

2017/2018



Sarasvati Productions Annual Report



Year in Review

This year we reached out to our newest community members both by premiering *New Beginnings* (based on the stories of over 100 newcomers) and taking stories of youth adjusting to the transition to Canada to schools with the first leg of the *Home 2.0* tour; we showcased powerful stories in our International Women’s Week Cabaret 2018 – *I Am Unstoppable*; we broke barriers with FemFest 2018—*Staging Resistance*; and began the important work of exploring our role in reconciliation. Plus offered regular workshops for emerging artists and youth. All told we provided a platform for hundreds of individuals to share their stories and allowed thousand to gain new perspectives.



Home 2.0 School Tour



New Beginnings



Int'l Women's Week Cabaret



The Game at FemFest

Support Sarasvati Productions

If you care about the work we do, we can use your help! As a registered charity we provide tax receipts for all donations. Mail in a donation to the address on the back or donate to our endowment fund at the Winnipeg Foundation (www.wpgfdn.org).



Become a Sarasvati Supporter today!

Vision Statement

Transform society through theatre.

Inspire, Challenge, Change

International Women's Week Cabaret of Monologues

In 2018, our celebration of women's voices was the most accessible yet, with the first time inclusion of ASL interpretation and a wide range of artists. The monologues were all focused on the theme *I Am Unstoppable* with pieces written by playwrights from across Canada as well as new work presented by local artists. Two performances were held in the theatre to full crowds. We also presented in community venues all over Manitoba, including: the University of Winnipeg, North End Women's Centre, Agape House (Steinbach), the University of Manitoba, Mount Carmel Clinic, Ukrainian Labour Temple, Interlake Women's Resource Centre and St. Aidan's School. We received enthusiastic responses from audiences. In total 393 people saw the monologues at

the various venues.

The event continues to be a way to do important community outreach and give voice to a variety of perspectives in one evening. We did also help several other agencies fundraise at their own events and raise awareness.



"I am so full of all the wonderful ideas, writing and acting I've heard this afternoon! I just feel unstoppable. Sarasvati is so wonderful for providing the encouragement and the space for people to say all these things that would be left silent for so much longer. Thank you for giving us your voices- you're wonderful!" – Beverly Grace, Audience Member

"Both of the performances were well received by audience members. The Q & A portion afterwards was really great too! It's a shame that there aren't more opportunities throughout the year for the artists and performers to showcase their work, but the Womyn's Centre would definitely be interested in partnering again for next year's IWW." - Mubo Christine Ilelaboie, University of Manitoba

FemFest 2018: Staging Resistance

We produced FemFest 2018: *Staging Resistance* from September 15-22. We worked hard to try to incorporate at least some of the feedback from a recent consultation on the festival, as well as to explore new programming opportunities. The line-up included local productions produced by Sarasvati Productions, touring work from across Canada presented by the festival, an international production, readings of new works in development, opportunities for community interaction and skill development workshops.

Through FemFest 2018 we continued to showcase artists that aren't generally seen in Winnipeg. Topics addressed were racism, power inequity, colonisation, gender roles, the newcomer experience, a need to re-examine history and the role of artists in all of this. We did our seventh 'Bake-Off' in honour of Janet Taylor. The event helped five female playwrights develop new work and provided financial support for the winner, Alissa Watson, to keep writing. Donna-Michelle St. Bernard was our featured guest and spoke passionately to 75 students at U of W as well as offering a workshop for Black Space Winnipeg. Due to a partnership with Théâtre Cercle Molière, we were able to present a play in French as well as a reading of its Arabic translation, a first for the festival. We also had a very successful co-production with Manohar Performing

Arts of Canada leading to a final sold-out performance of *The Game*. We were so excited by the mix of dance, culture and theatre on stage as well as the resulting cultural diversity in the audience. We also offered a new Walking Art Tour. Total attendance for the festival was 1,263.

The festival continues to meet our mandate by providing a platform to tackle several social issues in, giving opportunities to those who are underrepresented in theatre, allowing for experimentation in form, and based on audience surveys attracting numerous first-time FemFest attendees.

FemFest has provided me many opportunities throughout my career to grow, be creative, and challenge myself, both as a theatre practitioner and an audience member. This festival and company continue to present some of the most ambitious and diverse theatre in Winnipeg and it is always an honour to be invited to participate among some of Canada's most talented artists, including over the years, Judith Thompson, Ivan Coyote, and Donna-Michelle St. Bernard. Sarasvati is a company that is willing to take a chance on artists (often when others are not) and they have proven the value of building relationships, listening to the community and larger conversation, and truly committing to making change in the world." - Tatiana Carnevale, Director



Donna-Michelle St. Bernard, *The Game*, and the Walking Art Tour

New Beginnings

As part of our larger project, we used our May slot for the world premiere of *New Beginnings*. After over two years in development and the participation of over a hundred in the story-gathering phase, we contracted a team of professional artists alongside newcomer artists for the full production. Total attendance was 836, over two hundred more than our previous May show. It also allowed us to work closely with organizations to bring in new audiences. By offering translation, transportation and childcare it was possible to welcome dozens of refugees to experience the show. In addition, the feasts and conversation circles following

performances led to powerful discussions and interaction among audiences taking the dialogue beyond the stage.

“Thank you for letting us be a part of such an important play. Everyone enjoyed the evening. Everyone from our group was able to connect with the play’s stories, it made them less fearful for the future knowing others who came before them experienced some of the same things they experienced. I’ve heard nothing but positive response.” - Nafiya Naso, Operation Ezra



The cast of *New Beginnings*

Home 2.0

Our latest school tour was launched in October. It came directly from stories of newcomer youth. In this fiscal year, there were 1,600 who saw the show. As in past years, we opened it up to the full community with a preview at Graffiti Gallery and a public viewing at the Millennium Library. The interactive Forum Theatre style continues to be effective in working with youth. We also had a culturally diverse cast who were able to bring their own experiences to the

show. The performance was also seen by education students and teachers, many of whom said afterwards that they now understood the power of using theatre to develop empathy.

We were particularly excited to increase the number of presentations outside of Winnipeg, by including additional schools in rural Manitoba.

Home 2.0 was an innovative play that showed many of the worst case scenarios that refugees face when immigrating. Not only was the play outstanding, but adding the parts where viewers were allowed to interact with the actors and potentially change the outcome of the play, made you truly think about how you can impact the lives of others through simple actions.

– Grace, grade 12, Seven Oaks School Division

Capacity Building

This was again a great year for capacity building. A new full-time Administrator position started in November 2017. In addition, more core and multi-year funding allowed for long-term planning.

We were able to continue to fund the part-time Associate Producer role through various projects. We once again received internship funding from Young Canada Works and CHRC for a production/tour coordinator. Summer students continued to be a valuable part of the FemFest team.

The Board has continued to play a crucial role in keeping Sarasvati Productions going and the staff have been grateful for their support. Having a full Board complement with a range of perspectives has allowed for healthy discussions about the best way forward – this is very much appreciated.

Workshops

We continued to offer a series of workshops as part of our goal to provide development to a range of artists. In 2017/18, we offered workshops on monologue work, voice, grant writing, devising for theatre, plus ‘Coffee with a Pro’ sessions on playwriting, directing and dramaturgy. We also did a 10-week series of workshops for students at Children of the Earth and Gonzaga Middle School with guest facilitators. We were also invited to do theatre-based workshops for additional community groups.

Financials

Sarasvati has again performed well in 2017/18 continuing to provide an incredible level of theatrical work and community outreach.

We exceeded our budget goals due to one-time special funding for *New Beginnings* and community workshops. This increased revenue also led to increased expenses but ultimately we ended with a

small surplus adding to our modest accumulated surplus.

Our Endowment Fund continues to grow due to the support of the Winnipeg Foundation. With new core funding the outlook for the next fiscal year is extremely positive and will allow for long-term planning and greater sustainability.

November 1, 2017 to October 31, 2018

Total Revenue: \$362,751

Total Expenses: \$361,743

Surplus/Deficit: \$1,008

Accumulated Surplus/Deficit: \$1,168

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Board of Directors

In the 2017/18 fiscal year, we were pleased to welcome new Board members Olatunbosun Amao, Susan Cuvelier, Shahid Khan, Danielle Morrison, Debbie Norman and Cindy Singer.

They brought knowledge from finance, healthcare, legal and charity backgrounds to the table. They have been a wonderful complement to Board members already in place.

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Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba
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