



2018/19  
ANNUAL REPORT  
Cygnet Theatre Company





## Mission Statement

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

Monty Python's Spamalot (2018)

Cover: Angels in America: Perestroika (2019)



Dear friends,

Every season, we're amazed by what a wild ride we get to take patrons on. This season was no different, comprised of eight amazing plays that were carefully chosen to open our eyes and our hearts. Each one supported our mission, stretched our perspectives, and celebrated humans: big, brassy, frail, silly, fighting, fascinating and very much alive!

The season kicked off with coconuts, killer rabbits, and flying cows in the Tony Award-winning musical *Monty Python's Spamalot*. The fall uplifted the soul with *Every Brilliant Thing*, a storytelling experience with humor and heart. After that came *HIR*, an uproarious dark comedy about a household in revolt. Still growing in popularity as a holiday tradition is *A Christmas Carol*, which closed out the year. 2019 kicked-off with a roof-raising play with music, *Marie and Rosetta*, the story of the 'godmother of rock and roll' and her protégé. In the springtime we brought back our rotating rep with the Pulitzer, Tony and Drama-desk award-winning epic *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes (Part One: Millennium Approaches, Part Two: Perestroika)*. The final show of the season was a hilarious take on Jane Austen's classic *Pride and Prejudice*.

From enjoyable, entertaining fare to emotional and thought-provoking stories, we really took our patrons on a journey. And all of this was made possible by the dedication of our staff, the creativity of our artists and the continuing generosity of our donors.

Bill Schmidt, Executive Director

Sean Murray, Artistic Director





## IRREVERENT CULT COMEDY MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT

Winner of three Tony Awards, including Best Musical, *Spamalot* elevated silliness to an art form. With nearly sold out houses every night, the show was a commercial and critical success! A Critic's Circle award for Outstanding Featured Performance went to Bryan Banville for his role(s) in *Spamalot*.

*"It's loopy, loony, zany, madcap, screwy, wacky, nutty, goofy and any other off-the-wall, asinine-sounding adjective you care to add. When it's well done — as it is here — it's irresistible."* -Pat Launer, Times of San Diego



## IMMERSIVE STORYTELLING EXPERIENCE EVERY BRILLIANT THING

A West Coast premiere, *Every Brilliant Thing* wowed audiences. Patrons were moved and engaged with this interactive play about depression and the lengths we go to for those we love. Post-it notes of patrons' own "brilliant things" filled the lobby and seats on stage were available. In addition, we partnered with mental health organizations National Alliance on Mental Illness and Vista Hill to provide resources to attendees.

*"Cygnet has achieved the trifecta in this winning, moving and thoroughly original play."* - Pam Kragen, The San Diego Union-Tribune



## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PREMIERE HIR

*HIR* got patrons talking and feeling and thinking...which is exactly what we do here at Cygnet. Audiences who went along for this wild ride were rewarded with stellar performances and deep conversations on their drive home. We were proud to partner with The San Diego LGBT Community Center.

*"This pitch-black comedy is raw and cathartic."* - Dan Letchworth, San Diego Magazine



## A HOLIDAY TRADITION A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Ebenezer Scrooge and Dickens' tale of hope and redemption continues its popularity as a holiday favorite – with full and sold out houses nightly. Our fourth annual Family Day was well-attended and included a partnership with Geppetto's Toy Store, a visit from Santa Claus, cookie decorating, a coloring station and hot chocolate for everyone! Additionally, we partnered with San Diego Blood Bank for a pre-show blood drive.

*"A fine-tuned delight and a welcome fixture of the holiday season."* - James Hebert, The San Diego Union-Tribune

## PLAY WITH MUSIC MARIE AND ROSETTA

Patrons enjoyed roof-raising performances about the historic musical duo Marie Knight and Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Partnerships with the San Diego Museum of Making Music and House of Blues exposed new audiences to Cygnet and engaged current ones.

*"Powerhouse voices."* - Pat Launer, Times of San Diego



## ROTATING REP ANGELS IN AMERICA PART ONE: MILLENNIUM APPROACHES PART TWO: PERESTROIKA

As timely as ever, this stunning epic blew audiences and critics away, receiving Critics Choice from the San Diego Union Tribune. The two-part play totaled over 6 hours of theatre, yet captivated patrons the entire time. Partnerships included The San Diego LGBT Community Center and San Diego Gay Men's Chorus.

*"Angels resonates in compelling, sharply acted revival."* - James Hebert, The San Diego Union-Tribune



## PLAYFUL NEW ADAPTATION PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

We closed the season with the Southern California Premiere of *Pride and Prejudice* by one of the nation's most produced playwrights, Kate Hamill. A funny and whimsical version of Jane Austen's classic kept audiences laughing and garnered Critics Choice from The San Diego Union-Tribune.

*"This talented comedic cast takes the reins and runs."* - E.M. Reiter, Talk Theatre To Me







A Christmas Carol Student Matinee, 2018



In School Workshop, 2018



Storytelling on the Green



The Bill and Judy Garrett Finish Line Commission, 2019

## ARTS ENGAGEMENT

### YOUTH

**Last year, Cygnet provided 16 in-school workshops serving 708 students from 15 schools.** Cygnet 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. These important workshops were funded by Kamaya Jane and Diane Zeps, in honor of their mother Elaine Lipinsky.

**Last year, 608 students from 17 schools attended one of four Student Matinee mainstage performances.** Study guides and post-show forums with the actors and Cygnet's resident dramaturge help further the students' understanding of each production.

*"Thank you for letting me go to the A Christmas Carol. My favorite part was all the background noises and the imagination it put in my head like when somebody was knocking on the door but there wasn't really one there."*

- Standley Middle School student

*"Every Brilliant Thing really moved me because I deal with depression. I seem like a very happy person but on the inside, I'm the opposite. The play reminded me that there are a lot of people that can help me. I don't have a bad life and I'm thankful I'm not living on the streets. I'm thankful for the great life I have and I realize this again with your play."*

- Anonymous student

### STORYTELLING ON THE GREEN

**Last year, approximately 8,000 students and other visitors attended a Storytelling on the Green performance.** Cygnet presents a theatrical education program rooted in theatre, literature, and California history six times a week in Old Town San Diego State Historic Park's central square.

### MILITARY

In order to reach members of San Diego's large military community, Cygnet Serves takes free theatre workshops to specific military locations around the county. Currently, the program consists of quarterly two-hour workshops at Navy Base San Diego and weekly two-hour workshops at the Veterans Administration ASPIRE Center. All workshops are tailored to the specific needs of the participants. This blends active participation in theatre with life skills such as coping with PTSD, suicide prevention, and improved communication skills.

Last year Cygnet distributed 309 tickets to local military service providers through our Tickets for Troops program so that active duty military service personnel, veterans and military family members could attend a performance.

### COMMUNITY

To help audiences further comprehend and appreciate Cygnet productions, Cygnet hosts a series of forums that are open to the public. For each production, this includes a designer showcase, pre and post show chats, and off-site chats and readings in areas underserved by theatre.

### EMERGING ARTISTS

Cygnet has made it a priority to give professional opportunities to emerging artists and designers. Last year, six San Diego State University graduate students received Fellowships funded by Jeffrey and Sheila Lipinsky. Fellows work with professional designers to design sets, sound, lights and costumes. Cygnet also provided professional acting and designing opportunities for eight recent graduates and students of UNCSA, USD, UCSD and SDSU.

### 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 third annual Bill and Judy Garrett Finish Line Commission Festival. The three playwrights (one local) were each awarded a financial grant to complete their scripts.



Armed Forces YMCA Performance, 2016



Emerging Artists Alex Bodine and Wil Bethmann in Angels in America, 2019



Bill & Judy Garrett, Playwright Leah Nanako Winkler and Associate Artistic Director Rob Lutfy at The Bill and Judy Garrett Finish Line Commission, 2019





Legacy Society member Deborah Pantoni with Kevane La'Marr Coleman



Producers Circle donors Joseph and Linda Satz



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Artist Advocates Rick & Eileen Brown with Producers Circle donor Rob Watson

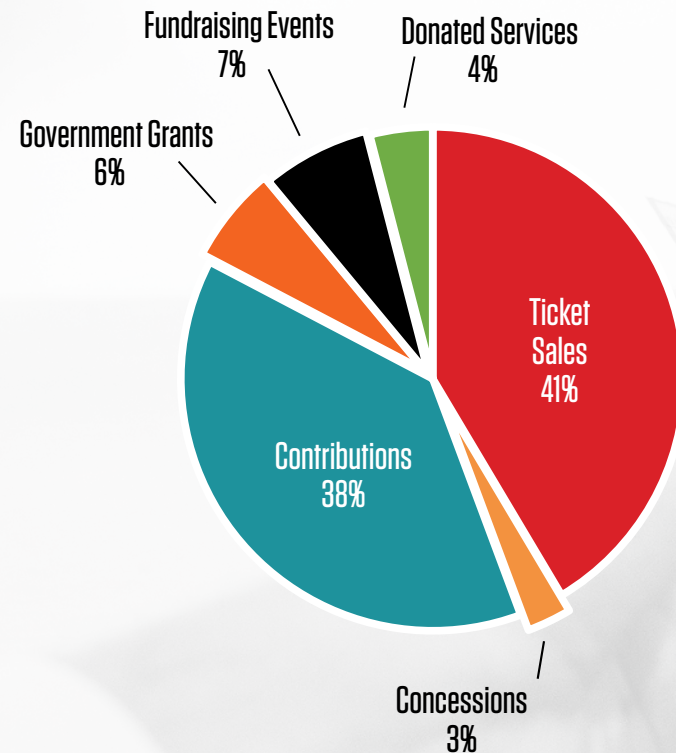


Artist Advocate Joyce Gattas with Producers Circle donor Larry Cousins and Nancy Spector

## REVENUE

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. This season Cygnet introduced a **new dynamic pricing structure** designed to streamline the ticket-buying process while rewarding our most loyal patrons and early purchasers.

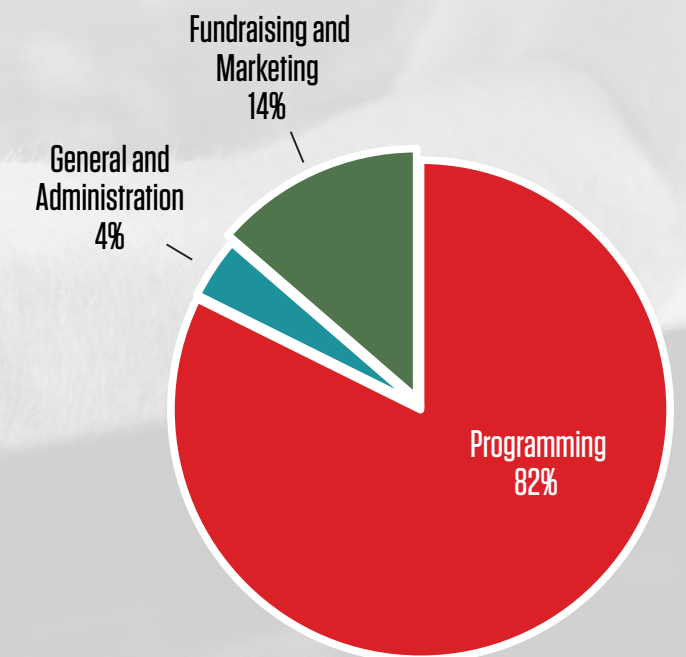
TICKET SALES	\$1,175,316
CONCESSIONS AND OTHER	\$81,217
CONTRIBUTIONS	\$1,087,835
GOVERNMENT GRANTS	\$178,488
FUNDRAISING EVENTS	\$198,057
DONATED SERVICES	\$114,276
REALIZED INVESTMENT INCOME	\$39
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,835,228</b>



## EXPENSE

Our commitment to taking artistic risks, producing top-quality productions and hiring the best actors/designers for each role has made us one of the leading professional theatres in San Diego. We are especially proud of our reputation for employing equity actors and paying our artists at some of the highest rates in the San Diego area. Thanks to a gift made by an anonymous donor last year we were able to increase the rates at which we compensate our theatre artists, designers and technical crew.

PROGRAMMING	\$2,335,779
GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATION	\$113,798
FUNDRAISING	\$387,256
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,796,582</b>





## 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.



Executive Director Bill Schmidt and Artistic Director Sean Murray at Cygnnet 2019 Red, Black and White Gala.

## CYGNET LEGACY SOCIETY

Cygnnet is honored to recognize our 2018-2019 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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