

contemporaryamericantheaterfestival

AT SHEPHERD UNIVERSITY



Creating the Ultimate Theater Experience

2015-2019 Strategic Plan



Introduction

The time has come to put into motion our five-year Strategic Plan that will enhance and strengthen our position as one of the most important curators of new American theater.

Strategic planning is paramount to our success. It provides us with the opportunity to define the dream, the vision, the purpose, the mission, and the core values for creating a more perfect and vital Contemporary American Theater Festival. We have a vibrant, concise mission that expresses who we are, what we do, and why we do it. It demonstrates our unique purpose for existing. Our mission motivates every major activity of our organization. It guides, directs, and inspires our strategic planning; and it defines how we measure our future success.

The world of performing arts is changing at a rapid pace. In order to remain current—to remain *contemporary*—we cannot wait and then react. In order to create new works of art that will promote openness to new ideas and creativity, this organization must have a plan in place. It must have a plan that makes firm demands of its leadership while understanding the flexibility required in the risky business of creating bold art. This is the type of plan we have embraced.

Our Strategic Plan reflects our fierce hunger for provocative stories, emotionally complex stories, stylistically sophisticated stories, and entertaining contemporary stories. We have adopted four innovative and aggressive goals that will launch the future of the Contemporary American Theater Festival.

We will continue to . . .

thinktheater . . . maketheater . . . talktheater. . .

We will continue to pioneer and curate ambitious new theater.

Join us in realizing our future.

Ed Herendeen
Founder and Producing Director

catf.org

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Strategic Plan: 2015-2019

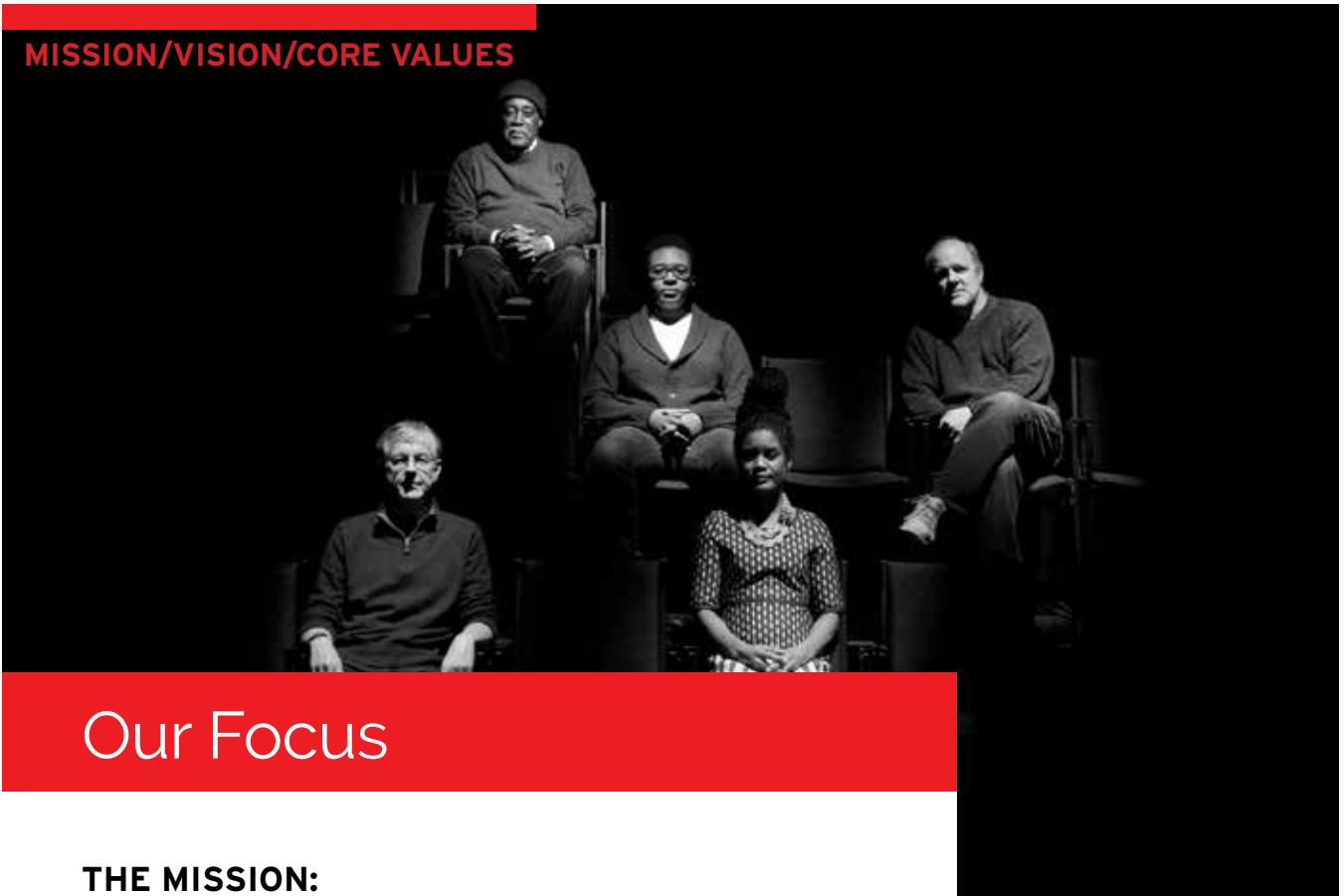
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Contemporary American Theater Festival

AT SHEPHERD UNIVERSITY

MISSION/VISION/CORE VALUES



Our Focus

THE MISSION:

To produce and develop new American theater.

THE VISION:

The ultimate theater experience.

CORE VALUES:

- Fearless art;
- Daring and diverse stories;
- A profound dynamic among the audience, the artist, and the work.

Defining CATF

Each word in our name is intentional, potent, and packed with meaning. Contemporary, by definition, evolves daily – much like the world of theater. CATF, too, will embrace and encourage its own change, growth, and new opportunities.

Contemporary

We are committed to producing and developing new theater that

- asks both audience and artist to examine the here and now, as well as our collective responsibility to sculpt the future;
- tells relevant stories;
- holds up a mirror to our world and challenges its conventions, politics, mores, and assumptions.

American

We are committed to being a home for American artists. We

- tell stories that tap into the current American dialogue;
- acknowledge that “American” means many cultures, perspectives, voices, and personal journeys – that we are united by our individuality;
- encourage engagement *from* the American audience to create the ultimate theater experience *for* the American audience.

Theater

We believe that this art form is intentionally broad, vibrant, and inclusive. Theater is

- a community created through live performance engaging both artist and audience;
- story-driven and presented with innovation and creativity;
- provocative, immediate, ever-evolving, and collaborative.

Festival

We promote an arts experience that exists beyond our stage.

The festival atmosphere is permeated with

- community-building inspired by our rotating repertory of risk-taking and pioneering art;
- a celebration of multiple forms of art that expresses our contemporary aesthetic and tells our stories through visual art, music, literature, film, and new media;
- a continuing dialogue among artist, audience, and community about the themes and impact of the work.



In 1991, Ed Herendeen founded the Contemporary American Theater Festival on the campus of Shepherd University. Beginning as a humble endeavor with just under \$80,000, the Festival has since grown to an organization with a year-round staff, an active Board of Trustees, and an annual budget of over \$1 million. The Festival and the University have helped earn Shepherdstown, West Virginia, the reputation as a preeminent destination for new theatrical work.

An example of the CATF/Shepherd University partnership shines at the entrance of West Campus, where the first two of three phases of the copper-encased Center for Contemporary Arts stand. These state-of-the-art buildings represent the successful realization of the *create* campaign, which began in 2006 as the boards of Shepherd University, the Shepherd University Foundation, and CATF came together with the common goal of creating an academic and professional center for contemporary art. The University's visual arts and theater programs are housed in the Center, which features art studios, rehearsal halls, graphic design labs, galleries, production spaces, and the beautiful Stanley C. and Shirley A. Marinoff Theater (named after one of the Festival's first families).

The unique partnership between an independent nonprofit arts organization and a public, liberal arts institution of higher education represents the power and impact of collaboration between shared missions and purposes. In addition to the thousands of theater artists housed by Shepherd University over the years (and the art they have created), this synergy has helped transform the economy, civic appreciation, and overall social well-being of West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle. Over the years, tens of thousands of "theater tourists" have flocked to Shepherdstown to attend the Festival, making it the cultural gateway into the Mountain State. With two-thirds of

its audience traveling more than 50 miles and most spending at least two nights in the area, the economic impact of the Festival's four-week season is profound, estimated at nearly \$3 million for the local economy annually. And the word is spreading. The Festival has received press coverage in national media outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *American Theatre*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, and *National Public Radio*.

Our patrons come for the plays, but also for the community's natural beauty, the accommodations, dining, boutique shopping, and historic sites all of which create a wonderful, bucolic blend of rustic ambiance and metropolitan thought. A weekend in Shepherdstown at CATF is a vacation for the body and a workout for the mind. The Festival is committed to an ongoing conversation surrounding new plays and encourages its audiences to participate in the process, to delve deeper into the topics raised, and to debate their standing in a greater national conversation. Under the auspices of **talktheater**, there are workshops, lectures, post-show discussions, late-night salons, readings, artist exchanges, and so much more.

Over the course of its two-plus decades, the Festival has cemented its place within the theater field. CATF is committed to its professionalism and national reputation. CATF works closely with national groups such as New Dramatists, League of Regional Theaters (LORT), Dramatists Guild, National New Play Network, and professional unions (Actors' Equity Association, United Scenic Artists, Theatre Communications Group, and Stage Directors and Choreographers Society). Twice-recognized with the Governor's Award for Leadership in the Arts, the Contemporary American Theater Festival prides itself in creating a diverse culture where the artist and audience can grow and flourish.



Anthony Crane and Anne Marie Nest in *Farragut North* by Beau Willimon (CATF 2009).
Photo by Ron Blunt.

LOOKING BACK

1991 – Lisa Loomer's *Accelerando*
CATF's first professional production.

1992 – *Still Waters* by Lynn Martin
first play to make its world premiere
in Shepherdstown.

1998 – First CATF Commission *Carry
the Tiger to the Mountain* by
Cherylene Lee, part of the Clinton
administration's town hall initiative
on race and the arts.

1999 – *Compleat Female Stage
Beauty* by Jeffrey Hatcher,
commissioned and premiered by
CATF, film rights purchased by
Robert DeNiro, adapted and
produced as film *Stage Beauty*
starring Billy Crudup and Claire
Daines (2004).

2001 – CATF's *The Pavilion*
by Craig Wright, America's most
produced play the following year.

2003 – five former CATF plays
produced Off-Broadway in NYC.

2007 – CATF produced *My Name is
Rachel Corrie*, despite national
controversy and boycotts.

2009 – *Farragut North* by Beau
Willimon produced at CATF, later
adapted into film *The Ides of March*
featuring George Clooney and Philip
Seymour Hoffman.

2010 – Two Steinberg/ATCA New
Play Award nominees. Only the
second time in the history of the
award that a single theater had
two plays considered.

2011 – Lydia R. Diamond's *Stick Fly*
(CATF 2008) made Broadway debut.

2012 – CATF world premiere *Gidion's
Knot* by Johnna Adams published in
American Theatre magazine,
becomes one of the most produced
plays in America in 2013-14.

2014 – *Uncanny Valley* by Thomas
Gibbons is first-ever CATF Off-
Broadway production transfer.

Notable ongoing artistic
collaborations include: Johnna
Adams, Lee Blessing, Lydia R.
Diamond, Steven Dietz, Richard
Dresser, Joyce Carol Oates, Sam
Shepard, and Michael Weller.

Complete production history available at catf.org.

Looking Forward

This Strategic Plan was adopted by the Contemporary American Theater Festival Board of Trustees in 2015, just prior to the launch of the Festival's 25th Season. It serves as the culmination of months of in-depth review and reflection, planning, and prioritization. It was led by an ad hoc committee consisting of 11 members of the Board as well as permanent staff. Serving as its basis and starting point was the Festival's long-range plan crafted around the organization's 10th anniversary. The goals, priorities, and tasks established in 2000 have been celebrated, recalibrated, or retired during this process. The Committee commends the tireless efforts of its predecessors for first envisioning the many accomplishments to which today's organization can lay claim. It is a testament to the importance of careful planning to see how many of the original goals have been achieved.

The current Strategic Plan serves as the Festival's guiding principles for the next five years, taking the organization through its 25th anniversary and to the doorstep of its 30th. The Plan's continued implementation and oversight will be monitored by the Executive Committee and the Board as a whole. New programs, projects, endeavors, and budget directives will be tested against this Plan. This is a blueprint for CATF's next chapter.

CATF, its Board, and its staff are committed to achieving four strategic goals embodied in this 2015-19 Strategic Plan:

GOAL ONE: To make great art

GOAL TWO: To inspire and educate through the theater experience

GOAL THREE: To initiate and enhance collaborations and partnerships

GOAL FOUR: To sustain fiscal and operational growth with integrity

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Goals & Priorities

GOAL ONE



Artistic Achievement

Goal One: To make great art

PRIORITY ONE:

Create, discover, and instigate new theater

PRIORITY TWO:

Develop and nurture American artists

PRIORITY THREE:

Produce and present professional theater of exceptional quality and merit

PRIORITY FOUR:

Distribute CATF's work and showcase its artists around the globe

Harold & Mimi Steinberg/American Theatre Critics Association New Play Award nominees, citation winners, and finalists include:

Compleat Female Stage Beauty
by Jeffrey Hatcher

Lidless by Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig

Breadcrumbs by Jennifer Haley

Gidion's Knot by Johnna Adams

H2O by Jane Martin

Dead and Breathing
by Chisa Hutchinson

Tijuana T. Ricks and Maduka Steady in *Stick Fly* by Lydia R. Diamond (CATF 2008).
Anne Marie Nest in *My Name is Rachel Corrie* from the writings of Rachel Corrie (CATF 2007). Photos by Ron Blunt.
Alex Podulke and Barbara Kingsley in *Uncanny Valley* by Thomas Gibbons (CATF 2014). Photo by Seth Freeman.



Education

Goal Two: To inspire and educate through the theater experience

PRIORITY ONE: Provide learning and enrichment opportunities for audience members that intelligently and deeply complement the work on stage

PRIORITY TWO: Create the next generation of contemporary theatergoers and professionals

PRIORITY THREE: Expand the canon of contemporary American theater and invite study and growth in the academic arena

PRIORITY FOUR: Establish a nationally renowned pre-professional training program in theater

GOAL THREE



Collaboration

Goal Three: To initiate and enhance collaborations and partnerships

PRIORITY ONE: Serve as West Virginia's cultural gateway, an economic driver, a model nonprofit, and a leader within the local and state communities

PRIORITY TWO: Work within the professional theater community to promote an appreciation for, and production of, new plays

PRIORITY THREE: Be an ultimate arts destination for patrons from around the region, nation, and world

PRIORITY FOUR: Work with key partners to expand the marketing and media reach of the Festival



GOAL FOUR

Sustainability

Goal Four: To sustain fiscal and operational growth with integrity

PRIORITY ONE:

Follow sound financial and business practices to achieve organizational success

PRIORITY TWO:

Develop and nurture the organization's staff and Board

PRIORITY THREE:

Diversify sources of philanthropic support

PRIORITY FOUR:

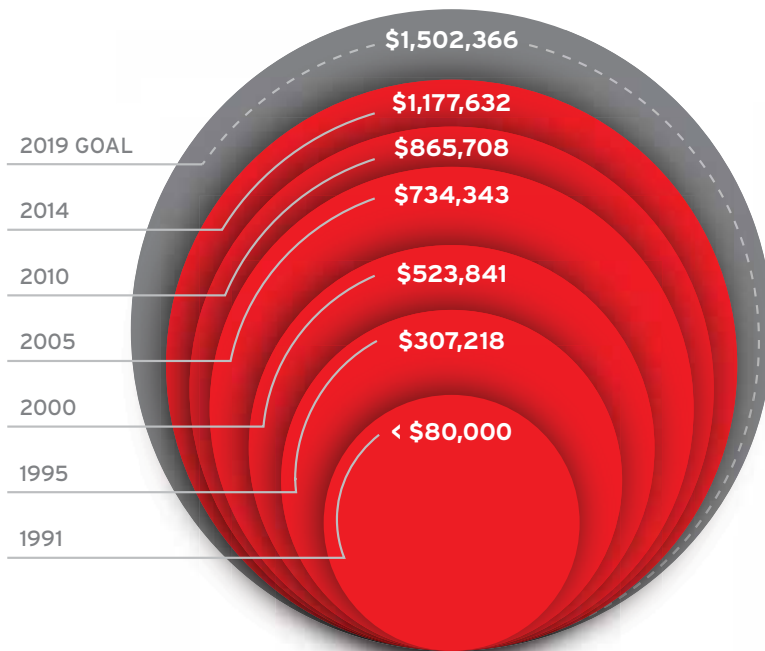
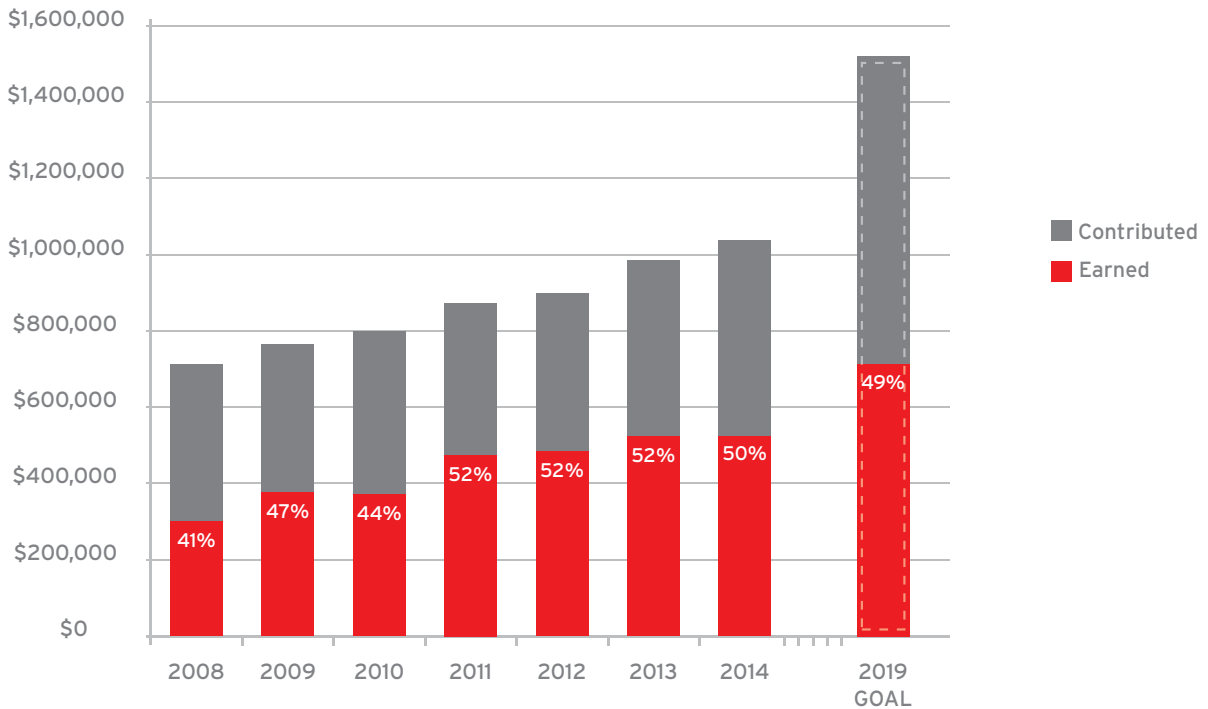
Solidify, expand, and create new revenue streams

Center for the Contemporary Arts, Buildings I & II, 2013.
Photo by Seth Freeman.

JOURNEY TO 2020

INCOME BREAKDOWN BY YEAR

As a nonprofit arts organization, the Festival does not cover its costs through ticket sales alone. Rather, CATF depends upon a well crafted blend of earned income (tickets), grants, and donations from businesses and individuals. It is the goal of this Strategic Plan to create a balanced framework that allows the Festival to produce risk-taking, fearless art.



BUDGET* BY YEAR

As the Festival has grown more ambitious over time, so too has its financial capacity. The goal of this Strategic Plan is to continue CATF's responsible expansion in tandem with its artistic aspirations in order to fully support its artists and staff members.

*Budget does not include in-kind contributions.



2020 AND BEYOND

- Permanent Artist Housing
- Off-Season Programming
- Professional Playwriting Program
- Increased Commission Resources



Back cover photos, from left: Julianna Zinkel in *From Prague* by Kyle Bradstreet (CATF 2011). Photo by Ron Blunt. Eva Kaminski in *Lidless* by Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig (CATF 2010). Photo by Judy Olsen. Daphne Gaines in *The Ashes Under Gait City* by Christina Anderson (CATF 2014). Photo by Seth Freeman. On this page: Artist Rendering of Phase Three of the Center for Contemporary Arts, Holzman Moss Architecture.



“Brand new plays have found a home—and a loyal audience—in West Virginia’s oldest town. [CATF] is a dream for the writers of those plays.”

National Public Radio

CATF.ORG

thinktheater