

MISSION

The Erie Playhouse Mission is to engage, educate, and entertain patrons and volunteers with theatrical productions ranging from classical to contemporary; train the next generation of artists and advocates; provide meaningful educational programs that serve the entire community, regardless of background or socio-economic status; and celebrate the power of the performing arts to impact personal and community growth.



ERIE PLAYHOUSE • 13 WEST 10TH STREET • ERIE, PA 16501 • 814.454.2852 • WWW.ERIEPLAYHOUSE.ORG



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Playhouse Family,

This past season has spanned a wonderfully diverse palette of plays and musicals, and you have been with us the whole way. You grew up with MATILDA, came of age with SPRING AWAKENING, tapped your toes on 42nd STREET, and fell in love alongside William Shakespeare himself in SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE. Let me thank you from the bottom of my heart for coming with us on this journey and helping us to create these colorful characters and beautiful stories!

Despite this last season's immense and numerous artistic successes, it also brought about considerable financial challenges. There were some unanticipated expenditures still lingering from our recent renovations and a large change to the funding model used by our wonderful partners at Erie Arts and Culture. These changes to the funding model, while largely for the better, altered the schedule of the distribution of funding, making it impossible for us to include that funding as part of our fiscal year, combining with other minor setbacks to create a perfect storm.

With that said, our difficulties extend to something a bit beyond the financial. As you are all undoubtedly aware, attendance to the theatre on a national scale has dwindled. We attribute this largely to a cultural shift in the way this country is consuming entertainment and the way we choose to spend our leisure time. With the continuing boom of streaming services like Netlfix and now Disney+, access to on-demand entertainment has never been easier. Additionally, the average family's schedule is becoming more and more hectic, and it has become rarer to have a free night to spend "out-on-the-town. Budgets are always getting tighter too and all of this makes getting to the theatre harder and harder for the average person to accomplish, let alone an entire family! We acknowledge these hurdles and will strive to make them non-existent for you by listening and working with you to give you what you want and need to make it possible to attend the shows you want to see!

Through your continued dedication and support, we will adapt to our changing cultural landscape and strive to make the arts accessible to every person in our community. We will aim to demonstrate that nothing compares to seeing a story unfold with real, tangible people living it right before your eyes. And of course, with your support, we'll continue to take on the responsibility of introducing the joy of creation, collaboration, and storytelling to a new generation of children and young adults through participation in live theatre.

Thank you so much for your continued support and faith in our mission. We cannot express how grateful we are for everything you do for this organization and this community. We look forward to all the great things we'll accomplish together in this coming season and every season to follow.

All my best,

Kate Neubert-Lechner

SUSTAINING YOUR COMMUNITY THEATRE ANNUAL FUND

ive theatre is a celebration of creativity, collaboration, culture and community. Ticket revenues cover only a fraction of the production costs. Like many community theatres, we rely on the support of our generous community of patrons to help bridge that gap. Last year the annual fund drive raised \$155,471 of its \$192,200 goal. 291 donors helped us raise \$59,588.92 toward this total on Erie Gives Day. Several factors contributed to this shortfall: life-changing circumstances to several generous patrons; volatile stock market, especially in December; and the new tax law, which reduced the tax incentives of giving for many households, especially those in the middle class. Our sincerest gratitude goes out to Jim, Wendy, Maggie and Emily Bahm for their intrepid leadership throughout this campaign.



For every \$25 donation on **Erie Gives**, patrons were entered into a drawing for two tickets to HADESTOWN with a backstage tour plus two tickets to AIN'T TOO PROUD, provided by Mike Karns and Marathon Digital. Congratulations to winners Emy and Gary Dougan, Playhouse season ticket holders.

A MESSAGE FROM BEN AND SHARI LONGO

2019-2020 ANNUAL FUND CHAIRS

Our family is very honored and excited to be asked to chair the Annual Fund for the 2019-2020 season of The Erie Playhouse!

As life-long Erie residents we consider ourselves extremely lucky and fortunate to have grown up in a town with such a fantastic community theater. Admittedly, the theater and stage took a little longer to take root with us...we love going to shows but the natural talent for acting just isn't there. Luckily, our daughter Meghan attended an Erie Playhouse Summer Youtheater camp when

she was eight years old, and voila, that's all it took!

While Meghan loves being on stage, we spend our time volunteering out front, often as ushers and Playbill stuffers.

Six years and twelve shows later, our family just can't imagine not being a part of this amazing group of talented individuals. Theater has become such an important part of our lives, and we are extremely thankful for The Erie Playhouse. We are honored to be able to give back to a place that has given us so much!

We look forward to an exciting year and hope that you all are able to enjoy everything that the Erie Playhouse has to offer!

Yours sincerely,

Ben, Shari and Meghan Longo



Shari, Meghan and Ben Longo

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GRANTS RECEIVED FISCAL YEAR 2019

American Tinning and Galvanizing Company – Neighborhood Assistance Program for PLAYtime

Erie Arts and Culture – Programming and Operations

Erie Community Foundation Hovis Fund – Camp Scholarships

Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority – Lead Asset Sustainability and Programming

Erie Insurance - Neighborhood Assistance Program for PLAYtime

Henry A. and Mary J. MacDonald Foundation – Facilities

PA Council of the Arts – Programming and Professional Development

Schuster Re-Grant Initiative – Arts Accessibility

United Way of Erie County - PLAYtime

UPMC Health Plan – Neighborhood Assistance Program for PLAYtime

Pictures from Season 35: 1951-52



Strange Bedfellows
The Man
The Second Man
The Gentle People
The Glass Menagerie

BERNICE FRYER A SEASON TICKET HOLDER SINCE 1951

A special thank you to Bernice Fryer, our oldest season ticket holder at 98, for supporting the Erie Playhouse since 1951. She and her husband bought their first season tickets in 1951 during Newell Tarrant's tenure when the Playhouse performed at the West 7th Street Theatre and the leads were professional actors. She remembers watching Ann B. Davis in more than one production. Bernice says, "The shows and the acting are every bit as good today as they were back then with the professionals." With a laugh she told us that "some shows she liked, some not so much, but they were all worth seeing."

FINANCIAL REPORT

REVENUE FALLS SHORT OF GOALS

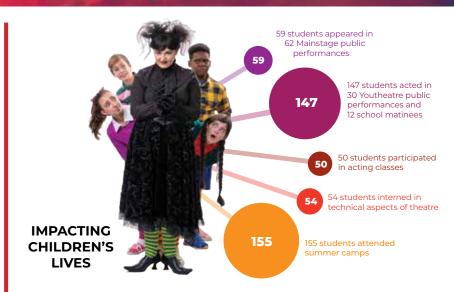
Despite our artistic successes, we did have financial challenges this season, resulting in a loss for the year. Various factors can be pointed at including softness in the annual fund drive, unexpected facility expenditures, reduced income from Erie Arts and Culture as they restructure their funding disbursement schedule, and increased entertainment options. National studies indicate that the way we consume entertainment as a society is shifting with the vast options for streaming at home, providing challenges for theatres across the nation as they work to continue to attract audiences.

Obviously, our financial results are not acceptable or sustainable and in response we are seeking funding to hire a Business Consulting Group to work with us to develop a new Strategic Plan to set exciting yet realistic goals for the future. So many circumstances have changed since our last strategic plan in 2006 that an annual update is no longer viable. If you would like to be involved in this process, please contact Kate Neubert-Lechner at 814.454.2852 ext. 7 or at kate@erieplayhouse.org and we will be pleased to put you on a committee.



*Salaries and benefits included in relevant categories (marketing, production, etc.)

Our audited 990s are available on our website at erieplayhouse.org



EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT TAX CREDIT

For more information on the application process and how your business can support the Erie Playhouse through EITC, please contact Teri Marshall at 814.454.2852, ext. 4.

Thank you for supporting our innovative Educational Improvement Tax Credit programs in fiscal year 2019.

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Marquette Savings Bank
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UPMC Diversified Services

2018-2019 FUND DRIVE PATRONS

WE COULD NOT EXIST WITHOUT YOU

We gratefully acknowledge our generous donors whose gifts helped us to deliver high quality theatrical productions and educational programming to the Erie community. A special thank you goes out to the 197 new donors who joined our family and to the 86 donors who gave above and beyond their Annual Gift. We are so grateful for all of you and feel so thankful to be able to work for an organization that has such devoted friends.

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(\$2.500+)

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THE HEART OF THE ERIE PLAYHOUSE OUR VOLUNTEERS

orty-six years ago, Tim Roche told me that the Frie Playhouse needed a drummer for the upcoming children's production of THE WIZARD OF OZ at the old theatre in Weslevville, I said, "Sure, When does it open?" He replied, "Thursday." I should mention that he called the Monday before the show opened! The other drummer had to bail at the last minute. So I played for my first show in 1973, and except for about a year and a half period when I was working nights while in college, I never left.



Jim Griffey

That phone call changed my life. I met my bride of 31 years through the Erie Playhouse. 'Nuff said! Playing for the Erie Playhouse has broadened my musical palate. As a self-taught musician, I treasure all the opportunities that I have had to play with so many amazing musicians who have taught me much.

By Jim Griffey

y daughter Tess, Kate, and Halloween brought us to the Erie Playhouse!

While we were trick-or-treating, we ran into Kate. I knew her through our daughters, but I didn't know she was the Youtheatre Director! I was telling her about Tess's experience in SOUND OF MUSIC, and she invited Tess and my other daughter Erin to



Lisa and Chris Callaghan

audition for JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH. She told me I'd love it and my kids would love it too. The Erie Playhouse was a family like no other. She wasn't wrong on any account!

My girls have either been in or involved in (crew, lights, etc.) every Youtheatre show since. I've met amazing, talented children, great parents and now we're starting to work crew for the Mainstage and the family is enlarging!

I truly believe that our involvement as a family has brought us closer. I've watched my children blossom into confident young women who are able to speak in public, stand in front of a group and speak (school) and hold their own in a discussion. And as a backstage mom, I'm humbled by the talent, compassion and camaraderie of the children in every single play.

Youtheatre is truly theatre for children by children. I can't thank the supporting staff enough for teaching every part of the production: sound board, stage management, lighting, etc.

By Lisa Callaghan

first got started at the Erie Playhouse in high school when my friend, Ethan Craig, encouraged me to work stage crew for KISS ME, KATE in 2016. One of my most memorable experiences was moving from backstage to onstage for FREAKY FRIDAY this past summer. The bond I forged with everyone involved in that show gave me back a sense of confidence that I hadn't realized I was missing. I am where I am today, studying to receive a BFA in Stage Management from Boston University, because of my Playhouse family.



Nicole Schneelock

By Nicole Schneelock

thank God every day for the Erie Playhouse family. My involvement with the Playhouse began when my daughter SaNae auditioned for a Youtheatre show. My first impression was how welcoming and supportive everyone was and how they accepted SaNae and me. From that moment forward, our lives were forever changed. I went through a horrible divorce and being able to go to the Playhouse for her rehearsals and performances made me feel



Colette and SaNae Stephens

like I was important and useful. It also brought my daughter

out of her depression and made her feel loved and special. My most beautiful memory is watching my daughter take center stage for the opening number in her first lead role in LION KING. I was so proud and emotional that I cried tremendously from start to finish. We feel so loved and blessed to be members of the Erie Playhouse family.

By Colette Stephens

SaNae has performed in 13 Youtheatre shows. FREAKY FRIDAY is her 6th Mainstage show.

uring my sophomore year of high school, my stage manager, Steven George, told me that the stage manager at the Erie Playhouse needed crew members for CLYBOURNE PARK. He wanted to know if I'd be interested. I said, "Yes," and Julie Lokahi never let me leave again! I've met so many wonderful people and had so many amazing memories, but my favorite day was my 17th birthday when my friends dragged me on stage so that everyone could sing to me. I felt so loved and like I belonged.



Lilium Pierce

The Erie Playhouse is so incredibly important to me! Because of the Playhouse I have decided to apply to theatre colleges for Stage Management rather than history as I had planned my whole life. Before the Playhouse I had never had a best friend, and now I do. It is a spectacular centerpiece of this small city, and I am so thankful to be a part of it.

By Lilium Pierce



MAINSTAGE and YOUTHEATRE

WHAT A SEASON WE JUST HAD!

While our musicals continue to be our best sellers, our straight plays continue to struggle. AND we are no exception. According to Alexis Soloski in "Why are traditional plays struggling to attract crowds on Broadway?," even plays that "collected a stack of Tony nominations such as A DOLL'S HOUSE and THE GLASS MENAGERIE, which had the star power of Sally Fields, fill less than half their seats." So why do we produce plays? The answer is simple. Plays provide a different type of challenge to our actors and audiences.

Here is our year by the numbers!

Ticket Sales

2016-2017 34,990 2017-2018 31,356 2018-2019 32,811

Sponsorships

2016-2017 \$100,000 2017-2018 \$126,00 2018-2019 \$144,500





Ticket & Sponsorship Revenue: \$62,899 Production Expenses: \$36,183 Performances: 11 Attendance: 3,698 Percent Capacity: 77%





Miss Nelson is Missing!

YOUTHEATRE

Ticket & Sponsorship Revenue: \$25,937 Production Expenses: \$25,620 Performances: 8 public/4 school matinees Attendance: 2,680 Percent Capacity: 51%









Terms of Endearment

Ticket & Sponsorship Revenue: \$32,529 Production Expenses: \$16,097

Performances: 11 Attendance: 1,305 Percent Capacity: 27%



Ticket & Sponsorship Revenue: \$106,330

Production Expenses: \$44,627 Performances: 16

Attendance: 5,389 Percent Capacity: 65%



Ticket & Sponsorship Revenue: \$33,180

Production Expenses: \$15,211

Performances: 8 public/4 school matinees

Attendance: 3,214 Percent Capacity: 62%













EVITA

Ticket & Sponsorship Revenue: \$64,801 Production Expenses: \$29,555 Performances: 11 Attendance: 3,363 Percent Capacity: 70%





Ticket & Sponsorship Revenue: \$41,356 Production Expenses: \$25,911 Performances: 11 Attendance: 1.711

Percent Capacity: 37%



Ticket & Sponsorship Revenue: \$33,421 Production Expenses: \$16,050 Performances: 8 public/4 school matinees Attendance: 2,946 Percent Capacity: 52%













Ticket & Sponsorship Revenue: \$44,438 Production Expenses: \$27,478

Performances: 11 Attendance: 2138 Percent Capacity: 45%



Ticket & Sponsorship Revenue: \$38,861 Production Expenses: \$17,996

Performances: 11 Attendance: 1,786 Percent Capacity: 37%



Ticket & Sponsorship Revenue: \$68,600 Production Expenses: \$27,056

Performances: 11 Attendance: 3,476 Percent Capacity: 73%







BUILDING LITERACY IN THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE "ART" OF STORYTELLING

PLAYtime is our Pre-K program designed to engage the **SAME** three to five year olds over a three-year span for the greatest impact. It uses Imagination Library books as core resources and consists of two thirty-minute periods, twice a week for three eight-week sessions. Its distinctiveness comes from the use of the arts as a vehicle for the experience.



27 Collaborating Classrooms: Downtown YMCA, City Center Early Connections, St. Martins' Center, St. Benedicts Day, Sarah Reed Hamilton Campus Care Center, Barber National Institute, and Edison, McKinley, Diehl, Harding, Pfeiffer-Burleigh and Perry Elementary Schools.

96 Teachers Touched

726 Children Challenged

1296 Victorious Visits

When the school year ends, students can still visit PLAYtime downtown in our community! New last summer was PLAYtime in the PARK. Each Wednesday, PLAYtime staff presented a 45-minute PLAYtime session in the park-like setting adjacent to the Erie Art Museum.



PLAYtime Musical

Each year, in cooperation with the Imagination Library for Erie County, we present a musical based on an Imagination Library book. This year we produced PRETEND by Jennifer Plecas and presented three free performances on Saturday, April 13. After each performance, we offered interactive literacy-building activities for parents and their children as part of our "Parent & Me" programming.

PLAYtime is made possible by the generous support of the United Way of Erie County, our Neighborhood Assistance Program partners:

American Tinning, Erie Insurance and UPMC Health Plan and the Erie Downtown Development Corporation.

PLANNED GIVING

ENSURING THE FUTURE OF THE ERIE PLAYHOUSE

BEQUESTS

The simplest way to make a planned gift is to name the Erie Playhouse in your will. You can make a bequest of a certain dollar amount, a particular piece of property, a percentage of your estate, or a "residual" (what is left after making specific provisions for loved ones).

GIFTS FROM LIFE INSURANCE OR RETIREMENT PLANS

Another option is to name the Erie Playhouse as a beneficiary of your life insurance or retirement plan. When the original purpose for such plans no longer applies – such as to educate children now grown or to provide financial security for a spouse – these assets can be redirected to help support a cause you value.

GIFTS THAT PAY YOU INCOME

If you would like to support our mission and receive steady payments during your retirement years, a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust may be right for you.

If you would like to discuss supporting the Erie Playhouse in perpetuity with a planned gift, please contact Kate Neubert-Lechner at 814.454.2852 ext. 7 or kate@erieplayhouse.org.

DR. DORIS SNELL AWARD

LEGENDARY LOVE OF THEATRE

Congratulations to Linda Wingerter and Gary Daugherty, who received the Dr. Doris Snell Award in 2017 and 2018 respectively. The award is named after its first recipient, Dr. Doris Snell, whose commitment to her education, community, and love of theatre is legendary. Linda and Gary are long-time performers who embody the spirit of this award. Past recipients include Bob Martin, Judy Matthews, Roberta Stoughton, and Michael Malthaner.







Gary Daugherty

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY THEATRE

efore December 8, 2018, I don't think I ever truly understood the power of community theatre; and I have been performing on stage for over 30 years.

My whole family of four was in the cast of MATILDA at the Erie Playhouse, which opened on December 6, 2018. Our daughters, Hadleigh and Haven, had been very active in the Erie Playhouse Youtheatre for several years, and my husband and I watched every show from the audience, handing out programs at nearly every Youtheatre performance since SNOW QUEEN (2016). We never imagined that we would be on stage with our daughters.

I have a degree in theatre and communication arts from Gannon University, so I have always had a passion for the stage. It didn't take much convincing to persuade me to audition for the mainstage production of OKLAHOMA! in 2017, and I was cast alongside both of my daughters. My husband, Paul, was planning to help with stage crew. But, when a fellow cast member had to bow out of his role, Paul stepped into the ensemble. He had never done a show before, and that was all he needed to be bitten by the theatre bug. Since OKLAHOMA!, our family of four has also performed together in ANNIE (2017) and MATILDA (2018).

We had two opening-weekend performances of MATILDA under our belts, and we were excited to get back onstage for the Saturday night show. Instead, Paul woke up Saturday morning with a terrible headache that scared me enough to call an ambulance. I arrived at St. Vincent's shortly after the ambulance, and I was immediately rushed into his ER room, where the doctor told me that Paul had a brain aneurysm that had ruptured. His prognosis was grim. He needed surgery immediately, and that had to be done in Pittsburgh.

Three agonizingly long hours later, we boarded the helicopter to Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh. When we got there, the

news did not improve. The surgeon told me that it was unlikely that Paul would live, and if he did, he would almost certainly be altered in some way. The surgeon talked about the strong likelihood of physical disabilities, mental disabilities, and personality changes. The odds on his survival with no ill effects were nearly non-existent. Our lives would never be the same.

This was the worst day of our lives...but this is where the kindness started. During



The Bills Family

that three-hour wait for the helicopter, the Erie Playhouse was already taking care of our family. Kate started a Go Fund Me page for our family, and people were already donating and reaching out to us before we even got off the ground in Erie. One of our OKLAHOMA! cast mates, Ian Brady, was a student at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, and he showed up during those first few lonely hours in a Pittsburgh hospital waiting room, bringing food, games, and eventually, keys to his apartment so the girls and I would have a place to stay during Christmas week. So many of our friends from the Erie Playhouse made the drive to Pittsburgh to see us, and many others took care of the girls while I was in Pittsburgh with Paul by giving them rides, dinners, and taking them home for more than a few Youtheatre sleepovers to help cheer them up.

The show must go on...even Paul knew that, because he told the EMTs in the ambulance that he had a performance at the Erie Playhouse that night, so he really needed to get back in time for call. Paul had a

big solo in the opening number of the show as the doctor who delivers the baby Matilda. Later in the show, his character had to speak Russian. It was a lot to learn, and by the time Haven told Richard what was going on, someone in the cast had about six hours to learn all of Paul's solos, lines, and learn a scene in another language. Incredibly, Michael Hipwell and Ryan Ingram played Paul's roles, starting with that first Saturday night.

After several surgeries, a permanent placement of a drainage shunt in his brain, long stretches of terrifyingly high blood pressure, and severe pain that I can't even comprehend, Paul survived. Against all odds, he not only survived, but he is still the same person he was before this nightmare. He does all the things I was told he might never do again, like walking, talking, speaking. I should have known when he kept shouting his lines in Russian from his ICU bed that he might actually beat this, but instead I just told him to stop shouting in Russian because the nurses might think he's suffered a stroke.

He did not get to return to the stage in MATILDA, but he did make it back in time to perform in SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE, just three short months after his near-death experience. And to think that twelve hours before the aneurysm ruptured and nearly killed him, Paul was on stage with our friends in MATILDA; singing a solo in a song titled, "Miracle." I don't think that was a coincidence.

The greatest outpouring of love, support, kindness, and generosity that I have ever experienced came primarily from our Erie Playhouse family. I could never thank you all enough for everything you did to support us during that awful time, and I don't think any of us could have survived without our extended theatre family. The Erie Playhouse is Community Theatre, in the very best and truest sense of those words.

By Shani Bills

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE PLAYHOUSE:

THE PLAYHOUSE

42nd Street, the last show in the 2019 fiscal year, was the 1,343rd production.

PERFORMANCE LOCATIONS

1916-1919 Reed Hotel

1919-1927 Keystone Brass Foundry

1927-1965 West 7th Street Theatre and Beachcomber Summer Tent

Theatre

1965-1974 Penn Theatre

1974-1983 Cathedral Prep, Fairview High School, Gannon University,

Iroquois Jr./Sr. High School, McDowell Intermediate, Mercyhurst University, Perry Square, Unitarian Society, Warner Theatre, Empty Store Front on West 7th Street

1983 Erie Playhouse, 13 West 10th Street

EXECUTIVE MANAGERS/DIRECTORS

1916-1941 Henry Vincent

1942-1945 Guest Directors & Dark Years World War II

1945-1962 Newell Tarrant

1962-1972 Bill Cohen 1972-1972 Jerry Brace

1972-2006 David Matthews

2006-2017 Almitra Clerkin

2017... Kate Neubert-Lechner

During the Newell Tarrant era, the Erie Playhouse was a professional theatre. Some of the "eventually" bigger names that appeared on our stage were Ann B. Davis, Rue McLanahan, Jerry Stiller, Frank Langella, Vic Morrow and Dom Deluise.

2018-2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Paul Bills, Wing Michael Burns Sonya Byes

Thomas D. Corso

Dale DeMarco, Treasurer

Ken Dias

Bonnie Fagan, *Wing*Bradley Fox, *Vice President*

Kristen Fry

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ERIE PLAYHOUSE WING

13 WEST 10TH STREET

ERIE, PA 16501

814.454.2852

Non-Profit Organization U.S. Postage PAID Erie, PA Permit No. 732

2018-2019 STAFF

Sam Brady, Scenic & Lighting Design Charles Corritore, Business Manager Crystal Corritore, Costume Assistant Kelly Craig, Marketing/Social Media Director Brendan Daugherty, Scenic Assistant Richard Davis, Producing Director Domenic DelGreco, Youtheatre Director Karen Etter, Box Office Assistant Ryan Ingram, Costume Designer Maeve Kirby, PLAYtime Facilitator Julie Lokahi, Scene Shop Manager Carolin Lynn, Box Office Manager Teri Marshall, Development/Season Ticket Manager Karen Nasca, PLAYtime Facilitator Kate Neubert-Lechner, Executive Director Angela Pulling, House Manager Andrew Rainbow, Music Director

Trisha Yates, Education/Outreach Coordinator

Shaun Salchi, Maintenance

Sponsored by:









