Village Theatre’s 40th Anniversary Season was unlike any we have encountered before. The coronavirus pandemic forced us to shut down operations during our run of She Loves Me in Everett, and on opening night of Hansel & Gretl & Heidi & Günter in Issaquah. We also had to stop in-person KIDSTAGE classes and productions. Nevertheless, we are so proud of what we were able to accomplish before and despite the shutdown.

The mainstage season began with the most audience participation seen on our stages in quite some time with The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. We learned just how smart our patrons are—and boy, can they spell! Guys & Dolls and She Loves Me brought Golden Age musicals to life, and although Hansel & Gretl & Heidi & Günter never saw its official world premiere, the development this new musical received at Village Theatre was remarkable. Village Originals gave us one of the most thought-provoking Beta productions to date, XY, which also led to new partnerships and community engagement.

KIDSTAGE students shined brightly from classes to youth productions and even starred in our mainstage shows. They continued to shine as the pandemic hit: our Youth Education staff quickly moved KIDSTAGE classes and summer camps to Zoom and will continue online until in-person classes are once again safe. As gathering restrictions continued through the fiscal year, we met our patrons online in Facebook happy hours and on Zoom for backstage parties and maintained connection with our new Scene Change e-newsletter.

When the world closed down, Village Theatre patrons opened up to support their theatre in so many ways, and we are grateful for supporters like you who are helping carry us through this difficult time. We are pleased to share that several substantial gifts have allowed our Board of Directors to designate a reserve fund to sustain the Theatre through the COVID crisis and emerge a strong organization on the other side. We are heartened by the generosity of our donors and forever thankful for the many subscribers and ticket buyers who donated their canceled tickets back to us.

We hope you enjoy a look back at our 40th Anniversary Season. You—our patrons, subscribers, and supporters—are a vital part of Village Theatre, and we could not do this without you.

Robb Hunt
Executive Producer

Jerry Dixon
Artistic Director

Can you name all of the shows on the front cover? Visit villagetheatre.org/annualreport for the answers and photo credits.
A GLORIOUS, IF CURTAILED, 40TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Before COVID-19 closures, Village Theatre successfully mounted 220 performances of three musicals, with behind-the-scenes work well underway (or even completed) for two more productions. We were honored to serve more than 17,000 subscribers and 74,356 total attendees, including 3,238 students.

The 2019–2020 mainstage season opened with The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, a delightful twist on the underdog story trope: all of the characters are underdogs reveling in the joy of self-discovery and the community of fellow enthusiasts for their very specific hobby. Associate Artistic Director Brandon Ivie directed this show—the first professional production of Spelling Bee in the Seattle area—featuring a majority BIPOC cast. Each performance included four audience volunteers, who joined the actors on stage as guest spellers in our “perfectly cast, exuberant production” (Seattle Spotlight) that Broadway World dubbed a “M-U-S-T S-E-E!” Spelling Bee also marked a special milestone for our beloved Master Scenic Artist, Julia B. Franz: her 125th mainstage show and 26th season at Village Theatre.

A grand production of Golden Age favorite Guys & Dolls followed our opening contemporary musical. Veteran performer Billie Wildrick (most recently Sally Bowles in Cabaret) made her Village Theatre directorial debut, bringing a unique perspective to the show: Wildrick played Miss Adelaide at another Seattle theatre in 2011. Wildrick, choreographer Nikki Long (also making her Village debut), music director Julia Thornton, and the multi-talented cast of 22 made musical theatre magic with a gender-bending trio of tinhorns and a dynamic ensemble cast that “pull[ed] ed out all the stops” (Daily Record News) to create “the perfect haven for those looking to lose themselves in the wonderful world of Guys & Dolls” (Drama in the Hood).
COVID-19 IMPACT

Our mainstage new musical, Hansel & Gretel & Heidi & Günter, was just 24 hours away from its world premiere. The scenery was built, costumes were completed, mouthwatering prop dumplings and tarts waited in the wings, and the cast left their hearts on the stage at a preview the night before public gathering restrictions were announced. This contemporary sequel to the familiar fairy tale was directed by Village Theatre Artistic Director Jerry Dixon and featured eight professional-caliber youth performers in lead and supporting roles, including many KIDSTAGE participants.

Although our final mainstage production, The Wedding Singer, was canceled with a bit more notice, preparations were well underway when the shutdown hit. Production work begins 14 months before the first performance, so the scenic and costume shops were bursting with design sketches, half-built sets, and plenty of 1980s shoulder pads. Rehearsals would have started April 7 for a May 7 opening night in Issaquah.

The new year rang in a lesser produced but equally charming gem, She Loves Me, with Taproot Theatre Company Artistic Director Karen Lund making her Village Theatre mainstage directing debut. Says Lund: “Set in the 1930s, a time of scarcity, upheaval, and unrest for many in the world, She Loves Me reveals the truth about what little it takes to be happy. Our heroes are ordinary people [who] long for love, stability, and connection.” Lush updated orchestrations, an exquisite set that opened like a jewel box to reveal the central perfumery, and gorgeous period costumes designed by Costume Shop Manager Esther Garcia breathed new life into our production that “captures everything that’s magnificent about this show” (Broadway World). We only wish She Loves Me had been able to complete its run; as the pandemic intensified and Washington state issued stay-at-home orders, the final two weeks of Everett performances were unfortunately canceled.
EXCITING WORK CONTINUES

Our new works program, Village Originals, is one of the most comprehensive developmental pipelines for expanding the musical theatre canon. Whether writers have the first spark of an idea, a draft that needs to be read aloud and revised, or a show ready for audience feedback, Village Theatre’s artist-centric process allows for a tailored approach that gives each piece its best next step. For 2019–2020, Village Originals had planned two Issaquah residencies, two New York readings, two developmental “Beta” productions, and our 20th annual Festival of New Musicals.

RESIDENCIES

The Writers’ Residency program is for scripts that are not yet completed, or sometimes even begun. This early support aims to give authors dedicated, focused time to develop their ideas, generate material, and test drafts of scenes and songs with professional actors while receiving constant feedback and dramaturgical support.

In November 2019, Village Theatre produced a week-long residency for Miss Step by Melissa Li and Kit Yan. This heartfelt ‘80s dance musical comedy was previously conceived in development with Village in 2017 in our At the Table program, which focuses on writers and stories from underrepresented communities. Miss Step features a transgender/non-binary (TGNB) cast in a classic underdog story that portrays TGNB characters as both ordinary and extraordinary people, led by a middle-aged trans woman protagonist who tries to connect with the memory of her late father when she discovers his secret career as a professional step aerobics competitor.

NEW YORK READINGS

Our team spends a few months every year in New York City (NYC) scouting for new projects to bring back to Village for further development. In October 2019, Johnny and the Devil’s Box—a bluegrass/country musical by fiddle player Douglas Waterbury Tieman, loosely based on the 1979 Charlie Daniels Band song “The Devil went Down to Georgia”—had an exploratory table reading in NYC with invited industry guests. In January 2020, Village Theatre produced a table read of a new draft of The Homefront by Sam Salmond and Jenny Stafford, which was part of our 2018 Festival of New Musicals and 2019 Beta Series. The NYC reading focused on centering the narrative of female factory workers fighting to keep their jobs as soldiers return from World War II.

BETA PRODUCTIONS

2019–2020 marked the fourth year of Village Theatre’s Beta productions, an unparalleled platform for writers to see their musical fully designed, staged, and performed for an audience while continuing to make adjustments, even throughout the performance run. Beta shows are produced at our First Stage Theatre in Issaquah, with intentionally simple production designs to allow the team to make changes without worrying about complicated mechanics. Audience feedback is key to the process; there are talkbacks following each performance, as well as surveys distributed in hard copy and online.

We were able to produce only one Beta production this season, but what a powerful and uplifting new musical it was! JT, written by Oliver Houser and developed and directed by Hunter Bird, tells the story of an intersex man navigating his first romantic relationship while being haunted by his eleven-year-old self. During the February 2020 rehearsal and performance process, scenes and songs were cut (one character was even completely cut for a performance before being restored at the next), timelines were revised, and a lot of staging was altered. It was a very busy and rewarding process: 818 people attended the show and Village Theatre forged exciting new partnerships with Seattle Rep, which has continued development; and InterACT, an intersex youth advocacy organization.

COVID-19 IMPACT

After its January 2020 NYC table read, The Homefront was scheduled for a week-long Issaquah residency in March and a Beta production run in June, both of which were canceled. The largest and most publicly visible Village Originals program is our Festival of New Musicals, which takes place annually in August. Five new musicals are presented in staged readings for audiences of Village Originals members and industry professionals from across the country. While we were disappointed to have to cancel this year’s Festival, which would have been our 20th, we look forward to its triumphant return in 2021.
YOUTH EDUCATION

SKILLS FOR THEATRE… SKILLS FOR LIFE
Village Theatre’s Youth Education programs serve young people, families, and teachers throughout the Puget Sound. KIDSTAGE programs are available to all, regardless of the ability to pay.

CLASSES AND CAMPS: VIRTUALLY UNSTOPPABLE
Village Theatre KIDSTAGE offers classes and camps year-round for students of all experience levels, PreK through age 20. Fall 2019 and Winter 2020 classes were held in person in both Issaquah and Everett, as usual, and served nearly 1,500 families. Spring saw the development of new online classes as a pilot for Summer 2020 virtual offerings, which were highly successful with more than 600 students participating. More than 250 students in year-long programs finished the school year in our dance and advanced musical theatre training programs (Institute and Pathway to Institute) using both live Zoom classes and recorded online education.

We are grateful to the Arakawa Family, The Boeing Company, and Hearst Foundations for their extraordinary support in general and specifically of our Young Innovators STEM initiatives. Along with our technical training program, this grant provided resources to integrate STEM into KIDSTAGE classes and our in-school residency program. We continued to work with the Youth Program Quality Initiative lab with a focus on Social Emotional Learning.

Perhaps most importantly, KIDSTAGE provided connection and belonging during a time of tremendous uncertainty and upheaval for students. Teaching artists received professional development on creating stimulating online programs, and Village Theatre Youth Education continued to offer a supportive community where students found hope and resilience in creativity, music, and human connection.

BY THE NUMBERS

15,315 youth experienced Village Theatre programs through KIDSTAGE or as audience members
3,158 students worked directly with professional artists, designers, and arts educators
18 average contact hours provided per student in KIDSTAGE classes, camps, and productions
27% of KIDSTAGE and Pied Piper students received scholarships, free tickets, or free tuition

KIDSTAGE PRODUCTIONS
In addition to classes and camps, KIDSTAGE produces ten musicals per year. Eight are directed and designed by theatre professionals and performed by youth; two are entirely student-driven with professional mentorship. Students participate in all areas of KIDSTAGE productions, including performance, directing, design, technical theatre, management, and more.

Three shows were rehearsed and performed in person: In the Heights (October 2019), A Christmas Story (December 2019), and the student-written new musical Out of Bounds (February 2020). 4,298 audience members attended these shows’ performances.

Five shows were in progress when pandemic restrictions began. Each developed its own hybrid in-person/online approach:

- Tuck Everlasting became a serialized multimedia radio play
- The team of Jasper in Deadland decided to instead create an original cabaret entitled How We Came to This about their quarantine experience
- With permission from composer Jason Robert Brown, 13 became a short film entitled Black Lives Matter: Inspired by 13 the Musical
- All That Glitters, another new musical written by students in our KIDSTAGE Originals program, is becoming a documentary about the show development process
- The Disney’s Aladdin Jr. team is creating an online performance-documentary hybrid

Our two SummerStock 2020 shows unfortunately had to be canceled. These are typically our largest, most elaborate KIDSTAGE productions with youth performing on the Francis J. Gaudette and Everett Performing Arts Center stages. We are hopeful that SummerStock will return in 2021.

PIED PIPER: THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES
Pied Piper is Village Theatre’s series of performances for young audiences, with complementary arts in education programming available before and after the show. This program brings literature to life for schools and the public at very affordable prices.

Prior to the pandemic, 7,290 students throughout King, Snohomish, and Island Counties joined their class or family to attend at least one of our three Pied Piper shows—The Rainbow Fish, The Snowy Day, and Miss Nelson Has a Field Day—in a theatre in Bellevue, Issaquah, or Everett. Two additional shows—We the People and Magic Tree House: Shakespeare—were canceled due to COVID-19. Village Theatre also presented two free sensory-friendly performances, made possible in part by funding from the Nysether Family Fund and the Everett Cultural Commission.

“A COVID has been hard… KIDSTAGE is great because even though we can’t be on stage, I can keep singing, dancing, and acting. I look forward to it all week.”
—Chloe, KIDSTAGE Student
The 2019–2020 Season was unlike anything Village Theatre has ever experienced. As a result of COVID-19 and at the government's direction, on March 12, 2020 Village Theatre was forced to cancel or postpone all performances, leading to a significant loss of operating revenues. We have laid off or furloughed production staff, reduced salaries and/or hours for remaining staff, and focused our efforts on fundraising.

Like so many others, we cannot reasonably estimate the duration of the pandemic and its total financial impact at this time. The shutdown caused ticket sales for fiscal year 2019–2020 to be 50% lower than the prior year. However, many patrons generously donated their unused tickets back to the theatre which lessened the revenue impact by allowing us to record $1,190,379 in ticket donations.

Despite the shutdown, Village Theatre continued to offer season tickets for our 2020–2021 season, which has shifted to a later start date. We were thrilled to have 8,700 loyal subscribers renew their subscriptions and are hopeful that our remaining subscribers from 2019–2020 will join us again when we are able to reopen.

Our KIDSTAGE program was able to shift its programming online during the pandemic. Online classes were offered throughout the spring and summer and KIDSTAGE found imaginative ways to keep students engaged and involved, despite the challenges of not being able to gather in person. Although tuitions declined 21% from the prior year, KIDSTAGE was successful in overcoming many challenges. Foremost, we kept KIDSTAGE kids engaged and provided a creative outlet during these stressful times.

The Pied Piper program faced many challenges this year. Though the program was slated to present five shows in Everett and Bellevue, one show in Everett was canceled due to snow and two were canceled in both Everett and Bellevue due to the pandemic. Due to the uncertainty of when schools will resume in-person classes and be able to book field trips, Pied Piper is on hiatus in 2020–2021.

The Village Originals program produced a powerful development production of *XY*; however, the much-loved Festival of New Musicals, normally scheduled for summer, was canceled due to the pandemic. The Village Originals team is working on providing online content in the coming year to keep patrons engaged and fulfill our mission to support the development of new musicals.

Total earned revenue from operations was down 44% from the prior year at $5.5 million, while operating contributed support was over $3.3 million thanks to the generous support of our patrons, foundations, and corporate and government partners. Additional donations allowed Village Theatre to create cash reserves that will be used to help the organization address the impacts of the pandemic. Operating expenses decreased 33% as layoffs, furloughs, salary cuts, reduced hours for staff, and other cost saving initiatives were implemented. These measures will remain in effect over the course of the pandemic.

In 2016, Village Theatre launched an endowment campaign as part of the Board’s long-term strategic plan for future financial stability. As of August 31, 2020, the endowment consists of donor-restricted and board-designated funds established for Village Originals, Youth Education, and operations. Our endowment goal is $14 million; the total value of the endowment fund as of August 31, 2020 was $1,500,611 which includes $983,556 of permanently restricted net assets, $437,471 of temporarily restricted accumulated unspent earnings, and $79,584 of board designated funds. In accordance with Village Theatre’s endowment spending policy, $32,933 was distributed from endowment earnings in 2020 to be used for operations. Adapting to the financial impact of pandemic-related restrictions has further demonstrated the value and importance of building this endowment.

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In celebrating Village Theatre’s 40th Anniversary we’ve enjoyed taking pause to celebrate the very special patrons who have been a part of our memorable journey and continue to show their support while our doors are temporarily closed due to the pandemic. Joan Watjen is one such supporter whose belief in our mission and message has had a profound impact on our mainstage productions. The Craig and Joan Watjen Technical Studios, where the work of hundreds of artisans (painters, welders, prop artisans, etc.) takes place in designing, creating, and painting the sets and props you love, exists thanks to their generous leadership. Although Craig is no longer with us, his legacy continues through every stroke of the paint brush and strike of the hammer. Thanks to Joan’s ongoing philanthropic leadership and her desire to leverage her giving to inspire others to consider their values, like she and Craig did, her generosity has created a ripple effect that continues to fortify our legacy during these lean times. She knows that, through proper planning, the legacy of love and care that you leave for your family, friends, and the causes you care about can be encouraging and even inspiring.

Joan Watjen stands with today’s new legacy gifts received in the 2019–2020 Season totaling $1,332,975, and by honoring all Village Guardian Legacy Society members who have made a gift in their will or trust.

CORPORATE, FOUNDATION, AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

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American Bank Foundation, Inc. / Benefit Community Impact Fund
The Arts Fund
Endowment Category

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Richard & Marianne Anderson • In Memory of Samuel D. Armstrong • The Bailey Family • Michael Bauer • Janet Pitts Beckmann & the Late George M. Beckmann

Kim Davis

Craig did, her generosity has created a ripple effect that continues to fortify our legacy during these lean times.

VILLAGE GUARDIAN LEGACY SOCIETY

Richard & Marianne Anderson • In Memory of Samuel D. Armstrong • The Bailey Family • Michael Bauer • Janet Pitts Beckmann & the Late George M. Beckmann • Alex & Heather Berry • L. Renee Briggs • The Estates of Robert W. & Lois H. Catterall • Bob & Ann Christensen • The Estate of Elaine & Phil Davis • The Emans

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We gratefully acknowledge our 2019-2020 season sponsors.

The magic will return!

MARY POPPINS, 2014 PHOTO: MARK KITAOKA

2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT