine*

"Sincere humanity." – *Chicago Theatre Review*

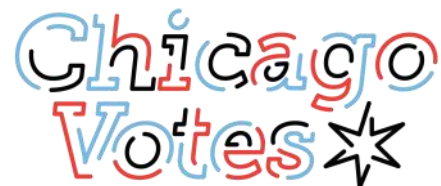
"Best plays in Chicago" – *Picture this Post*

COMMUNITY SERVICE

We offered complimentary tickets to Chicago Public Schools and Chicago Votes. We partnered with The Family Institute of Northwestern University. We raised funds for Season of Concern and donated proceeds of "Pediatric Previews" to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.



THE FAMILY
INSTITUTE
at Northwestern University



MAINSTAGE PRODUCTIONS - "THEN & NOW"



Ensemble members Dara Cameron
& Michael Mahler in *It's a
Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago!*
Photo by Michael Brosilow.

8
WEEKS



36
PERFORMANCES



4,134
PATRONS

18th ANNIVERSARY

NOVEMBER 14, 2019 - JANUARY 4, 2020

From Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life"

Directed by Artistic Director Gwendolyn Whiteside

Music Directed by Ensemble member Michael Mahler

Original score by Ensemble member Austin Cook

This is the second longest-running holiday play in Chicago! For 18 years, the American Blues Ensemble has treated Chicago audiences to live 1940s radio broadcast of "It's a Wonderful Life". The incredible cast recreates the entire town of Bedford Falls with Foley sound effects and holiday carols.



REVIEWS

Seen & heard on ABC, CBS, NBC, WGN, FOX, WXRT, WBEZ, WBBM, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Magazine, Newcity, Chicago Reader, Time Out Chicago, Windy City Times, and many more!

Dean Richards recommended

"Holiday favorite – makes the bell ring every time." – Chicago Tribune

"Tried & true." – Chicago Sun Times

"This show nourished me in a way no other play has. American Blues Theater gave me a profound lesson in generosity." – PerformInk

"More than a play, it's an incredible experience! Don't leave this off your must see list!" – Newcity

"Blues brings the holiday magic we've all been missing." – Chicagoland Musical Theatre

"American Blues Theater's production would've made Mr. Capra proud." – Chicago Theatre Review

"Undeniable charm!" – Time Square Chronicles

"Immersive experience." – Third Coast Review

"Incredible cast!" – Let's Play

"This radio play is sure to lift your spirits!" – Picture this Post

"Life-changing experience" – Chicago Now

COMMUNITY SERVICE

We honored one military personnel per performance with a "Soldier Spotlight". We partnered with the USO, U.S. Dept. of Veteran Affairs, and Blue Star Theatres to offer complimentary and deeply-discounted tickets to military families. We also gave complimentary tickets to the Illinois Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. We donated proceeds of "Pediatric Previews" to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**





Brenda Barrie and Jasmine Bracey
in *Roan @ The Gates*.
Photo by Michael Brosilow.

5
WEEKS

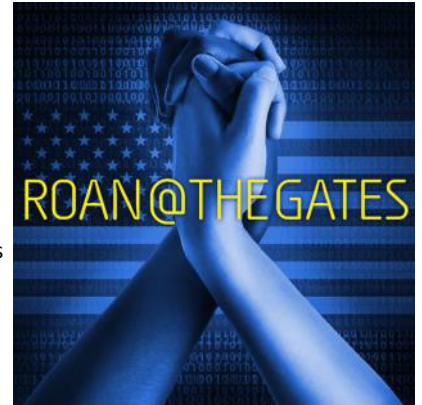
CHICAGO PREMIERE

JANUARY 31 - FEBRUARY 29, 2020

Written by Artistic Affiliate Christina Telesca

Directed by Lexi Saunders

Nat is an outspoken civil rights attorney; Roan, the quiet one, is an NSA analyst who isn't even allowed to tell her wife the location of her next business trip. A long-time couple confronts questions about their marriage they never thought to ask as their personal relationship collides with national security.



21
PERFORMANCES

REVIEWS

"Barrie and Bracey, both excellent actors...throw their considerable talents into this show." – *Chicago Tribune*

"Magnificent show!" – *Chicago Reader*

"Truly memorable performances" – *Newcity*

Highly Recommended – *Windy City Times*

"Powerful script!" – *Rescripted*

"Fascinating and absorbing" – *PicksInSix*

"Terrific...relevant to today's world" – *American Blues patron*

"Commendable is director Lexi Saunders' deft use of technology" – *Newcity*

"Design team is as solid as the actors." – *Chicago on Stage*

"If subjects of realism, inclusivity, & urgency are of interest to you, catch [this] production while you can!" – *Picture This Post*



351
PATRONS

COMMUNITY SERVICE

We offered complimentary tickets to Chicago Public Schools and Center on Halsted. We partnered with The Family Institute at Northwestern University, Computer Science graduate students at University of Chicago, and About Face Theatre's Youth Ensemble. We also raised funds for Season of Concern, and continued our "Pediatric Previews" which donates proceeds to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.



THE FAMILY
INSTITUTE
at Northwestern University



CENTER
ON 3656 N.
HALSTED

THE RIPPED FESTIVAL

30 SHORT PLAYS IN 30 DAYS!



The playwrights of the 2020 *Ripped Festival*. Top row (L to R): Tania Richard, Larissa FastHorse, Bret Angelos, Minita Gandhi, Samuel Kuhns, and Wandachristine. Second row (L to R): Heather Meyers, Kristoffer Diaz, Christina Telesca, Gloria Bond Clunie, Richard Lyons Conlon, Joseph A. Dandurand, and Allison Fradkin. Third row (L to R): J. Weintraub, Gregory D. Hicks, Ada Cheng, James Still, Caridad Svich, Katarzyna Müller, and Manny Buckley. Bottom row (L to R): Editha Rosario, Amy Crider, and Darren Canady.

17
STUDENT PLAYWRIGHTS



19th EDITION
JUNE 1 - JUNE 30, 2020

Ripped: The Living Newspaper Project began in 2009 with a series of staged readings of short plays based on the 1930s WPA era program "The Living Newspaper" that brought Orson Welles, Arthur Miller, and Clifford Odets into public attention.

In 2013, we expanded our staged readings into the sold-out, one-night-only, annual event – *The Ripped Festival*. All proceeds of these annual events benefit our free arts education program "The Lincoln Project" in Chicago Public Schools. In addition, we showcase short plays from CPS students who've completed our course.

Due to the pandemic, we cancelled our annual benefit performance and provided an online script library in its place.



30
SHORT PLAYS



2020 PLAYS

93% by Olivia Ruiz^

The Odd Family by Mahogany^

That's One Way to Feed a Shark by River Viets-Strel^

A Sacrifice by Camila Bautista, Alfredo Galicia, Metzli Hernandez Villalba, Ana Lopez Alcantar, Chriz Perez, & Noah Salinas*

Outrunning the Truth by Hali Rentas, Brianna Cordoba, & Casandra Munoz*

Climate Change by Eduardo Garcia-Hernandez*

I'll Never Be The Same by Gael Munoz, Lizbeth Nunez, Natalie Rioja, & Xavier Robles*

5 Things I Learned After Having COVID and Pneumonia by Tania Richard

My Son by Larissa FastHorse

Go Under a Windmill Someday by Bret Angelos

The Sun and All Its Sighs by Minita Gandhi

The Firefighter by Samuel Kuhns

One Day by Wandachristine +

Inside by Heather Meyers +

Peace/War by Kristoffer Diaz

Hot Mic by Christina Telesca +

A Shot: #A Love Story Inspired by Black Lives Matter by Gloria Bond Clunie

COVID Cohab by Richard Lyons Conlon

When the Streets Were on Fire by Joseph A. Dandurand

I Love Lezzie by Allison Fradkin

Empty Shelves by J. Weintraub

Read It and Weep by Gregory D. Hicks

A Letter to My Younger Self by Ada Cheng +

Saint Monica of the Unemployment Help-Line by James Still +

Debt by Caridad Svich

Mama by Katarzyna Müller

Thin Pink Line by Manny Buckley +

Neutral Ground by Editha Rosario +

Crossing Over by Amy Crider

The Night Andre's Man Came Home by Darren Canady +

^Classes for the Masses students *CPS students +Blues Ensemble member or Artistic Affiliate

COMMUNITY SERVICE

The winning CPS students in our *The Lincoln Project* Playwriting Award contest were included in this digital event. We also invited patrons to join American Blues Theater and its writers in supporting NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Chicago Community Bond Fund, No Kid Hungry, or another charity of their choosing.

1,039
VISITS TO THE RIPPED
DIGITAL LIBRARY FROM
SOCIAL MEDIA.

+ UC Berkeley used 7 scripts
for directing students



BLUE INK PLAYWRITING AWARD & FESTIVAL



Clockwise top left: Andrea Stolowitz, Kristoffer Diaz,
R. Eric Thomason, and Gina Femia

757
SUBMISSIONS

2020 BLUE INK PLAYWRITING AWARD

Recent Unsettling Events
by Andrea Stolowitz

Recent Unsettling Events was selected from a pool of 757 submissions across the world. Playwright Andrea Stolowitz (Portland, OR) received a \$1,250 cash prize and was featured alongside the Featured Finalists scripts in the digital 2020 Blue Ink Playwriting Festival.



"We're honored to celebrate the works of these four incredible playwrights in our annual Blue Ink Playwriting Award competition. Their bold voices and relevant themes make them distinct American writers. Due to this unprecedented pandemic, we are showcasing their scripts electronically and promoting these fantastic artists nationally." - Artistic Director Gwendolyn Whiteside.

2020 BLUE INK PLAYWRITING AWARD FINALISTS & SEMI FINALISTS

Featured Finalists

Kristoffer Diaz (*Football Football Football Football, or I Love Lave Dash*), Gina Femia (*The Mermaids' Parade*), R. Eric Thomas (*Crying on Television*).

Finalists

Jennifer Barclay (*Housebound*), Stephen Brown (*The Candidate*), Marisa Carr (*Punk Rock Mix Tape Play*), Franky Gonzalez (*Even Flowers Bloom in Hell, Sometimes*), Kristin Idaszak, Lily Kelting, Kate Jopson, & Regan Linton (*Eleven Months*), Zizi Majid (*Return to Fall*), Dino Mintu (*209*), Susan Pak (*Miguk Saram*), Andrew Rosendorf (*Cottontail*), Caridad Svich (*Arbor Falls*), Kurt Weitzmann (*In Gods We Trust*), Nathan Yungerberg (*Abuelita*).

Semi-finalists

Bret Angelos (*American Whoknew*), Bennett Ayres (*Bombs and Guns*), Mike Bencivenga (*Compromised*), Amy Berryman (*The New Galileos*), Darcy Bruce (*The Place That Made You*), Lilly Camp (*All Eight*), Toccara Castleman (*"Maybe a Mexican"*), Dolores Diaz (*The Curse of Giles Corey*), Reginald Edmund (*All the Dying Voices*), Taylor Geu (*Passing Over*), Allison Gregory (*Lulu in Rochester*), Amina Henry (*Columbus Street*), Kyle McCloskey (*Where the Lovelight Gleams*), Matthew Paul Olmos (*the broken hearts of a corrupted white house*), Marco Antonio Rodriguez (*Bloom*), Brant Russell (*Bankers*), Phillip Christian Smith (*We Can't Breathe*), Peter Snoad (*Seeing Violet*), Thomas W. Stephens (*Paddy's Pot*), Joe Sutton (*Enough is Enough*), Caity-Shea Violette (*Credible*), Carl Williams (*Unfinished Puzzles*), LaDarrion Williams (*Black Creek Risin'*), Brad McKnight Wilson (*Nebalah*), Amy E. Witting (*Day 392*), Kit Yan & Simone Wolff (*Mr. Transman*).

2020 BLUE INK PLAYWRITING FESTIVAL

MAY 1 - 4, 2020

Winning scripts were presented digitally on the American Blues Theater website and amplified on social media.

May 1

Football Football Football Football (or I Love Lave Dash) by Kristoffer Diaz

May 2

The Mermaid's Parade by Gina Femia

May 3

Recent Unsettling Events by Andrea Stolowitz

May 4

Crying on Television by R. Eric Thomas

4
DAYS OF DIGITAL PLAYS

THE LINCOLN PROJECT



Teaching Artists and Actors Robert Isaac and Freddie Beckley at Curtis Elementary. Clockwise from top left: Robert Isaac performing in the classroom; Freddie Beckley and Robert Isaac performing in the classroom; and Freddie Beckley answering student questions. Photos by Maia Rosenfeld.

2k

CPS STUDENTS SERVED
2019-2020 PRIOR TO
SHUTDOWN

INNOVATIVE, INTEGRATED, FREE ARTS PROGRAM 2019-2020 CPS SCHOOL YEAR

Before COVID-19 closed all Illinois schools, our arts education program—The Lincoln Project—was on track to reach 4,000 Chicago Public School students in the 2019-2020 school year. The data here reflects the students & schools we were able to serve prior to the school closures on March 17, 2020.

Our free program aligns with Illinois Learning Standards to engage 5th through 10th graders of the circumstances leading to the Emancipation Proclamation. Students watch scenes performed by professional actors, participate in discussions, and most importantly discover their voice by writing their own short plays.



STUDENT & TEACHER FEEDBACK

"I learned teamwork."

- Roberto, 7th grade student

"I learned you can change someone's opinion!"

- Fabiola, 5th grade student

"Great program that my students feel with their whole hearts!"

- Mary McCarthy, CPS teacher

"I believe it helped build confidence in [my students'] writing abilities as well as speaking in front of their classmates."

- Cheryl Strus, CPS teacher

"On behalf of my students and myself, THANK YOU!! You might have just turned on the love for the arts in a few of my students...whether as spectators, or on a future stage!"

- Alma Rodriguez, CPS teacher

"Breathtaking performances, student engagement, brainstorming, and group activities makes The Lincoln Project a MUST HAVE each and every year."

- Robert Wiechec, CPS teacher

78

CLASSROOMS SERVED
IN THE 2019-2020
SCHOOL YEAR

369

HOURS IN CLASSROOMS
IN THE 2019-2020
SCHOOL YEAR

NEIGHBORHOODS SERVED BY ZIPCODES (# of schools)

Albany Park (2), Ashburn (3), Archer Heights, Auburn Gresham (3), Austin (2), Avalon Park (4), Avondale, Belmont Cragin, Beverly (4), Brighton Park, Burnside (3), Calumet Heights (4), Chatham (6), Chicago Lawn (5), Clearing, Douglas, East Side, Edgewater (2), Englewood (3), Forest Glen, Gage Park (6), Garfield Ridge (2), Grand Boulevard, Greater Grand Crossing (6), Hegewisch, Hermosa, Humboldt Park, Irving Park (2), Jefferson Park, Kenwood, Lincoln Park (2), Lincoln Square (5), Logan Square (2), Loop, McKinley Park, Montclare, Morgan Park, Near North Side, Near South Side, North Center, North Park (4), Oakland, Portage Park, Roseland (6), South Chicago, South Deering, South Lawndale, South Shore (3), Uptown (2), Washington Heights (4), West Elsdon (2), West Englewood (4), West Lawn, West Pullman, West Ridge (2), West Town (2)

Approximately **90%** of performances and writing workshops reached students and community members in under-resourced communities. Approximately **42%** of performances and writing workshops were in classrooms where English is a second language for a significant portion of students.

We served **11** Communities in Schools of Chicago Schools

(About CISC: More than 85% of Chicago Public Schools students come from low income homes. Many students lack access to the resources and support that help them succeed academically. CISC offers a solution by connecting students and their families with free programs and services that address students' unmet needs.)

CLASSES FOR THE MASSES



ONE-ON-ONE CONSULTING
FREE CLASSES FOR THE MASSES
WITH INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION FOR YOU!

LEARN ABOUT OUR OFFERINGS AT
AMERICANBLUESTHEATER.COM
EMAIL CLASSES@AMERICANBLUESTHEATER.COM



Classes for the Masses -
Session 1 instructors. Top
row: Casey Campbell.
Middle row (L to R):
Gwendolyn Whiteside and
Manny Buckley. Bottom
Row (L to R): Shandee
Vaughan and Carolyn Minor.

5

FREE CLASSES

CLASSES FOR THE MASSES - SESSION 1

APRIL—JUNE 2020

Free classes in acting, writing, and more taught by American Blues Ensemble members and artists. All classes were taught through one-on-one, individualized consultations in order to best fit participants' schedules and learning styles.



200

HOURS OF FREE
CONSULTATIONS

CLASS OFFERINGS

"The World of Commercials & Voiceovers"*Taught by Ensemble member Casey Campbell*

Beginning actors, seasoned professionals, or those interested in creating a home-recording studio - Casey Campbell will answer all your questions and help you achieve your goals.

"First-Person Narratives & Solo Shows"*Taught by Ensemble member Gwendolyn Whiteside*

For industry professionals and weekend writers. Use your time to develop and refine your voice with award-winning solo performer and Artistic Director Wendy Whiteside. Submit a full script or story for feedback, seek guidance to self-produce, or workshop a new idea.

"Auditioning in the Chicago Market"*Taught by Ensemble member Manny Buckley*

Award-winning actor Manny Buckley helps you navigate Chicago's audition process for theater, tv, and film. Choose the right monologue, physically prepare for the character, analyze scenes, he prepares you to hit your mark and slay your slate. A safe place to discuss any and all issues.

**"Break into Production & Stage Management"***Taught by Artistic Affiliate Shandee Vaughan*

Attention recent grads: learn from this backstage unicorn! Shandee Vaughan worked her way from ASM to Production Manager while earning her AEA card for stage management at the same time. Learn time-saving tricks, share templates, and receive coaching for your Chi journey.

10

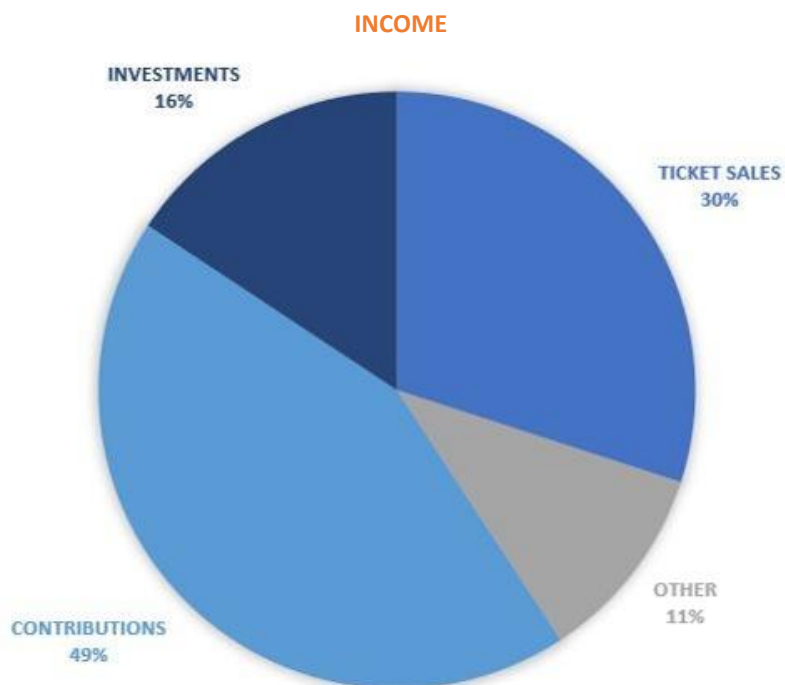
SHORT PLAYS
WRITTEN IN THE "10-
MINUTE PLAYS FOR
KIDS & TEENS" CLASS**"10-Minute Plays for Kids & Teens"***Taught by "The Lincoln Project" Teaching Artist Carolyn Minor*

Unleash your child's creativity! Education Associate Carolyn Minor teaches playwriting techniques from our successful program used in Chicago Public Schools. Your child will write a 10-minute play that will be shared in a Zoom reading for students and family members.

2019-2020 OPERATING STATEMENT

REVENUE

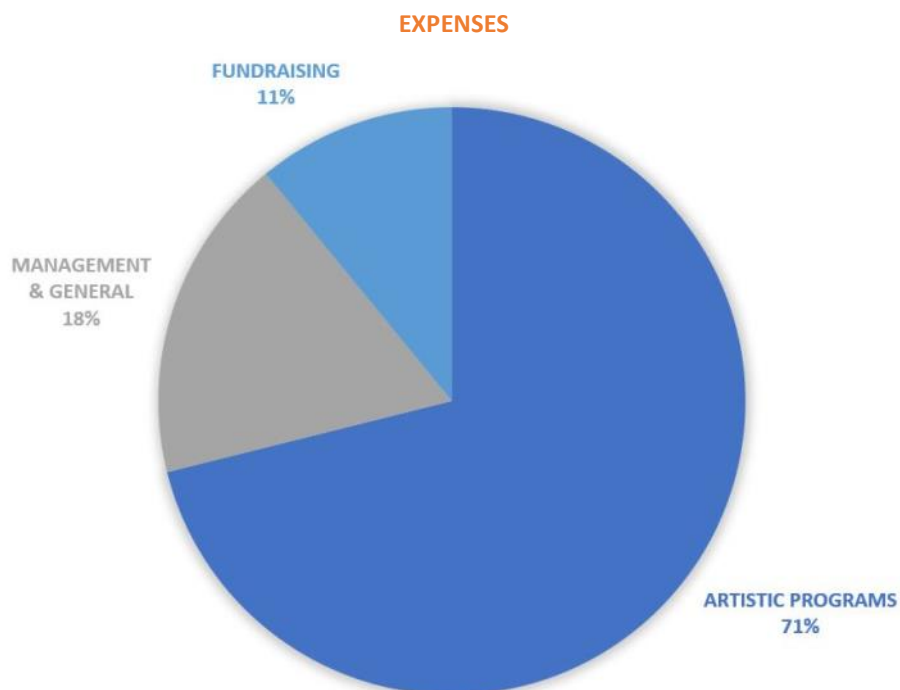
Contributions & Grants	415,710
Program Service Revenue	286,373
Investment income	149,904
<u>Other Revenue</u>	<u>37,049</u>
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 889,036



In FY20 we switched to accrual accounting.

EXPENSES

Artistic Programs	660,773
Management & General	167,024
<u>Fundraising</u>	<u>101,540</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 929,337
<u>ADJUSTMENT TO ACCRUAL</u>	<u>\$ 906,187</u>



REVENUE LESS EXPENSES **\$ -17,151**

From the most recent audit conducted by IL NFP Audit & Tax (Sept 2020).

American Blues Theater has total net assets of \$3,595,583

of which \$2,452,017 is a restricted endowment

from the Ruth D. & Ken M. Davee General Operation Support Fund.

BALANCE SHEET

June 30, 2020

ASSETS			
	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Current Assets			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 460,004	\$ 137,638	\$ 597,642
Investments	522,471	0	522,471
Accounts Receivable	5,700	0	5,700
Prepaid Expenses	45,589	0	45,589
Deposit	6,354	0	6,354
Total Current Assets	1,040,118	137,638	1,177,756
Total Fixed Assets	28,163	0	28,163
Other Assets			
Security Deposit	7,450	0	7,450
Investments	0	2,452,017	2,459,017
Total Other Assets	7,450	2,452,017	2,459,467
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 1,075,731	\$ 2,589,655	\$ 3,665,386
LIABILITIES and NET ASSETS			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts Payable	\$ 6,215	\$ 0	\$ 6,215
Accrued Interest Payable	127	0	127
Deferred Revenue	816	0	816
Total Current Liabilities	7,158	0	7,158
Non-Current Liabilities			
Note Payable (PPP)	62,645	0	62,645
Total Non-Current Liabilities	62,645	0	62,645
TOTAL LIABILITIES	69,803	0	69,803
TOTAL NET ASSETS	1,005,928	2,589,655	3,595,583
TOTAL LIABILITIES and NET ASSETS	\$ 1,075,731	\$ 2,589,655	3,665,386



GutterBall 2019. Clockwise from top left: Audrey Billings and Dara Cameron; Shaun Phillips, Kimberlee Herold, Heather Barnfield, Sue Wilde, and Liz Martinez; Heather Meyers, Manny Buckley, Gwendolyn Whiteside, and Jared Gooding; and Tyson Carter (center) with his children (far left & second-from-left), and James Joseph (far right) with his son (second-from-right)



We are honored to recognize the following contributors who enable American Blues Theater's artistic programming, arts education, and community service. This list includes donations from our True Blue Annual Fund, GutterBall, Blue Bash, production sponsors, and other contributions given from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

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Jonathan Abarbanel

\$100 - \$249 cont'd

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2019-2020 Snapshot



2,000
GPS students served

38

"Soldier Spotlights"



90

Days Worked
Remotely



9,990

Patrons attended



5
NEW
JINGLES



757
"Blue Ink"
scripts



124
Performances

169

Artists in
2019-20
season



5,850

Cookies passed out
for "Wonderful Life"



American Blues Theater is grateful for every contribution. We regret that due to space limitations we are unable to list donations under \$99. Please accept our deepest appreciation as your donation makes a difference!

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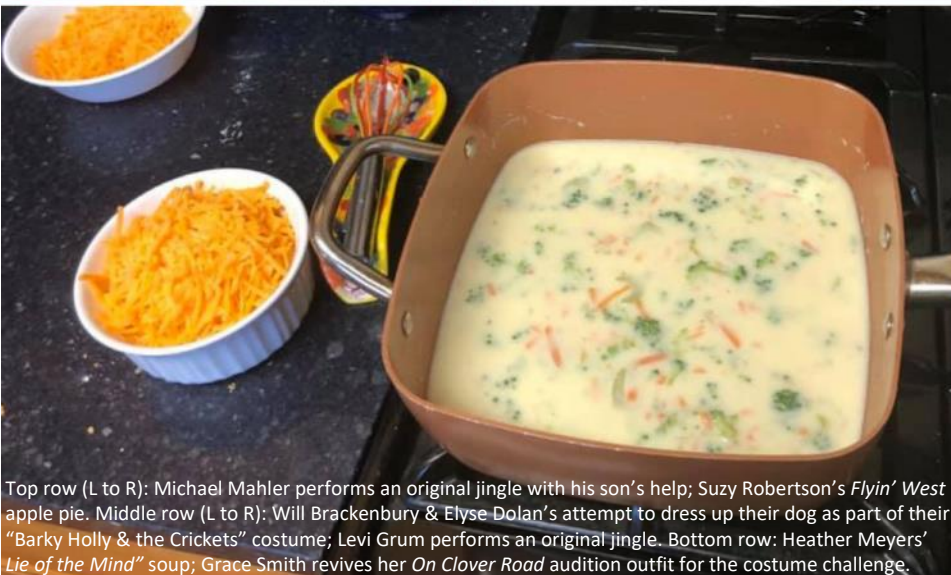
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Wendy Whiteside



The posters from the fundraising events *Guitars at the Grill*, *MoonNiE for President*, and *It's a Wonderful Party*

Game of Blues

As the stay-at-home order closed down theaters and forced us all into isolation, we invited our artists, patrons, staff, & supporters to participate the **Game of Blues**—a social media challenge that ran from April 18 - April 30, 2020. Below are a few of our favorite player submissions!



Top row (L to R): Michael Mahler performs an original jingle with his son's help; Suzy Robertson's *'Flyin' West'* apple pie. Middle row (L to R): Will Brackenbury & Elyse Dolan's attempt to dress up their dog as part of their "Barky Holly & the Crickets" costume; Levi Grum performs an original jingle. Bottom row: Heather Meyers' *'Lie of the Mind'* soup; Grace Smith revives her *'On Clover Road'* audition outfit for the costume challenge.

graysmiff 8h
Game. Of. Blues.
@AMERICAN_BLUES_THEATER
I wore this Blue look when I auditioned for *On Clover Road*

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Staff - Artistic

Gwendolyn Whiteside, *Artistic Director*

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Heather Meyers, *Artistic Programming Support*

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Teaching Artists – Leah Barsanti, Jerome Beck,

Brandon Boler, Manny Buckley, Kevin Duvall,

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Staff - Administration

Sarajane Johnson, *Director of Development*

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Manuel Ortiz, *Technical Director*

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Head of Security Bruiser Johnson supervises new intern Shadow Brackenbury-Dolan on the job.



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