When The Treasurer closed eight days early, on March 14, 2020, nobody dreamed that it would be 18 months before live, professional theatre would be produced again at Lyric Stage. Because of innovative programming, cost-saving measures, intervention from the Federal, state, and local governments, and without question, thanks to the generous philanthropic support of individual donors and institutions, the Lyric Stage has weathered the storm of Covid-19.

The audited results from Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021 each show a modest surplus. The Lyric Stage’s balance sheet demonstrates strong liquidity as the theatre reopens in a time of unprecedented uncertainty, but also with growing hope from a city eager to return to live theatre and theatre-based education.

COMMUNICATION WITH SUBSCRIBERS

At the very start of the pandemic-induced closure, Artistic and Executive Directors Courtney O’Connor and Matt Chapuran started weekly Wednesday night Zoom calls with subscribers, artists, ushers, and other constituents. Attendees often asked vital questions and contributed insightful ideas to shape plans, and together, the full Lyric Stage community coalesced around a commitment to maintain Lyric Stage and its service.

Out of this time of crisis, innovations such as The Walking Plays and Lyric First Page originated.

THE WALKING PLAYS

Sponsored by First Republic Bank and WBUR, The Walking Plays are a series of audio plays commissioned by the Lyric Stage and set in public, outdoor locations. Local playwrights were assigned their section of one of several connected routes and asked to incorporate one character from the previous play. Thousands of listeners have streamed these free plays from the Lyric Stage’s website or from a number of hosting channels. Last summer, the company collaborated with the Rose Kennedy Greenway for the installation of three plays, with the Greenway placing QR code decals, prompting visitors to enjoy the audio plays.

LYRIC FIRST PAGE

Sensing that the winter of 2020 would be long and dark for Boston’s youth, Lyric Stage partnered with Boston Public Schools to create a playwriting opportunity for area young people. The partners assembled a reading committee, giving each submission feedback. Eight plays were selected for readings over Zoom, which were directed by Lyric Stage staff and featured professional artists from Lyric Stage productions or from KidStage.

KIDSTAGE AT THE BOSTON CHILDREN’S MUSEUM

Since 1988, City Stage (which merged with Lyric Stage in 2019) has created hands-on exhibits, participatory plays, and education programs through a strong partnership with the Boston Children’s Museum. At the Museum’s KidStage, City Stage Co. actors present between 800 and 1,000 annual performances for as many as 65,000 children and their families. For many attendees, kids and adults alike, KidStage is their first exposure to live theatre. Lyric Stage and the Boston Children’s Museum both offer reduced admission prices through the Massachusetts Cultural Council’s EBT Card to Culture Program.

The Children’s Museum has opened at limited capacity over the summer. Lyric Stage is investigating new ways of supporting their mission, including adapting plays that emerge from Lyric First Page for KidStage, and producing fuller theatre for young audience shows at the Museum after hours.

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Cabaret Series

In January 2021, Yewande Odetoyinbo performed the first of three on-line cabarets in support of Lyric Stage. This was followed by Leigh Barrett and Erica Spyres, all Lyric Stage artists, and all working from home, providing an intimate experience, as Lyric Stage audiences have come to expect.

CHANGES AT 140 CLARENDON ST.

During the pandemic, it was announced that YW Boston would sell the building that the Lyric Stage has called home since 1991 to Beacon Communities. Beacon intends to convert the building to affordable housing from the fifth floor up, maintaining the Lyric Stage’s fourth floor rehearsal space, and its second floor performance space and offices. The new partnership promises to be fruitful as Beacon will closely work with Lyric Stage on improved signage and audience amenities. The parties have signed a new, long-term lease confirming 140 Clarendon Street as the Lyric Stage’s forever home.

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