IMPACT REPORT

2023

THEATRE OF LOUISVILLE

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LEARNING & CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT Pictured below and on the cover: The cast of *Party People* by UNIVERSES (Steven Sapp, Mildred Ruiz-Sapp, and William Ruiz, aka Ninja). Photos by Jon Cherry.



LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ROBERT BARRY FLEMING

As I reflect on another year in service of Actors Theatre of Louisville's mission- to unlock human potential, build community, and enrich quality of life by engaging people in theatre that reflects the wonder and complexity of our time-I am particularly proud of our organizational efforts to be a welcoming space of belonging for all.

Our Convergence Ball in February offered a robust example of the potential of storytelling to build connections, learn together, and heal the body, mind, and spirit. We had the opportunity to reimagine the classic story of *Dracula* through the lens of Kate Hamill's new adaptation, evoking thematic discourse and dialogue that reframes our understanding of ourselves and the world we inhabit. We deepened our commitment to language accessibility with our Storytelling (r)Evolution Lab workshop of *Ohio* by The Bengsons, and our world premiere production of *La Egoista* by Erlina Ortiz. We welcomed young people back into the theaters for student matinees and continued our in-school residency programs. We partnered with a myriad of wonderful individuals and collectives throughout Louisville and beyond, and felt heartened by the mutual support of so many folks profoundly invested in our community.

In this Impact Report, you will get a taste of the joyful, substantive, and meaningful work going on at Actors Theatre of Louisville because of your investment in us, and I hope that you will be inspired to join us again in our physical and/or digital theaters very soon.

Thank you to all who continue to make the Storytelling (r)Evolution possible.

Robert Barry Fleming Executive Artistic Director



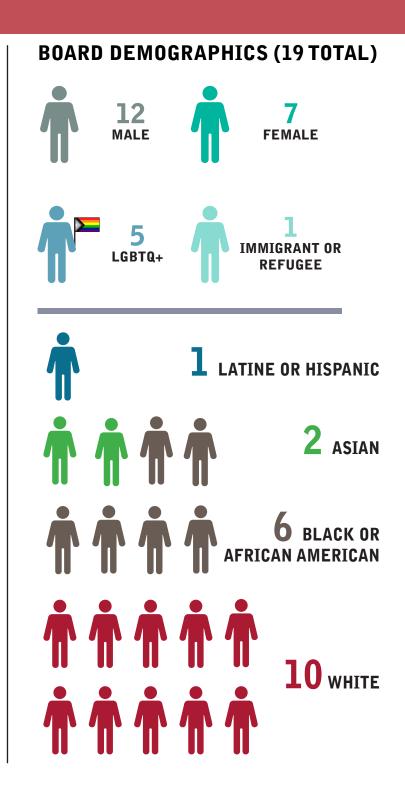
Robert Barry Fleming gives a warm welcome during Convergence Ball. Photo by Two Hearts Media - Yero.

ACCESS AND INCLUSION

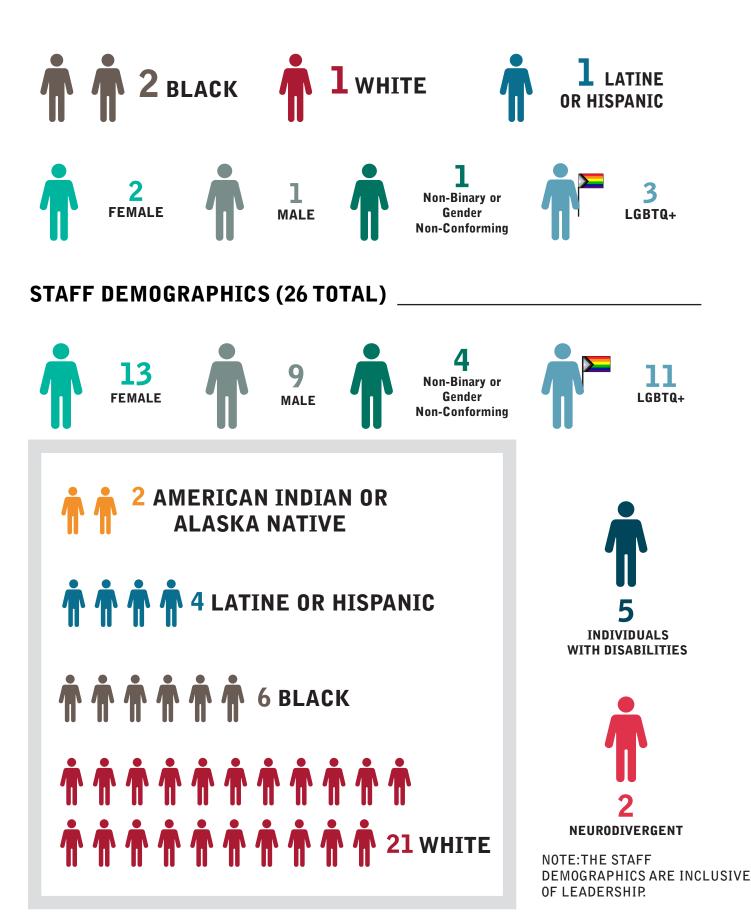
Actors Theatre of Louisville is an arts and culture organization as social enterprise. As a 501c3 nonprofit dedicated to service, building community, and creating positive social change, we strive to cultivate a place of belonging. It is critical to the success of our mission that our services be accessible and inclusive for all, and especially for those historically and systemically excluded.



Actors Theatre of Louisville strives to be inclusive of diverse perspectives and experiences at all levels of our operations – internally and externally. The demographics on the pages that follow provide a snapshot of who creates and supports our work on the board, on the staff, and on the stage. This data was self-reported by individuals. All categories were optional to report, and participants could identify in as many categories as applicable.



EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP DEMOGRAPHICS (4 TOTAL)



ARTIST DEMOGRAPHICS_____



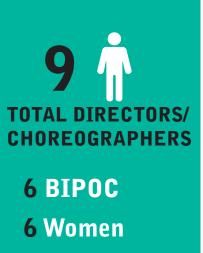
6 BIPOC

5 Women

3 LGBTQ+

1 Disabled or

Neurodiverse



3 LGBTQ+

37 TOTAL DESIGNERS

12 BIPOC 15 Women 1 TGNC 3 LGBTQ+ 2 Disabled or Neurodiverse

48 TOTAL PERFORMERS

26 BIPOC 20 Women 3 TGNC 13 LGBTQ+ 2 Disabled or Neurodiverse

13 TOTAL STAGE MANAGERS

9 BIPOC 10 Women 1 TGNC

3 LGBTQ+ 3 Disabled or Neurodiverse

TGNC=TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING

AUDIENCES CAME FROM OVER 320 DIFFERENT ZIP CODES.

"I love the direction Actors is taking. I haven't been in a while and was encouraged to go by a friend. Loved seeing Black and Brown people in the audience. It's probably the most diverse audience I've seen at Actors...I'll be sure to return in the future. Thank you for making art accessible."

> -*Party People* Audience Member

MEMBERSHIPS

Our membership program, now in its second year, grew by 35%. The membership model offers maximum flexibility and lowest cost for audiences and for the organization. Membership supports all that we do—from empowering young people through our Learning and Creative Engagement residencies, to building transformative community partnerships, to making our artistic work more accessible than ever through our growing library of digital experiences.

Members can choose between the free **Green membership** and paid **Blue**, **Red**, and **Purple** options, all of which offer a range of perks, including early access to tickets for our inperson productions.

Unlimited access to the Member Library, a collection of free audio and video content.	~	~	~	~
Membership emails and special offers.	~	~	~	~
Invitations to free events.	~	v	✓	•
Early access to tickets for in-person events.	~	~	✓	•
Ticketing fees waived. * (Average savings of \$5 per ticket!)			~	~
20% off many special events.			~	~
Discounts to all premium streaming content.**			\$5 to stream	Free to stream
Discounted tickets to in-person theatrical productions.***			20% off	50% off

MEMBERS FROM **20** DIFFERENT STATES



INCREASE IN MEMBERSHIPS OVER THE LAST YEAR Memberships start at zero cost, and benefits include early access to tickets – including the ability to purchase tickets to all announced productions – access to content in the Digital Member Library, discounts on tickets and events, waived fees, and more.

LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY

CC CLOSED CAPTIONS

Each production includes two performances with closed captions available. Closed captioning is available on guests' personal mobile devices. For any guest who needs a device on which to access closed captions, the Radical Hospitality Team can provide a tablet.



Each production includes one performance interpreted in American Sign Language. Guests seeking to take advantage of the ASL interpretation may access designated seats that provide the best sightlines to the interpreters and the action on stage.



OHIO

Ohio, a workshop of a new play by The Bengsons about the intersection of faith, family, and hearing loss, was shared in the Storytelling (r)Evolution Lab. Filled with music, this work-in-progress production was Actors Theatre of Louisville's first pilot of a project that fully incorporated open captions for hearing accessibility into the design of the show.

The Actors Theatre of Louisville team and Access Consultant Talleri McRae worked with The Bengsons and *Ohio's* creative team to imagine an accessible experience with three language modalities (spoken, captions, and ASL) for a full spectrum of lived experiences of hearing, hearing loss, and Deafness. We also established a process to collect feedback that can be applied to improve accessibility for future productions.

73.5% of audiences engaged with *Ohio* through a combination of reading the captions and listening, including guests who do not experience hearing loss but still reported using the captions when they did not understand all the lyrics or text.

97% of audiences reported that the two language modalities (vocal/ instrumental sound and written captions) significantly enhanced the experience without creating distraction or confusion.

COMMUNITY PARTNER

HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA KENTUCKIANA CHAPTER

HLAA members received free admission to attend a performance of *Ohio*, and Access Consultant Talleri McRae hosted a focus group conversation after the performance to gather feedback about how Actors Theatre can continue to become more inclusive for people experiencing hearing loss.



"KNOWING THE SHOW IS TAKING EVERYONE INTO CONSIDERATION AND REIMAGINING THE WAY THINGS 'ARE ALWAYS DONE' TO INCLUDE DISABLED PEOPLE IS REALLY BEAUTIFUL."

- Ohio Audience Member

LA EGOISTA

Actors Theatre of Louisville produced the world premiere of *La Egoista* by Erlina Ortiz, a comedy about two Dominican-American sisters, one a stand-up comedian and the other a devout Jehovah's Witness navigating a chronic illness.

In order to make the production as accessible as possible, Actors Theatre commissioned writer and comedian Cristina Fernandez to translate the script into Spanish. This script was then used to provide **Spanish-language closed captions** – the first time in Actors Theatre of Louisville history that this service was offered. A subsequent production of *La Egoista* in Los Angeles also used the translation to provide Spanish captions.



Kimberly Gómez in *La Egoista*, with one of local puppet designer Isaac Fosl-van Wyke's creations. Photo by Yunier Ramirez.



Jomaris DeJesus, Judith Gonzalez, and Xenia Miller of Teatro Tercera Llamada read *La Egoista* in Spanish. Photo by Amelia Acosta Powell.

Actors Theatre of Louisville partnered with Teatro Tercera Llamada to offer a free staged reading of the Spanish translation of *La Egoista* (pictured at left). Partnerships with other local theatre companies create a mutually beneficial opportunity for our audiences to connect and learn about each other.

WESLEY HOUSE WORD PLAY RESIDENCY

In 2022, our Learning and Creative Engagement Team piloted the first bilingual English/Spanish Word Play Residency at Welsey House Community Center. Participants learned storytelling techniques to express their stories, and every session also incorporated a new Spanish vocabulary word.



RESIDENCIES





Teaching artist at The Kentucky School for the Blind. Photo by Kavin Moore.

Day Spring Residency

Our partners at Day Spring, a Louisville organization that provides residential supports and services that empower people with developmental disabilities to live joyful and fulfilling lives, invited the Actors Theatre team to facilitate a New Voices Residency with their residents. Participants explored different storytelling techniques, culminating in writing and sharing their own plays.

Kentucky School for the Blind

Teaching Artists from Actors Theatre of Louisville led students at Kentucky School for the Blind in a New Voices residency where they had the opportunity to tell their stories and explore their creativity.

"Many of my students are reluctant readers and writers. This program encouraged them to just have fun with the writing. The question of the day helped them loosen up. Keith [McGill, Teaching Artist] was able to get the students to trust him and to try something new. Before they knew it, they were writing dialogue and plays that were funny, smart, silly, serious, and many were somewhat autobiographical."

- Kentucky School for the Blind Teacher Testimonial

"Many of my students have kind of given up on themselves when it comes to academics. Several have been 'behind' in reading and writing for so long that they believe that they aren't good readers and writers. This program gave them the boost that they have needed. They each wrote their own play from start to finish, surprising even themselves!"

- Kentucky School for the Blind Teacher Testimonial

DIGITAL INCLUSION



Actors Theatre of Louisville has partnered with the city of Louisville's Office for Civic Innovation & Technology's Digital Citizens program with the Department of Corrections. Through this program, individuals experiencing incarceration are provided with an mp3 player pre-loaded with audio content created by Actors Theatre, including Dracula: A Radio Play, A Christmas Carol: A Radio Play, Ali Summit, all episodes of our podcast, Borrowed Wisdom with Robert Barry Fleming, and all original songs from Louisville Sessions. Content from the Actors Theatre Digital Member Library provides this community, which has limited access to the outside world, with meaningful connection, entertainment, and inspiration.



IMPACT REPORT - INTERSECTION OF ART & WELLNESS / 2023

Nurse and dancer Tara Rynders, whose initiative The Clinic has previously partnered with Actors Theatre of Louisville to offer art-based resiliency workshops for Kentucky nurses, performs at the Convergence Ball in Feburary 2023. Combining art, music, movement, and caring science, Rynders's work centers self-compassion and self-care, and raises awareness around the detrimental effects of compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. Photo by Two Hearts Media - Yero.

INTERSECTION OF ART & WELLNESS

Art heals on an individual and communal scale. From art therapy in hospitals to creative outlets for imprisoned populations to collective grieving through sharing stories, quantitative and qualitative data support the essential nature of the arts for our personal and public health. Actors Theatre leverages our expertise in art-based practices to support the full flourishing of our communities through productions, programs, and partnerships at the intersection of art and wellness.

DRACULA: A FEMINIST REVENGE FANTASY









In 2022, Actors Theatre of Louisville reimagined the longstanding tradition of producing *Dracula* with a new adaptation by award-winning playwright Kate Hamill, based on the novel by Bram Stoker. This adaptation investigates the story through a feminist lens, using horror and humor to surface the ways in which the scariest "monsters" may not be fictional creatures, but live within our communities, our homes, and our own hearts when the dark and ugly sides of human nature prevail. Hamill's adaptation positions Doctor Van Helsing as a female hero on a mission to reclaim her own agency and support other women in doing the same.

In conjunction with the production, which depicts and references situations of domestic violence, Actors Theatre shared a list of local and national resources for survivors of domestic or intimate partner violence online, in the lobbies, and in the restroom stalls. This resource page remains available on the Actors Theatre website.

"Thank you for doing this wonderful and progressive production! As a survivor of domestic violence and sexual violence, I felt very connected to the play. I appreciated the sensitivity and realism in this show. The actors did an amazing job! I could feel the empathy and concern of the cast and production team for people affected by the themes expressed in this show."

- Dracula Audience Member

Pictured, top to bottom: Nick Jordan (Dracula), LaShondra Hood (Doctor Van Helsing), Brittany "BeeBee" Patillo (Lucy Westenra), and Abigail Bailey Maupin (Renfield) in the 2022 production of *Dracula: A Feminist Revenge Fantasy*. Photos by Jon Cherry.

OHIO



The Storytelling (r)Evolution Lab workshop of *Ohio* by The Bengsons not only incorporated captions for hearing accessibility, but also told a compassionate and heartfelt story about navigating crises of physical wellness (hearing loss) and spiritual wellness (faith loss).

"At many points *Ohio* brought me to tears because of how closely I felt my own experience with God was mirrored in the performance... The Bengsons so wonderfully captured the experience of a kind, gentle and loving God juxtaposed with a punishing, wrathful God and how we as humans encounter this contrast and wrestle with it in our daily life and through generations. This is a performance that I will think about and remember for the rest of my life."

- Ohio Audience Member

"I felt very healed and seen and held."

> - Ohio Audience Member

THE CLINIC AT CONVERGENCE BALL

At our Convergence Ball event on February 25, 2023, Actors Theatre welcomed back nurse and choreographer Tara Rynders, the founder of The Clinic. Rynders offered a workshop where participants had the opportunity to express themselves through movement, writing, and visual art. Then, Rynders shared a gripping performance inspired by her experience working as a nurse on the frontlines during the peak of the COVID pandemic.

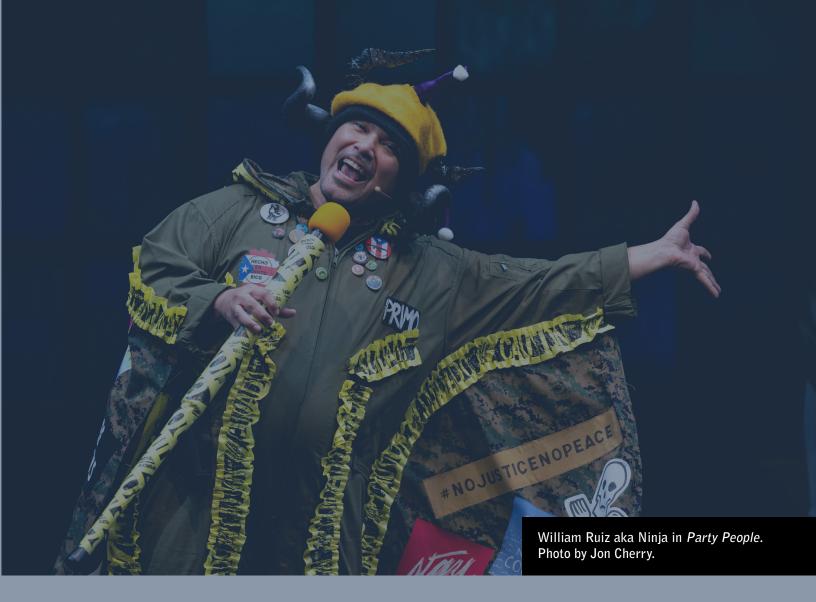






KORT Partnership

Actors Theatre of Louisville is grateful to partner with KORT Physical Therapy to provide free physical therapy for each of the in-person productions, supporting the health and well-being of artists engaged in the significant physical demands of rehearsing, performing, and serving as production crew for a live performance event.



CROSS-CULTURAL COALITION BUILDING

Actors Theatre is a public forum for the exchange of ideas. Our goal is to create nurturing spaces for humans from disparate life experiences to exchange sustainable strategies for mutual thriving.

FANNIE: THE MUSIC AND LIFE OF FANNIE LOU HAMER

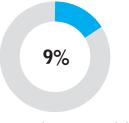


Robin McGee in *FANNIE: The Music and Life of Fannie Lou Hamer.* Photo by Two Hearts Media - Yero.

In connection with our Fall 2022 production of FANNIE: The Music and Life of Fannie Lou Hamer, Actors Theatre hosted a community dialogue called "Until I Am Free: Voter Rights from Fannie Lou Hamer to Louisville 2022" with two community members who have experienced incarceration. Hosted by Executive Artistic Director Robert Barry Fleming, this conversation explored the connection between the voter suppression Fannie Lou Hamer fought against in the 1960s and the voter suppression experienced by our communities today. The speakers addressed the disproportionate imprisonment of poor people, Black people, Latine people, and other marginalized groups, and the subsequent disenfranchisement of their voting rights.



of audience members reported that they already planned to vote, but *FANNIE* reinvigorated their passion.



of audience members reported that *FANNIE* inspired them to vote whereas before they felt ambivalent.

"*FANNIE* was an amazing performance; the most heart wrenching, inspiring and impressive monologue I have ever had the pleasure of experiencing."

- Audience Member

"Wonderful acting! Very moving performance. I didn't know about Fannie before or all that she went through. Thank you for doing this amazing play."

- Audience Member

PARTY PEOPLE

Cross-cultural coalition building took center stage in Actors Theatre of Louisville's April 2023 production of *Party People* by UNIVERSES. The production, created from interviews with members of the Black Panther Party and the Puerto Rican Young Lords, used music, poetry, dance, and storytelling to celebrate the ways in which the Rainbow Coalition of revolutionary groups working together was able to combat systemic injustices and serve their communities.



Every performance of *Party People* included local organizations tabling in the lobby to share information about related issues and opportunities in our community. Partners included Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, All of Us or None, Hood to the Holler, La Casita Center, Louisville Showing Up For Racial Justice, the Muhammad Ali Center, and the Revolutionary Black Panther Party.

"I'm an organizer in Louisville. I've never been to Actors Theatre before but, because of this show, I plan to sign up for your email list. I don't always feel like I belong in theater spaces, but I did for this performance."

- Audience Member



POWER TO THE PEOPLE: A Community Conversation with Former Members of the Black Panther Party

During the run of *Party People*, Executive Artistic Director Robert Barry Fleming hosted a discussion with four former members of the Chicago Black Panthers. These revolutionary activists shared their experiences in the Party, their trajectories in the years since, and their strategies for subverting systems of oppression and empowering the people.

"The play gave me hope for the future with communities and young people continuing to organize and create change." – Audience Member



National Puerto Rican Chamber Partnership

Actors Theatre partnered with the Louisville chapter of the National Puerto Rican Chamber of Commerce to host a Boricua Night with 8 local Puerto Rican vendors in the lobby and over 100 Puerto Rican community members in attendance.

"I was very moved by the final scene between the younger generation of Party members and the elder generation. It highlighted the importance of action and the idea that there's no one way to make positive change. This was not only incredibly powerful but incredibly motivating."

- Audience Member

Pictured, left to right: Asia Mark in *Party People*. Community Conversation with former members of the Black Panther Party. Sophia Ramos in *Party People*. Production photos by Jon Cherry.

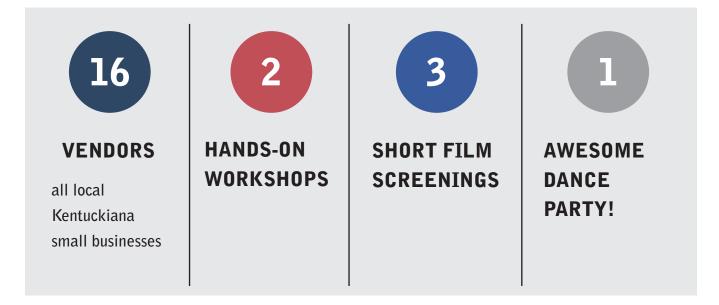
ADELANTE HISPANIC ACHIEVERS WORKSHOP

Actors Theatre of Louisville partnered with Adelante Hispanic Achievers to create a custom residency day for the students to visit the theater (pictured at right). Workshops included special effect make-up, movement, and improvisation.



CONVERGENCE BALL

In February 2023, Actors Theatre of Louisville activated every space in the Main Street Theater Complex and welcomed our community for Convergence Ball.







Convergence Ball included an unforgettable live performance in the Bingham Theater featuring 15 artists, live music performances in the Sara Shallenberger Brown Lobby throughout the day, and a listening station from Louisville Silent Disco featuring Louisville Sessions original songs and excerpts from our podcast series, *Borrowed Wisdom with Robert Barry Fleming*.



Top Photo: Kentucky-born composer and theater-maker Troy Anthony returns to his hometown to perform at the Convergence Ball. Middle Photo: Participants share their art during The Clinic workshop at Convergence Ball. Photo by Two Hearts Media - Yunier Ramirez. Bottom Photos, left to right: Local vendors Gimme Some Suga handcrafted cotton candy. Kentucky poet and National Beat Poet Laureate Ron Whitehead performing during Convergence Ball. Wyld Thoughts event planners Tonya Scott and Meika Finger-Gray demonstrating one of the creative photo opportunities throughout the theater complex. Photos by Two Hearts Media - Yero.

LEARNING & CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT



Erica Denise and students in rehearsal for *Journey of the Drum,* a collaboration between Actors Theatre of Louisville and River City Drum Corp featuring young performers and drummers in RCDC's percussion ensembles. Photo by Kavin Moore.

Actors Theatre of Louisville cultivates lifelong learners. Invigorated by the belief that artbased tools set young people up for success in all areas of life, our Learning and Creative Engagement initiatives offer various points of entry in school, on stage, and online.

RCDC PARTNERSHIP JOURNEY OF THE DRUM

Actors Theatre of Louisville partnered with River City Drum Corp — a renowned Louisville cultural institution with a mission to enhance the development of African American families with children through education, arts, and culture - to share *Journey of the Drum*, a show that explores the drum's history and cultural significance from Africa to Louisville, KY. An annual staple of RCDC's programming, this year's production applied Actors Theatre of Louisville's New Voices storytelling workshop techniques to dig deeper into the narrative aspects of the production. It was directed by Actors Theatre of Louisville's Director of Learning and Creative Engagement, Erica Denise, and choreographed by Line Producer Kavin Moore.



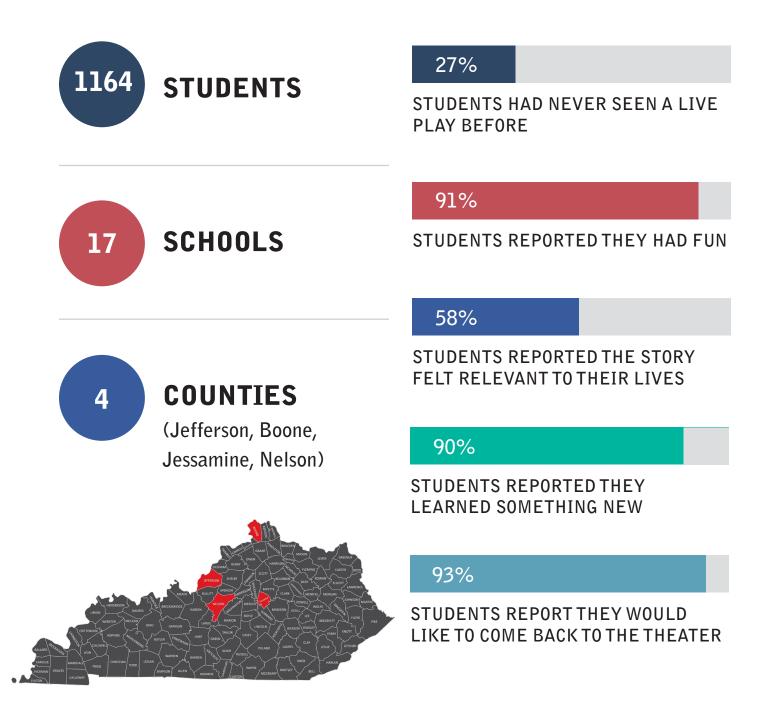
Journey of the Drum performed by students. Photo by Kavin Moore.

34

STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN JOURNEY OF THE DRUM

STUDENT MATINEES

Student matinees create opportunities for young people to see professional theatre at no cost to the families. Amid widespread cuts to arts education in schools, student matinees also enhance classroom education with dynamic storytelling that engages students' creative minds. Educators and students receive a custom study guide with each performance that highlights important cultural context and additional resources.



"I WOULD COME BACK EVERY DAY IF POSSIBLE" - Dracula student audience member

"The girls ATE THE PLAY UP AND LEFT no CRUMBS." – Dracula student audience member

"All the information presented was about things that happened/are happening in our society today. This opened my eyes and helped me realize that all of the issues happening today rest in my hands and my generation as we are the future."

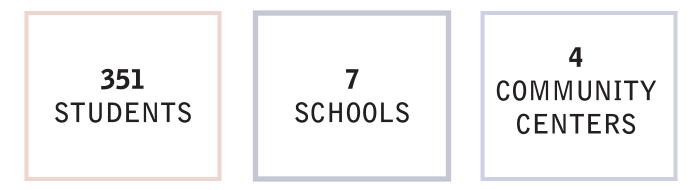
> - Party People student audience member

"It was really inspirational and inspired me to be myself and do something with the law like probably be the first woman president."

- FANNIE student audience member

RESIDENCIES

Actors Theatre of Louisville teaching artists offer a range of classroom residencies, inperson and virtually, focused on engaging students' creative self-expression, building storytelling skills, and instilling confidence.



RACIAL EQUITY INSTITUTE TRAINING

The staff and board of Actors Theatre of Louisville participated in training with the Racial Equity Institute, an alliance of trainers, organizers, and institutional leaders who have devoted themselves to the work of creating racially equitable organizations and systems. The Racial Equity Institute helps individuals and organizations develop tools to challenge patterns of power and grow equity.



Phase 1: REI's two-day training designed to develop the capacity of participants to better understand racism in its institutional and structural forms.

Latinx Challenges: A two-day workshop for people who live in or work with Latinx communities and are interested in ending racial disparities in our institutions and working together for social justice.

"The deep dive into understanding how systems and institutions have been built to oppress many and empower others gives me a sharper critical analysis of how those dynamics show up everywhere, and how capitalism and enslavement have been intertwined from the beginning. I hope that this analysis will help me to interrogate assumptions/ existing systems and support work toward creating more equitable frameworks, and to better find the language to explain why this is essential. Also, the time spent together in conversation gave me a window into my colleagues' experiences navigating both privileged and marginalized identities; I hope this perspective will make me a more thoughtful and informed co-worker."

- Training Participant

"I think one of my biggest takeaways was how the construction of whiteness as a privileged racial category has decimated (and continues to hinder) the possibility of poor and working-class people across cultural backgrounds joining together in solidarity. Also, the comprehensive historical context offered in the Latinx Challenges workshop was invaluable -it's shameful how dominant educational and historical narratives are shaped to erase what has happened, and I was grateful for the chance to dig in and learn more."

- Training Participant

100% of participants who responded to the post-engagement survey reported that they agree that "after participating in the REI training, I feel better prepared to foster an anti-racist, antioppressive environment at Actors Theatre of Louisville."

"I have a deeper understanding of historical implications surrounding the construction of race in the Americas. Learning more about this also makes me want to dig further into more continued education about the construct and implications of race in our society."

- Training Participant

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU FOR BEING A PART OF THE **STORYTELLING (R)EVOLUTION**

Learn more about Actors Theatre of Louisville at Actors Theatre.org







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