

**CYGNET  
THEATRE**

2016/17  
ANNUAL REPORT  
Cygnet Theatre Company

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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

Two Anonymous Donors, Bill and Judy Garrett, Dr. Ronald and Susan Heller, Leonard Hirsch, Kamaya Jane & Diane Zeps in Honor of their Mother Elaine Lipinsky and Harvey and Sheryl White

**CYGNET  
THEATRE**

Dear friends,

I'm so proud of the quality and range of shows we saw in season fourteen. To go from a stripper to an ex-con, to some 'bad Jews,' to one naughty little boy in just one season...That's exciting. That's Cygnet!

We opened with one of the most beloved stage musicals of our time, *Gypsy*, with Cygnet favorites Linda Libby, Allison Spratt Pearce, Katie Whalley Banville and Manny Fernandes (Craig Noel Award: *Allison Spratt Pearce, Outstanding Featured Performance in a Musical*). In the fall we continued our tradition of shows performed in rotating rep with the staging of two renowned works by August Wilson *Seven Guitars* and *King Hedley II* (Craig Noel Awards: *Laurence Brown, Outstanding Featured Performance* and *Outstanding Ensemble*). We were honored to have August Wilson's widow, Constanza Wilson, attend a performance with praise for the cast. The holiday season saw our continued success of *A Christmas Carol*. January brought *Bad Jews* to the stage - a fierce, biting comedy about family, faith and what you choose to believe. It also brought our top ticket sales for a drama in our history of productions! In March, a luxury train rolled into town bringing nonstop laughter and mayhem with *On the Twentieth Century* (Craig Noel Award: *Sean Fanning, Outstanding Scenic Design*). The season ended with the manic, irreverent and wildly engaging presentation of the German theatrical event, *Shockheaded Peter* (Craig Noel Award: *Shirley Pierson, Outstanding Costume Design*).

Additionally, we were proud to have been selected for a \$187,000 grant from the California based James Irvine Foundation's Exploring Engagement Fund to provide quality theatre programs and main stage shows for low-income military personnel and veterans in the San Diego area, exposing many who would otherwise not have had the opportunity.

This was all made possible by the dedication of our staff, the creativity of our artists and the continuing generosity of our donors.

*Bill Schmidt*  
Bill Schmidt, Executive Director

*Sean Murray*  
Sean Murray, Artistic Director





## THE MOTHER OF ALL MUSICALS GYPSY

Everything came up roses for the production of *Gypsy* this season. Audiences flocked to this all time favorite musical, and critics sang its praises. *Gypsy* featured the largest cast we've had on the Cygnet stage. *Gypsy* received three Critics Circle nominations and one win for Outstanding Featured Performance in a Musical (Allison Spratt-Pearce). Girls Night Out continued to draw crowds, this year with the help of our partnership with Star 94.1 and on air personality Delana Bennett.

*"It Soars! It Roars! It Rocks!... This 'Gypsy' is a must see show."* - Carol Davis



## PERFORMING IN REPERTORY AUGUST WILSON REP

For tackling two of Pulitzer-prize winning playwright August Wilson's works in rotating rep we received a whopping seven Critics Circle Award nominations, winning for Best Ensemble and Outstanding Featured Performances in a Play (Laurence Brown). We partnered with The San Diego Food Bank collecting food and donations. We were honored to be visited by August Wilson's widow, Constanza Romero-Wilson who said, "The whole team at Cygnet made me feel very proud, I know August Wilson's words are alive and well in San Diego."

## SEVEN GUITARS

*"A potent, sharply acted revival"* - San Diego Union-Tribune

## KING HEDLEY II

*"Praise Cygnet Theatre"* - San Diego Reader



## A HOLIDAY TRADITION A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Ebenezer Scrooge and Dickens' tale of hope and redemption continues its popularity as a holiday favorite. This year marked our highest selling holiday show to date! Our third annual Family Day was popular and included a partnership with Gepetto's Toy Store, with cookie decorating, a coloring station and hot chocolate for everyone.

*"It's not Christmas without 'A Christmas Carol,' and this is the best one around."*  
- SDGLN.com

## SAVAGE COMEDY BAD JEWS

This "play with a controversial title" was the best-selling play in all 14 seasons at Cygnet Theatre. It engaged audiences with its humorous and cutting dialogue, relatable issues, and outstanding performances. Outreach efforts included a roundtable breakfast with community groups and advocates, as well as cross-promotional partnerships. In addition, multiple talk-backs were hosted featuring area rabbis and educators.

*"A brilliant and challenging show engaging Judaism as inherited by the next generation!"* - Rabbi Scott Meltzer, Ohr Shalom Synagogue



## HILARIOUS MUSICAL ON THE 20TH CENTURY

In the spring, a luxury train rolled into Old Town bringing nonstop laughter and mayhem. Critics and audiences loved the show, and it garnered "Critic's Choice" (Union Tribune), and "Critics Pick" (Reader) among its praise. Patrons also enjoyed another fun evening of champagne and shopping at Girls Night Out in partnership with Star 94.1.

*"Hop 'On the 20th Century' at Cygnet Theatre, and prepare yourself for an evening of unalloyed bliss."* - Pat Launer, Center Stage



## BIZARRE AND BEAUTIFUL SHOCKHEADED PETER

Cygnet's fourteenth season ended with this manic, irreverent and perversely delightful theatrical event. Inspired by gruesome tales from the famous German Children's book, *Struwwelpeter*, or Slovenly Peter, by Heinrich Hoffman, *Shockheaded Peter* created some of our most avid and vocal fans, combining the silly and sinister in a tantalizing and visual treat"

*"Bizarre, demented, disturbing, ghoulish, grotesque, macabre, nightmarish, twisted, warped and wickedly funny!"* - StageScene LA







## EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH PROGRAMS

### Free In-School 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. In 2016-17, Cygnnet provided **40 workshops**, serving **875** students.

### Free Student Matinees

Cygnnet offers free Student Matinees for select main stage productions. In 2016-2017, **853** students attended performances of *Gypsy*, *Seven Guitars*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *On the 20th Century*. Cygnnet Theatre generates study guides for students and teachers to complement the matinee experience. Post-show forums with actors and Cygnnet's resident dramaturge help further the students' understanding of each production. For the majority of students attending Cygnnet Student Matinees, this is their first experience with live theatre performance.

*"My students love Cygnnet student matinees. It's one of the best teaching and learning experiences for their growth as artists."*

-Carrin Edwards, high school theatre educator

*"I related to the show so much. It made me think of my life and my family and the way we live. It's crazy to think that a lot of people live like that."*

-Savanna Johnson, high school senior



## CYGNETURE EVENTS & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Cygnnet patrons return season after season for the work they see on our stage. But engaging audiences doesn't just happen during a show. This year, we continued our popular Cygnneture events including Theatre on Tap, Wine Night, Social Media Night, Out Night, Girls Night Out and Family Day. We partnered with other non-profits to support a variety of causes while gaining exposure to new audiences. Partners included The San Diego Food Bank, San Diego Film Festival and Southern Caregiver Resource Center, as well as many local theatre and performing arts organizations. Business and Media partners included Star 94.1, San Diego Magazine and Geppetto's Toys.

## THE BILL AND JUDY GARRETT FINISH LINE COMMISSION

At Cygnnet, we believe the best way to really have an impact on the American theater is to focus on new plays. The mission of this program funded by Bill and Judy Garrett is to allow writers to work on their dream play. Our first annual Bill & Judy Garrett Finish Line Commission was a success. Audiences enjoyed a reception with the playwrights, designer showcases, and staged readings of two new works that were both awarded a financial grant to complete the work.

*The Wind and The Breeze* by Finish Line playwright Nathan Alan Davis was included in our Season 15 lineup, and will receive its World Premiere right here at Cygnnet. We give one commission to a local playwright each year. We have to find a way to keep our playwrights in San Diego and keep them writing plays. The solution is simple: make sure they have the resources they need to make that happen.



## CYGNET SERVES

### Blue Star Theatre

As a Blue Star Theatre, in collaboration with the Theatre Communications Group and Blue Star Families, Cygnnet continues to offer deeply discounted \$20 tickets to military personnel, veterans, and their families, year round.

### Tickets For Troops

Cygnnet continues to provide free tickets to military families through our Tickets for Troops program. Funding for this program is provided by our donors and the tickets are distributed by our military partner agencies. Over 400 free tickets were given to active military, veterans and their families this year.

### Individualized / Residency Workshops

We participated in an eight-week Creative Expression residency workshop with four teens via SAY San Diego at Serra High School. We provided two eight-week themed summer residencies with six rotations of youth ages 6-12 at the Armed Services YMCA's Camp Hero. Eight-week residency workshops in Creative Expression were provided to veterans at the ASPIRE Center and four individual workshops were customized for individual requests. All these individualized and residency workshops were provided to the community free of charge.

### Community Performances

Cygnnet Serves launched four separate performance series, of six to eight shows each, for a total of 28 performances all provided free of charge. *Walking in the Shadows of August Wilson* featured military veteran and Cygnnet Resident Artist T.J. Antonio Johnson in a one-man tour-de-force that played to six partner organizations, including the ASPIRE Center and Veterans Village. *A Christmas Carol*, our version of the Dickens classic commissioned from area playwright Megan DeBoard, entertained military families with story, music and puppets at eight sites around the county, alongside a festive holiday reception. Our production of *Supers*, commissioned from area playwright Liz Silverman, played to seven sites including the Armed Services YMCA's Camp Hero.

## EMERGING ARTISTS

Cygnnet Theatre collaborates with San Diego State University to provide Lipinsky Family Fellowships for specially selected San Diego State University graduate students. In Season XIV, 5 Fellows designed sets, sound, lights and costumes for Cygnnet under the mentorship Cygnnet Designers and Directors. Cygnnet also provided three fellowships to students from Grossmont College, Rutgers University Mason Gross School of the Arts and the University of Carolina School of the Arts. Cygnnet also provides professional directing and acting opportunities for select recent theatre school graduates, often offering them their first Actor's Equity contract, helping launch their professional career. In 2016-2017, Cygnnet worked with Ro Boddie in the August Wilson Rep. Since this program began, several artists have appeared on and off Broadway and others have returned to Cygnnet, including Cygnnet's Associate Artistic Director, Rob Lutfy.



Emerging Artist Ro Boddie with Laurence Brown



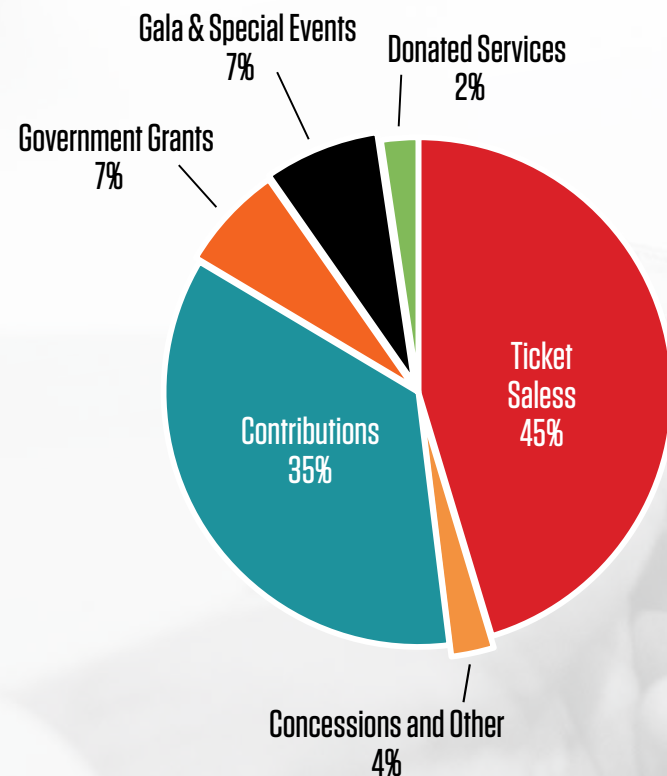


As a nonprofit company presenting high-quality, daring and diverse programming, Cygnet relies on donations from individuals as well as private and public sources to accomplish our mission. Because ticket sales cover only a portion of the actual cost of producing a show, the generosity of our patrons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

Cygnet has experienced strong revenue growth over the past three fiscal years, from \$2,325,282 in 2014-2015 to \$2,642,537 in 2015-2016, and \$2,852,047 in 2017-2018. Nevertheless, expenses have also increased during this time. To improve the financial position of the theatre, Cygnet has begun reducing costs and has cut \$300K from the new fiscal budget. The biggest savings measures have 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.

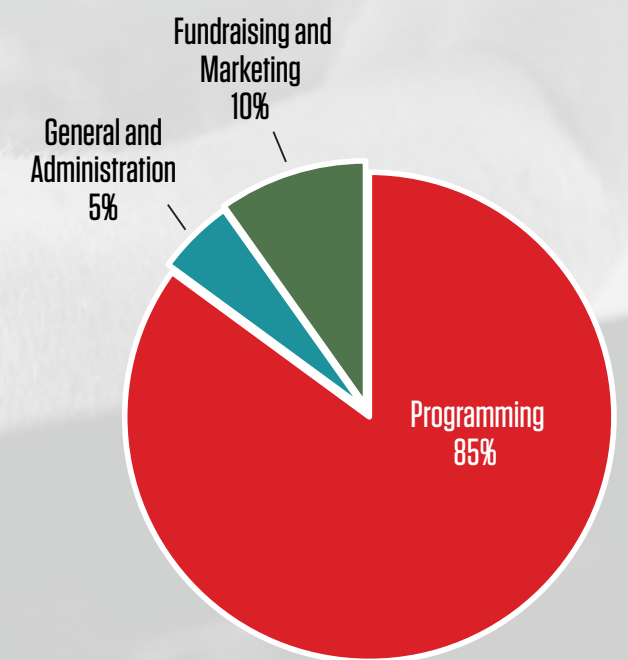
## REVENUE

TICKET SALES	\$1,324,178
CONCESSIONS AND OTHER	\$79,333
CONTRIBUTIONS	\$1,036,727
GOVERNMENT GRANTS	\$197,094
GALA SPECIAL EVENT	\$214,568
DONATED SERVICES	\$68,728
REALIZED INVESTMENT INCOME	\$147
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,920,775</b>



## EXPENSE

PROGRAMMING	\$2,632,708
GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATION	\$158,005
FUNDRAISING AND MARKETING	\$304,130
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,094,843</b>





## WHY INVEST NOW?

Cygnnet Theatre is one of San Diego's leading theatre companies. We are known for the quality of our productions and the excellence of our artists. Cygnnet has received over 130 awards including a \$10k grant from the American Theatre Wing, producers of the Tony Awards and 7 Craig Noel awards at the 2017 San Diego Theatre Critics Circle Awards.

We are known for producing risky and innovative work. We create high quality art with 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 do theatre that reflects our community and we provide a supportive nurturing home for local artists.

Cygnnet is growing

- Our budget has grown from \$212,000 in our first season to more than 2.5 million.
- Our subscriber base has grown from 40 to 2,400.
- Our staff has grown from 3 paid staff to over 30 including, artistic, administrative, production and patron services



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

## CYGNET PLANNED GIVING SOCIETY

Cygnnet is honored to recognize our Planned Giving 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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This listing reflects gifts made from July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016.

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