



ABLE
artists breaking limits & expectations

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2018
July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018



A MESSAGE FROM A.B.L.E.

Hello A.B.L.E. Family,

Well, I feel like we say this every year, but **FY18 was truly the biggest season yet for A.B.L.E.** We celebrated our **second birthday** as a 501c3. We welcomed several **new actors and facilitators** to the ensemble. Our teens got standing ovations for 2 stage plays, including a **record-breaking production of *Cyrano de Bergerac* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater.** We officially **launched programming for adults ages 22+.** We more than doubled our fundraising goal for the year thanks to a windfall of **individual giving.** There is much to celebrate, and the following pages will give you a deeper look at these and other highlights from this season.

None of this would be possible without the the strength of our community and the beautiful relationships that come from the work we do. A.B.L.E.'s accomplishments are a testament to **our dedicated staff and volunteers** who share their considerable talent, time, and hearts with our actors. Whether its assisting in rehearsals, crafting costumes and props, or simply spreading the word about our program to their networks, they go above and beyond for our actors. Countless **organizations and individuals** have rallied behind our mission and aided us in creating platforms for individuals with disabilities to share their voices. You can read their names throughout this report. To each of them, we are eternally grateful.

And we're grateful to you too. Thank you for believing, like we believe that everyone is A.B.L.E. to connect, A.B.L.E. to contribute and A.B.L.E. to create. With your support, we can keep creating opportunities for individuals of all abilities to collaborate on theatre and film projects, and in the process, share who they are and all that they are A.B.L.E. to do. Stay with us on this adventure, and I'm sure next year will be our biggest season yet...again!

With gratitude,



Katie Yohe, *Founder & Artistic Director*

OUR 2017-2018 SEASON TEAM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nancy Buchanan, *treasurer*
Matt Maxwell, *secretary*
Kendra Van Kempen, *trustee*
Katie Yohe, *president*

TEACHING ARTISTS

Kaylie Honkala
Sean Okerberg
Katie Yohe

FACILITATORS

Somer Benson
Braden Cleary
Shannon Diegel*
Lawrence Kern
Emma MacLean*
Kate Magon
Alison Perrone
Jenna Rapisarda*
Madeleine Rostami*
Michael Russell*
Beth Sherwood
Susan Sjodin
Lindsay Stock
Kendra Van Kempen
Peter Van Kempen
Adele Wilhelm*
Polly Yukevich

**denotes first season with A.B.L.E.*

SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

THE SPY WHO KNEW ME WORLD PREMIERE

After almost 2 years of planning, pre-production, fundraising, filming, and editing, we debuted A.B.L.E.'s second feature film, *The Spy Who Knew Me*, in a red carpet event at The Landmark Century Center Cinema on September 16. Our cast, crew, and supporters packed the theatre for a first glimpse at our original spy movie and celebrated in a post-show reception at one of our filming locations.

Since the premiere, we have hosted private screenings and talkbacks of *The Spy Who Knew Me* at Vaughn Occupational High School, Northwestern University, and Misericordia. *The Spy Who Knew Me* was also named an official selection for the 2018 Chicago Onscreen Showcase and will be shown through the Movies in the Parks programs at multiple screenings in August 2018.



GEMS UNSEEN

On Saturday December 2nd, our ensemble presented A.B.L.E.'s thirteenth stage production, *Gems Unseen*, to packed house at Victory Gardens Biograph Theater.

Over the course of 10 weeks, the ensemble of 21 actors, supported by a team of teaching artists and volunteers, devised their own tales for this performance around the central theme of inner beauty vs. outer beauty. Our devised shows are always special because they show the depth of our ensemble, and reveal what's in their hearts and minds. Actors built stories from the ground up, collaborating on every detail from scripting to staging. The finished performance featured 4 stories about 4 very different characters and the talents and strengths that lie beneath the surface.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

We were overjoyed to return to Chicago Shakespeare Theater on Thursday, May 17, 2018 with an original adaptation of Edmond Rostand's classic story *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Actors spent the first several weeks of the spring semester working with teaching artists and facilitators to learn the characters and plot. In the final performance, actors shared roles, with each playing multiple characters —giving everyone a chance to be in the spotlight.

Cyrano was a landmark performance on many fronts. We smashed records for attendance (421 audience members!) and fundraising (over \$1200 in donations)!

We partnered with industry leader C2 to provide captioning for audience members who are D/deaf/HOH.

Lastly, *Cyrano* marked the final bow for two founding ensemble members: Emily Kwidzinski and Emily Lavin.



SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

PARENTS TAKE A BOW!

To help families understand what happens in a typical A.B.L.E. rehearsal and build relationships with our teaching staff and facilitators, we hosted our first ever **Parent Classes**. Participants tried their hands at devising, dropping in, building tableaux, and more. This helps parents develop a vocabulary to reinforce the work we're doing in rehearsals. They also get to see our talented team in action and appreciate the work, energy, and heart that goes in to each rehearsal.



INCLUSIVE THEATER FESTIVAL

In November, A.B.L.E. joined companies from around the country at the **Inclusive Theatre Festival**, hosted by **Seesaw Theater Company** at **Northwestern University**. A.B.L.E. co-founders Katie Yohe and Lawrence Kern, along with actors Colleen Altman and Sam Radinsky presented on the programs history and methodology, and Katie also led a practical workshop around **Strategies for Devising Theater**.



DEVISING WORKSHOPS WITH FRANTIC ASSEMBLY

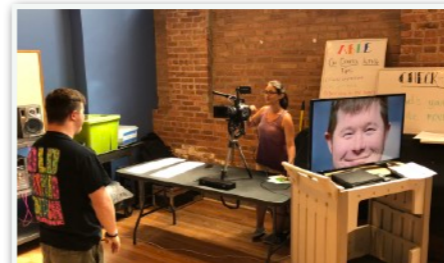
On November 5th, members of the ensemble took part in a special day of workshops with the internationally renowned company **Frantic Assembly**. Based in the UK, Frantic is known for their unique physical approach to creating theatre, and has been responsible for movement direction for *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, and the TV series *Humans*. Visiting practitioner **Krista Vuori** led two sessions for our ensemble focused on developing skills for building choreography, and storytelling through movement.



SUMMER WORKSHOPS

We officially launched programming for adult ages 22+ on June 12th with a 5-week workshop series. Each Tuesday, we focused on a different theme – improvisation, physical theatre, puppetry, Shakespeare, and on-camera acting – to help both new and experienced performers hone their personal skills and build a community.

Through the course of the program, we welcomed a mix of program alums as well as 6 brand new actors and we are well on the way to creating a regular ensemble in the fall!



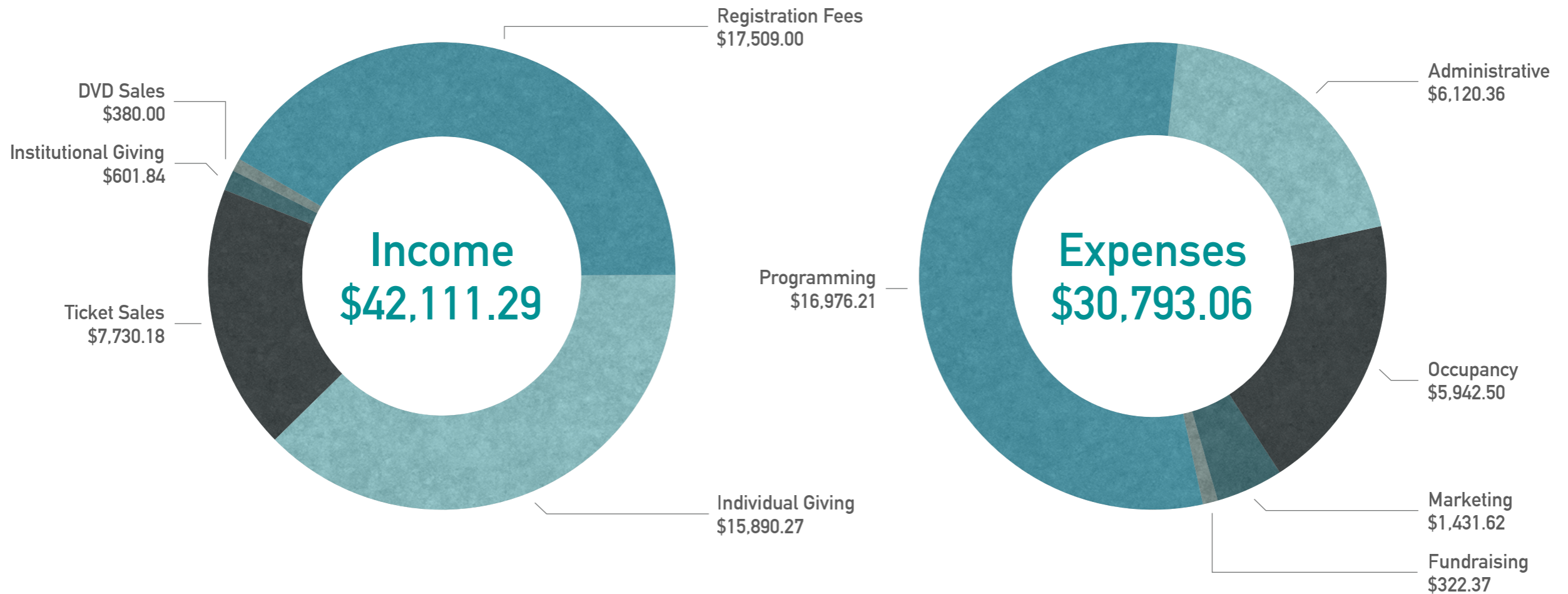
FIELD TRIPS

We enjoy the opportunity to connect with the professional theatre community around Chicago, and to expose our actors to different types of performance.

In February, we enjoyed *Short Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream* at **Chicago Shakespeare Theater**. In April, members of our ensemble saw **BoHo Theatre Company's** production of *Cyrano de Bergerac* at Theatre Wit and enjoyed discussing the play and characters with this professional cast.



BY THE NUMBERS



635

total tickets booked for our stage performances reaching 450 unique audience members



6

fundraisers organized by our Facebook fans, raising a total of \$2835 in individual donations



600+

hours volunteered by our facilitators across all of our programs and special events



31

actors enrolled in our ensembles and workshops, including 8 new actors



47

dance parties as we kicked off various rehearsals, workshops, and special events



2

actors graduated from our teen ensemble and will help launch the adult ensemble.



STRATEGIC GROWTH

This year, we took several steps to strengthen our organization from the inside out, and ensure that we have the capacity to grow into our long-term goals:

- ▶ Partnered with the **Arts and Business Council of Chicago's Business Volunteers for the Arts** program for an 8-month capacity building project. Our four-person **BVA team gave a combined total of 133 hours of consulting valued at \$19,950**. These consultants helped us to:
 - ▶ Assess **staff roles** to refine our **organizational structure** and workflow
 - ▶ Clarify and document **procedures and policies** on a range of HR topics
 - ▶ Update all of our **organizational materials** for our volunteers, staff, program parents and the public to ensure consistent and effective communication of program mission, goals, and procedures.
- ▶ Participated in the **Chicago Volunteer Expo** to connect with interested volunteers from around Chicago.
- ▶ Premiered an **incentive program to recognize our donors** at various levels.
- ▶ **Launched our Development Committee**, headed by several program parents and dedicated volunteers. In the first year, this committee has already exceeded fundraising goals. Most notably, our online **#giveable** campaign for **Giving Tuesday raised \$2100**. And our inaugural **Trivia Night** event in January raised over twice its original goal, earning a total of **\$4440** to support A.B.L.E.'s programs.

LOOKING AHEAD

Here are just a few goals we're working towards next season:



LAUNCHING THE ADULT ENSEMBLE

This fall we will offer two sessions on Tuesdays with actors collaborating to produce a variety show in December.



INVESTING IN OUR TEACHING ARTISTS

We are supporting the professional artists who make our programming possible by formalizing our teaching artist training program and raising salaries.



EXPANDING OUTREACH PROGRAMS

We are actively seeking partnerships with local organizations that serve individuals with I/DD to offer workshops and residencies.



GROWING THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We are excited to connect with passionate professionals who can serve as ambassadors for A.B.L.E. in their communities and help shape our growth in the years ahead.



INCORPORATING CAPTIONING

*After partnering with industry leader C2 for *Cyrano de Bergerac*, we are inspired to provide captioning to ensure we are creating accessible performances for both our actors and audiences.*



STRENGTHENING THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Our team has plans for the return of Trivia Night, as well as a Giving Tuesday campaign, and an end-of-season dance party. These fundraising efforts will support our new programming and staff.

THANK YOU TO OUR FY18 SUPPORTERS!

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

\$1000

Kelly & Michael Small

\$500+

The Bane Family
The Butler Family
The Lavin Family
Katherine Magon
Patrice Tuohy
Teresa Tuohy

\$250+

Greg Desmond
Carly & Ben Settle
Ruth Sharps
Gerard Toomey
Don Weiner
Tom & Maria Yohe

\$100+

Anonymous
The Altman Family
Neal Bader
Justin Bodary
Anna Boone
Bridgeview Bank, Edgewater
Diane Buchanan
Gerald & Michelle Buchanan
John & Nancy Buchanan
John & Sue Buchanan
Steve & Susan Buchanan
The Collins Family
Mary J. Cooke
Sean Curry
The Daley Family
Roberta Deakayne
Julianne Eisele
Scott Floersheimer
Ines Grzeslo
Renata & Ziggy Janik
Suzette Kern
Tom & Mary Kons

The Kosnik Family
The Kwidzinski Family
William Leclercq & Mary Tuohy
Philip Loftus
Annie Mabie
Christine Mars
Matthew Maxwell
Thomas McGuire
Michael Meyer
Ken & Mary Claire Moll
The O'Leary Family
Anne Philips
Lawrence & Maribeth Shover
Randall & Mary Smith
Susan Stewart
Nancy Tuohy
The Walsh Family

\$25+

Andrew Buchanan
Arlene Braker
Nate Buursma
Dana Calderone
Cynthia Cleary
Gerald & Patricia Cleary
Keith Cochran
Bryan Cothorn
Leslie Daly
Lawrence Daufenbach
Leslie DeSantis
Miki Ferenczy
Tony Fleming
Erin Folan
Jayson Goldman
Matt Goldstein
Martha Gottlieb
Victoria Huston-Elem
Palmer Jankens
Stephanie Janulis
Katrina Johnson
Rebecca Johnson
Colleen Kane
Kurt & Elsa Kern
Nickoleta Lytras
Dave Maxwell
Mark Maxwell

Chris McArdle
Bob Mohr
Sam Ostrowski
Nikki Palumbo
Catherine Pelech & Christopher Stucki
Ted Perez
Mary Petri
Anthony & Beth Pfeiffer
Danielle Rego
Sue Sirvinskas
Cathy Stix
John & Gail Tuohy
Sarah Tuohy
Patricia Walsh
Stacy Weiss
Karen Willems
Sandra Woodhouse

Under \$25

Allen Arthur
Joe Ayers
Scott Bates
Noelle Berry
Roseann Bishop
Corey Boyles
Cal Brackin
Candice Casazza
Braden Cleary
Casey Currey-Wilson
Marybeth Curry
Scott DeBlaze
Jeanne Denaro
Robin Elizabeth
Nina Ferraro
Sasha Fountain
Kristin Frasca
Tinika Green
Kaylie Honkala
Rosalind Hsu
Carrie Jackson
Aurora Jimenez
The Jones Family
Janella Jones
Madeleine Kemeny
Sande Kern
Josh Ko

Lauren Krass
Leyla Lacombe
Eva Laporte & Zach Lewis
The Medina Family
Kirsty Millar
Ben Morgan
Ted Neild
Barbara Okerberg
Martika Ornella
Alex Palma
Loraine Pearson
Paul Rescigno
Brayn Scartozzi
Rachel Shuttleworth
Stephanie Sottile
Gina Stepuncik
Linda Stock
Stephanie Toussaint
Grace Walsh
Margaret Wrenn
Kathryn Yohe

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Amazon Smile
Paypal Giving Fund
The Royal Central School for Speech & Drama

IN-KIND SUPPORT



ADDITIONAL THANKS

LIGHTING DESIGN

Eric Van Tassell
John Kelly

PROPERTIES

Alison Perrone

VENUE PARTNERS

The Menomonee Club Drucker Center
Victory Gardens Biograph Theater
Chicago Shakespeare Theater
Landmark Century Center Theater

ARTISTIC COLLABORATORS

BoHo Theatre Company
Rosie Bross
C2 Captioning
Frantic Assembly
Andrew Heckman
Rich Hein
Outspoken Creatives
Jessica Price
The Theatre School at DePaul, Props Dept.
Krista Vuori
Jill Yetsky

FRONT OF HOUSE VOLUNTEERS

Somer Benson
Rachel Buchanan
Nate Buursma
Meryn Daly
Julianne Eisele
Joel Furmanek
Lauren Francisco
Judith Henry
Andrew Kosnik
Carly Mulliken
Ben & Carly Settle
Katie Svec
Maria Yohe

ARTS & BUSINESS COUNCIL BUSINESS VOLUNTEERS

FOR THE ARTS

Vivian Colon
Laura Cook
Anne Foley
Suzanne Ross



REACH OUT

A.B.L.E. – ARTISTS BREAKING LIMITS & EXPECTATIONS

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