



2017/18
ANNUAL REPORT
Cygnet Theatre Company



Believing in the power of theatre to startle the soul, ignite debate and embrace the diversity of the community in which it serves, Cygnet Theatre Company is fearlessly committed to the dissection, examination and celebration of the human story through the medium of live theatre.



Season Sponsors

Bill and Judy Garrett, Dr. Ronald and Susan Heller, Leonard Hirsch, Kamaya Jane & Diane Zeps in Honor of their Mother Elaine Lipinsky, Terry O'Donnell, Pamela J. Wagner & Hans Tegebo, Carey Wall, Harvey and Sheryl White

The Legend of Georgia McBride (2017)

Cover: The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds (2017)



Dear friends,

Fifteen years of Cygnet, can you believe it? What a delicious season it was, filled with delightful variety, pure entertainment, and thought-provoking theatre. From the dark and twisted to no-holds-barred fun, it was all classic Cygnet!

The season started off with the stage anarchy of the Marx Brothers in *Animal Crackers*. In the fall we were pleased to re-introduce audiences to the Pulitzer Prize-winning classic about growing up, *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*. The next show was anything but a drag. Fun and fierce, *The Legend of Georgia McBride* taught us how to find our own voice. The holiday season was enhanced by what has become a San Diego favorite, *A Christmas Carol*. January brought royalty to the stage with the feminist re-imagining of Henry VIII and Katherine Parr in *The Last Wife*. In the spring we revived Sondheim's *A Little Night Music*. The season ended with the World Premiere of *The Wind and the Breeze* by Nathan Alan Davis.

The dedication of our staff, the creativity of our artists, and the continuing generosity of our donors made all this possible.

Bill Schmidt, Executive Director

Sean Murray, Artistic Director



MADCAP MUSICAL COMEDY

ANIMAL CRACKERS

Rooted in Vaudeville, the Marx Brothers were notorious for improvisation and spinning a script. Cygnet's version of *Animal Crackers* delighted and entertained patrons! Nine talented comedic actors played multiple roles at breakneck speed.

"Murray's presentation is a much-needed eye of enjoyment." -David Dixon, San Diego Story



LYRICAL FAMILY DRAMA

THE EFFECT OF GAMMA RAYS ON MAN-IN-THE-MOON MARIGOLDS

This Pulitzer Prize-winning play by former science teacher Paul Zindel moved critics and patrons alike. The show garnered Critics Circle Awards: DeAnna Driscoll won Outstanding Lead Performance in a Play for her riveting performance as Beatrice Hunsdorfer and Conor Martin Mulligan won for Outstanding Lighting Design. The play was also nominated for Scenic Design and received "Critics Choice" from the San Diego Reader.

"What's important is to give all due credit to Cygnet Theatre and director Rob Lutfy for bringing new life to a neglected classic" - Jim Hebert, San Diego Union Tribune



MUSIC-FILLED COMEDY

THE LEGEND OF GEORGIA MCBRIDE

Catty commentary, witty references, glam, and some spirited music and choreography made *The Legend of Georgia McBride* a flamboyantly fun comedy. It was nominated for two Critics Circle Awards, for Outstanding Featured Performance in a Play by David McBean and Best Costume Design by Jennifer Brawn Gittings. Cygnet partnered with Star 94.1 for the popular Girls Night Out Cygneture event!

"At Cygnet Theatre, Sean Murray directs a knockout cast, who lip-synch their guts out." -Pat Launer, Center Stage

A HOLIDAY TRADITION

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Dickens' tale of hope and redemption continues its popularity as a holiday favorite. This year marked our highest selling holiday show to date! Our fourth annual Family Day was a hit and featured a partnership with Gepetto's Toy Shop, a visit from Santa, cookie decorating, a coloring stations, and hot chocolate for everyone!

"A magical, tuneful escape." – Jim Hebert, San Diego Union Tribune



CONTEMPORARY ROYAL DRAMA

THE LAST WIFE

Strong women abound these days, thanks in part to those who came before us... trailblazers, innovators and unstoppable women like *The Last Wife's* Katherine Parr. Playwright Kate Hennig was in residence for rehearsals. We also partnered with AlliesforWomen.org to host two Unstoppable Women events: a mixer and a discussion, designed to connect women and create dialogue around issues that matter.

"A piece for all seasons and never more appropriate than now, when intelligent, unstoppable women will have their day." - Scene by Jenni Prisk



ENCHANTING MUSICAL ROMP

A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC

Cygnets was thrilled to revisit one of its favorite musicals, Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music*, which was a hit with critics and audiences in 2008, when it was the first show Cygnets produced at the Old Town Theatre. The 2018 production featured a diverse cast, and wowed audiences with its stunning melodies, including the ever popular, "Send in the Clowns," performed by Southern California treasure Karole Foreman. The Tony Award-winning musical is considered one of Sondheim's most beloved works.

"Murray's revisiting of A Little Night Music offers a touching experience...as satisfying as a theatre fan could hope for." - David Dixon, Talkin Broadway



STIRRING RHYTHMICAL DRAMA

THE WIND AND THE BREEZE

We closed the season with the World Premiere of *The Wind and The Breeze* by New York based playwright Nathan Alan Davis. This poetic, slice-of-life drama was part of The Bill and Judy Garrett Finish Line Commission in 2016, where it moved audiences with its humanity and humor. The playwright was in residence and our cast and design team went to Milwaukee Repertory Theatre to workshop the play. We partnered with Urban Beats and Boys to Men to engage younger audiences, and our growing Donuts with the Directors event once again brought key stakeholders and community groups together to learn more about the show.

"A wonderful, aching experience" Pat Launer, Center Stage





A Christmas Carol Student Matinee, 2017

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

In-School Student Workshops

Cygnnet brings in-school workshops to San Diego County middle and high school students, exposing them to theatre topics like acting, playwriting, literature and history. The curriculum meets multiple San Diego Unified Visual and Performing Arts and California Common Core standards. **Last year, Cygnnet provided 46 free workshops, serving 1,075 students.**

Student Matinees

Last year, 798 students attended free Student Matinee main stage performances. Study guides and post-show forums with the actors and Cygnnet's resident dramaturge help further the students' understanding of each production.

"I'm glad I saw The Last Wife at Cygnnet Theatre. I've learned from this show that I can be in control and I should continue to stand for what it is I believe in. Thank you for that."

-Sonya Valle, Bayfront Charter High School student



Storytelling on the Green

Storytelling on the Green

Storytelling on the Green presents live, abridged works from Shakespeare and other classic authors free of charge, in the Old Town San Diego State Historic Park's **central square. Last year, over 3,000 youth and adults attended 280 performances.**

Discounted Tickets for Students

Each year Cygnnet discounts ticket prices for students, totaling more than \$30,000 in savings each year.

"Our faculty believes Cygnnet productions greatly contribute to our students' social-emotional education and literacy development. We appreciate Cygnnet's welcoming inclusion and support of students. We could never attend without the specially priced student tickets."

- Dr. Diane Lapp,

Health Sciences High and Middle College teacher



The Bill and Judy Garrett Finish Line Commission, 2018

THE BILL AND JUDY GARRETT FINISH LINE COMMISSION

Audiences enjoyed a reception with the playwrights, designer showcases, and staged readings of three new works at our second annual Bill & Judy Garrett Finish Line Commission festival. The three playwrights (one local) were each awarded a financial grant to complete their scripts.

MILITARY ENGAGEMENT

Blue Star Theatre

As a Blue Star Theatre, in collaboration with the **Theatre Communications Group** and **Blue Star Families**, Cygnet continues to offer **deeply discounted tickets to military personnel, veterans, and their families**, year round.

Tickets For Troops

Last year, 499 free tickets were donated to active military, veterans and their families. Cygnet Donors provide funding for this program and the tickets are distributed by our military partner agencies.

Military Performances

Cygnet Serves launched two separate performance series, of seven shows each, for a total of 14 performances **servicing over 400 military family members free of charge.**

Individualized Military Workshops

We provided 35 weekly Creative Expressions workshops at ASPIRE, serving veterans, four quarterly workshops at Navy Base San Diego, serving active military and families, and two workshops for children from military families. **Overall, we provided 41 free individualized workshops to 74 local military family members.**

EMERGING ARTISTS

Recognizing that nurturing young talent is crucial for the future of theatre, Cygnet has made it a priority to give professional opportunities to young artists and designers. Thanks to a generous donation from **Jeffrey and Sheila Lipinsky**, Cygnet was able to hire **four design fellows** from **San Diego State University** who helped design sets, lights and costumes. Cygnet also hired a **scenic designer** from the **University of Carolina School of the Arts** and **production assistants** from **Grossmont College** and **Emerson College**. Cygnet also provided professional directing and acting opportunities for select recent theatre school graduates, often offering them their first Actor's Equity contract and helping launch their professional careers. Last year, **Cygnet hired two artists from the University of Carolina School of the Arts and one artist from Grossmont College.** Since this program began, several artists have appeared on and off Broadway and others have returned to Cygnet, including Cygnet's **Associate Artistic Director, Rob Lutfy.**



Armed Forces YMCA Performance, 2016



Cygnet Serves A Christmas Carol production, 2016



Emerging Artist Demetrius Clayton



Season Sponsor Leonard Hirsch and Barbara Hoffer



Producers Circle Donor Wendy Nash with artists



Season Sponsors Dr. Ronald and Susan Heller

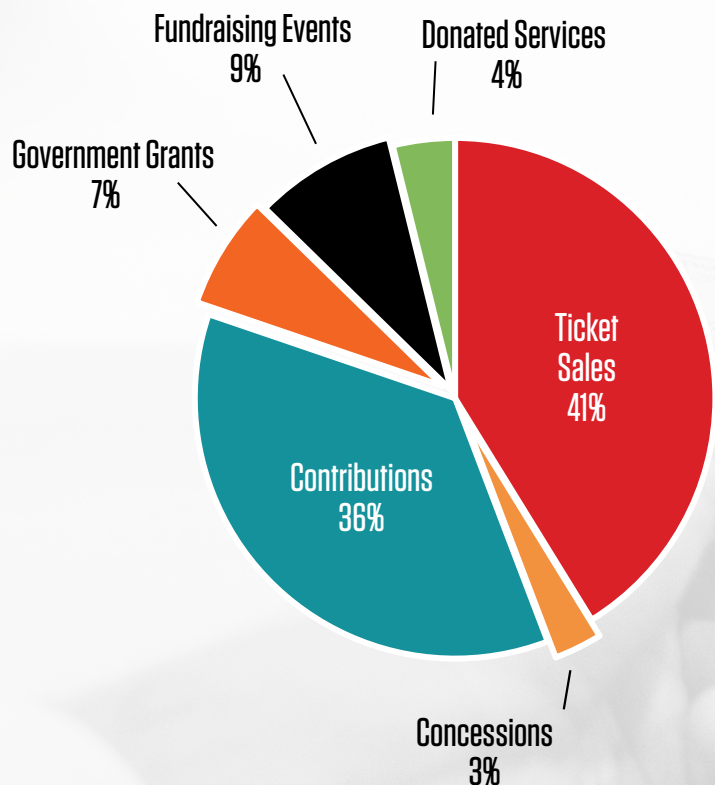


Legacy Society Donor Yolanda Holcomb and guest

As a nonprofit company presenting high-quality, daring and diverse programming, Cygnet relies on donations from individuals as well as private and public sources to accomplish our mission. Because ticket sales cover only a portion of the actual cost of producing a show, the generosity of our patrons is essential to maintaining artistic integrity while keeping ticket prices affordable.

REVENUE

TICKET SALES	\$1,150,015
CONCESSIONS	\$83,717
CONTRIBUTIONS	\$1,005,139
GOVERNMENT GRANTS	\$197,922
FUNDRAISING EVENTS	\$246,310
DONATED SERVICES	\$107,571
REALIZED INVESTMENT INCOME	\$251
TOTAL	\$2,790,925





Noyan Karakas with Producers Circle Donors Barbara Zell and Bill McHarg, Jr.



Season Sponsors Judy and Bill Garrett

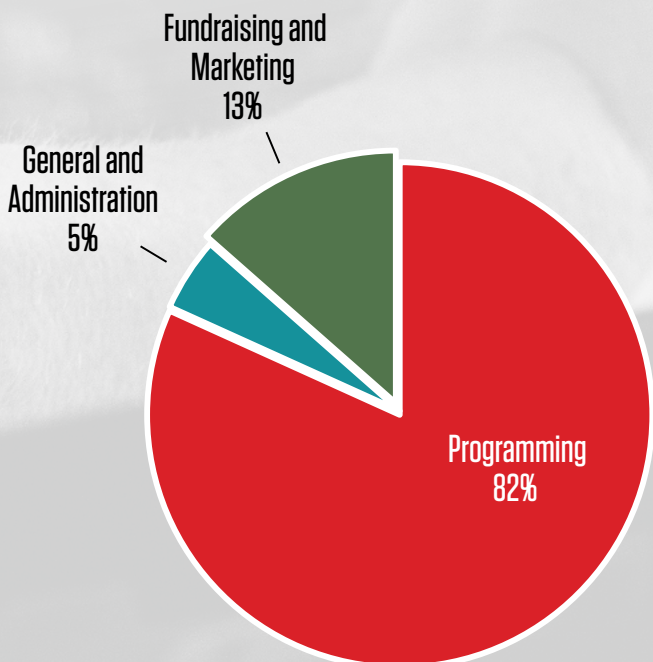


Producers Circle Donor Molli Wagner with Artistic Director Sean Murray and Executive Director Bill Schmidt

Cygnnet has experienced strong revenue growth over the past few years from \$2.3M in 2014-2015 to \$2.7M in 2017-2018. Nevertheless, expenses have also increased during this time. To improve the financial position of the theatre, Cygnnet cut \$300K from the fiscal budget. The biggest savings measures included reducing the size of its administrative office space, adjusting staffing levels, and reducing the number of preview performances. In addition, the company has implemented new tools to better track and control expenses.

EXPENSE

PROGRAMMING	\$2,286,538
GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATION	\$132,429
FUNDRAISING AND MARKETING	\$377,615
TOTAL	\$2,796,582



WHY INVEST NOW?

Cygnnet Theatre is one of San Diego's leading professional theatre companies. We are known for the quality of our productions and the excellence of our artists. Cygnnet has received over 130 awards and accolades for theatre excellence.

We are known for producing adventurous, entertaining and thought-provoking work. We create high-quality art within a modest budget, which provides challenging opportunities for artists and designers.

Cygnnet is a welcoming place that treats its artists and patrons like family. We provide open, equal access to our artists, we present theatre that reflects our community, and we provide a supportive and nurturing home for local artists.



Associate Artistic Director Robby Lutfy, Executive Director Bill Schmidt and Artistic Director Sean Murray.

CYGNET LEGACY SOCIETY

Cygnnet is honored to recognize our Legacy Society members for their commitment to provide valuable resources to help ensure the future vitality and long-term stability of Cygnnet Theatre.

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*In Memoriam

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