2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT



FROM LEADERSHIP

FRIENDS,

At first glance, the 2024-2025 season, our 47th, looks like a typical season for Studio. It featured plays by several significant writers of our time, both established and emerging, performed by terrific actors, and produced with artistry and skill. But dig a little deeper, and **the year reveals itself as one remarkably full of landmark events** in our institutional history.

It was a year in which the ambitions of our Open Studio campaign became reality. One of those ambitions: remaking one of our theatre spaces to hold more adventuresome and out-of-the-box stage design. This season, we produced our first fully immersive production in that space, transforming every inch of the Shargai Theatre into a Detroit jazz club circa 1949.

Another of Open Studio's major ambitions involved opening our building to the neighborhood. This year, we welcomed coffee shop Slipstream and cocktail bar Kbird into our facility. Now, most every day of the year, from 7am to late at night, patrons congregate for food, coffee, drinks, and theatre.

We also began producing off-subscription events again after a four-year hiatus, bringing back some programmatic flexibility and funkiness. We welcomed our first Fellows-in-Residence cohort, ten early-career artists and administrators who spent the season with us, and who were housed by Studio and compensated as full employees, with benefits. And at the end of the season, David announced his plans to step down as Studio's Artistic Director at the conclusion of our 2026-2027 season, after an incredible 17 seasons leading the institution.

The season was remarkable in at least two additional ways. It was a banner year for new playwrights and directors: all of the writers (save one) and all of the directors (save one) made their Studio debuts. It was also a standout year for individual giving: support from individuals increased by 23%, demonstrating the passion and commitment that our donors have for the work we do.

This report tells all of these stories—and more—in detail. The fact that you are reading this likely means that you have contributed in some significant way to our success. We offer you, and the rest of the Studio family, our sincerest thanks.

Yours

David Muse Artistic Director

Rebecca Ende Lichtenberg
Executive Director



FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

DEAR STUDIO SUPPORTERS,

Every season we strive to share the best in thought-provoking contemporary plays produced in uniquely intimate spaces that heighten the shared experience of live theatre. Looking back at the past year, it is exciting to see how multiple moments on 14th Steet, and beyond, come together to make a successful season at Studio Theatre.

Locally, this past season we served audiences from all eight wards of the District and across the DMV region, bringing them together to foster a more empathetic and connected community. We were honored to be voted by readers of the *Washington City Paper* as the Best Theater Company in the Best of DC 2025 awards.

And, for the first time, a show that Studio launched into the world with its world premiere production—*John Proctor is the Villain*—made its Broadway debut to critical and audience acclaim.

The heartbeat of Studio isn't just in the performances on stages—it's the people who make them possible. From our newest supporters to those who have increased their giving and stood with us for years, your belief in this theater fuels every rehearsal, opens the door to every new student and audience member who comes to see a show, and helps us train the next generation of theatre leaders.

As Chair of the Board of Trustees, I've had the privilege of working alongside a dedicated group focused on more than just the present moment. This year, we've been laying the groundwork for Studio's future—strengthening our finances and building a foundation that will support risk-taking theater for years to come. We've worked to significantly expand the Board, broadening the perspectives represented, and have been preparing for the major transition in artistic leadership ahead.

What makes Studio extraordinary is the network of people who bring it to life: visionary artists, tireless staff and fellows, community partners with shared values, and of course, our generous donors and spirited audiences. Thank you for being part of this story—we couldn't do it without you.

Sincerely,

Rob BatarlaBoard of Trustees, Chair





OH MY HEART, OH MY HOME

BY CASEY JAY ANDREWS COMPOSED BY GEORGE JENNINGS & JACK BRETT **DIRECTED BY DOM ALLEN & STEVE MCCOURT** SEPTEMBER 6 - SEPTEMBER 22, 2024 STAGE 4

Studio kicked off its season by presenting storyteller/ designer Casey Jay Andrews' intimate and expansive piece Oh My Heart, Oh My Home, which uses a fully bespoke dollhouse—complete with tiny working lights, expansive landscapes, and detailed and evocative still life compositions related to the story Andrews unfurls about a woman, her grandfather, a meteorite shower, and the love story that shaped his life.

The show, a hit at the 2023 Edinburgh Fringe, represents Studio's ongoing commitment to showcase innovative work outside of our subscription series. We created a super-intimate space for this production, reconfiguring Stage 4 to accommodate just 36 audience members for each performance.

HOURS SPENT ON **OVER 28 PHONE CALLS TO CONFIRM** THE SHIPPING **PROGRESS OF** THE DOLLHOUSE **CENTRAL TO THE PRODUCTION DESIGN:** 24



school, follows a group of students doing their time until they can leave—only to find out they might be trapped at school and in a system that has no intention of letting them leave unscathed. The production marked not just Dave Harris's Studio debut, but that of his longtime collaborator, director Miranda Haymon, as well as the Studio debuts of the entire cast.

CONTRACT: 66%

Shana Lee Hill and Sabrina Lynne Sawyer, photo by Margot Schulman

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PAGE 4 | STUDIO THEATRE



Studio's production of *Summer, 1976* landed squarely in Studio's sweet spot: An intimate production featuring powerhouse performances from two great DC actors. Studio Cabinet Member Holly Twyford and DC stalwart Kate Eastwood Norris starred in David Auburn's memory play about the unlikely friendship between two women, blossoming over one bicentennial summer.

With a set by Lee Savage, conceptualized as a kind of retrospective of a friendship, *Summer, 1976* struck a chord with critics and audiences alike. The show was extended by three weeks and is one of the ten highest-grossing productions in Studio's history.

SQUARE FEET OF MAPLE VENEER USED FOR THE BOXES THAT LINED THE SET: 732

Holly Twyford and Kate Eastwood Norris, photo by Margot Schulman



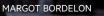
Irene Hamilton and Jaysen Wrigh photo by DJ Corey Photography

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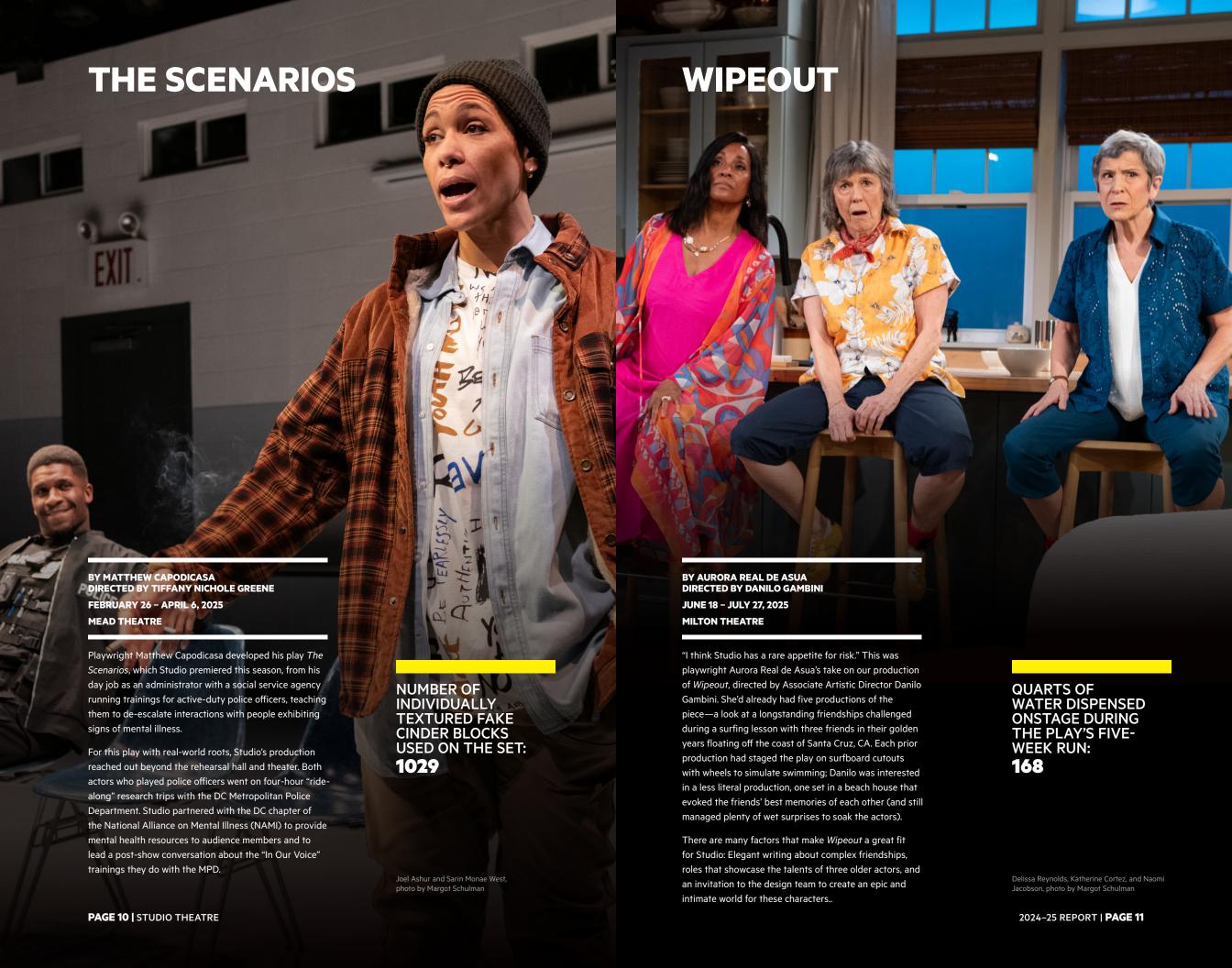
is our new work incubator, and the 2024-2025 season brought the first major professional production for new-to-DC playwright Matthew Capodicasa (*The Scenarios*) and saw our first director commission land onstage with Raymond O. Caldwell's immersive production of *Paradise Blue*. We increased our commission rate for playwrights and commissioned an additional seven artists: Directors Taylor Reynolds (*Fat Ham*), Margot Bordelon (*The Mother Play*), and Steve H. Broadnax III (*The Hot Wing King*) and playwrights Kate Eastwood Norris, Benedict Lombe, Marcelo Dos Santos, and Noah Diaz.

Kalen Robinson, photo by Margot Schulman

Morisseau's Paradise Blue into the full space of the

Victor Shargai Theatre.

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2024-2025 PRESS

"Muse's keen curation has strengthened Studio's reputation as a destination for thoughtful and provocative work engaged in dialogue with the present."

-The Washington Post

"An intimate experience that will reach into your soul and make you roar with laughter in the same breath."

-MD Theatre Guide on Wipeout

"One of the most captivating theatrical experiences in D.C. this year"

-The Washington Post on Paradise Blue

"Every scene frames a different moral dilemma, and that's what makes *Downstate* so remarkable."

-Washington City Paper on Downstate "A blistering, raw, yet undeniably tender and compassionate take on the third rail of policing... Capodicasa's play is about more than meets the eye, with crisp dialogue, multiple themes, and provocative ideas."

-DC Theater Arts on

The Scenarios

"D.C. theater at its best."

-The Washington Post on Summer, 1976

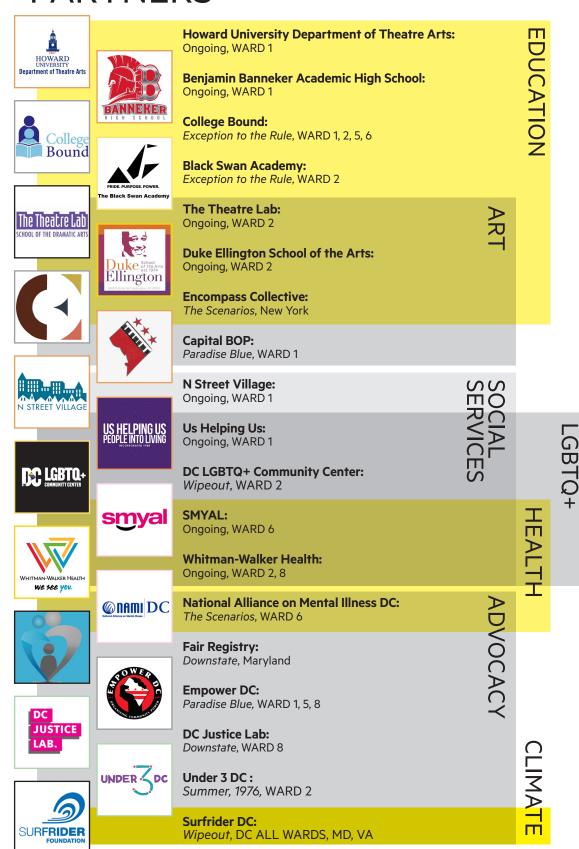
"Hopeful, terrifying at times, laughout-loud funny at others"

-MD Theatre Guide on Exception to the Rule

WASHINGTON CITY PAPER'S BEST OF DC 2025 BEST THEATRE COMPANY



COMMUNITY PARTNERS



FELLOWS-IN-RESIDENCE



Nora Geffen, Clarissa Briasco-Stewart, Anastasiya Rakova, Isabella Pedraza, Gursimrat Kaur, Adrian Knappertz, Juliana Shriver, Brian Martinez, Eliza Snipes, and Blake Berggren

Over the course of two years, Studio increased its investment in a longstanding workforce development program, transforming it into a prestigious fellowship that brings early-career professionals to Studio for hands-on training in directing, producing and community engagement, business administration, marketing and communications, electrics, production management, sound and projections, stage management, and technical direction.

Studio Theatre's inaugural class of Fellows-in-Residence took their positions at the start of the 2024-2025 season. The Fellows are now provided with housing, a living wage, and full benefits in alignment with full-time staff.

"The production fellows get great opportunities for gaining practical work experience. We're included in production meetings, we connect with our corresponding designers/managers, and the tech process shows you what a professional career in your field would realistically look like."

-Adrian Knappertz, Sound and Projection Fellow

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Student matinees at Studio bring DC public and public charter high school students to see Studio productions with free tickets and transportation. Students also receive a specially developed curriculum guide and participate in a post-show conversation with cast members.

In the fall, Studio held two matinees for the high school-set *Exception to the Rule*, and in the spring, students attended two matinees of *Paradise Blue*.



Sabrina Lynne Sawyer, Khouri St.Surin and Jacques Jean-Mary in Exception to the Rule, photo by Margot Schulman



Marty Austin Lamar and Amari Cheatom in *Paradise Blue* photo by Margot Schulman

"I appreciate coming, I love being closer to the actors because it makes the plot feel more real"

 Student from Bard High School Early College DC after Paradise Blue "This was an amazing play!"

- Student from Cardozo Education Campus after Exception to the Rule

Discussion with the cast of Exception to the Rule following a student matinee

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2024-2025 ANNUAL BENEFIT

A NIGHT AT THE PARADISE

Studio's Annual Benefit took inspiration from *Paradise Blue*, creating a unique evening filled with energy, passion, and live jazz performances by Felicia Curry and Roz White. It was an incredibly special evening that raised over \$300,000, surpassing our fundraising goal and raising awareness for the Fellows-in-Residence program.









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FISCAL YEAR IN CONTEXT

Since the pandemic, Studio has been on a path to achieve a balanced budget. In FY25, we reduced the institution's operating deficit by 49% from the previous year. Excluding the last tranche of Covid relief funding that we received in FY24, total income for FY25 held steady. However, contributed income made up a larger percentage of total income due to significant growth in individual giving, which increased by 21% over the prior year. Corporate, foundation, and government support all remained flat. Subscriptions are holding relatively steady and make up 38% of overall ticket revenue.

Single ticket sales continue to be volatile. While two productions from the season made it into the top ten highest-grossing shows list, total single ticket sales were down by 1% from the prior year, though they still exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Space rental income continued its steady growth trajectory and exceeded \$0.5M this year, including lease income from the opening of the new café and bar on site.

Total expenses decreased slightly from the prior year. The season included the same number of mainstage productions as last year, but we also presented a show that was not part of the subscription package for a total of seven productions. Differing run lengths kept programming expenses flat. The launch of the Fellows-in-Residence Program increased staffing

costs by approximately 4%, which was offset by reductions in other areas.

We covered the deficit with remaining surplus funds from FY21 and FY22, which will also sustain us in FY26 as we move towards income covering expenses by increasing fundraising and space rental income.

Assets Cash and Receivables \$1,648,274 Investments \$10,768,486 Property and Equipment \$20,328,010 Other Assets \$456,964 Total Assets \$33,201,735 Liabilities and Net Assets Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses \$296,147

Loans & Notes Payable \$8,313,895
Other Liabilities \$372,013

Total Liabilities \$9,797,851
Net Assets \$23,403,884

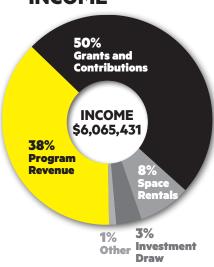
Total Liabilities and

\$815,796

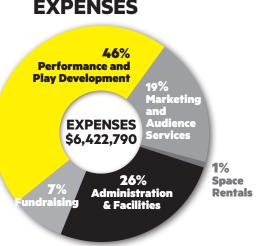
Deferred Revenue

Net Assets \$33,201,735

ANNUAL OPERATING INCOME



ANNUAL OPERATING **EXPENSES**



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Delissa Reynolds and Katherine Cortez, photo by Margot Schulman

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*In memoriam

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