



**GUILFORD
PERFORMING
ARTS
FESTIVAL**

2021 IMPACT REPORT

“It was ... visceral this year”



6

world
premieres

1,000

audience members

56

performers

450

artist talkback
attendees

280

workshop
students



Iddi Saaka collaborated with dancer Shirley Sullivan and musician John Dankwa to premiere the dance duet *Blurring the Surface*, about racial identity and racism in American society. Saaka also taught three classes in West African dance, history and culture.



There was a moment

before the opening of this year's festival when I walked into the tent as the cast of *All the World's a Stage* did one last run-through. I watched, listened—and choked up. It was hard for me to believe that with Covid still lurking and so many people's lives consumed with matters of life, death and financial survival and with philanthropy justifiably prioritizing human health and economic relief, we were actually holding a festival. Yet, here we were.

By the end of the weekend, 56 artists had appeared on stage and about 1,000 people had attended six shows; nearly half stuck around for post-performance talkbacks. Some 150 attended festival workshops on the Green and at Shoreline Ballet, and 130 Guilford High School students learned various aspects of drama, music and dance from festival performers.

While we couldn't have been happier with the quality of the performance and teaching, what sticks is the beauty and emotional impact of the content: so powerfully reflective of the times in which we've been living, and so viscerally performed. People told us that folks would be yearning for

live performance by the fall of 2021, and indeed they were. The enthusiasm of performers, the engagement of audiences and the generosity of supporters exceeded our expectations—by far.

With the financial climate uncertain, we kept things lean, limiting the event to one venue and only the six new works by recipients of our Artists' Awards grants, supported by a modest budget. An unexpected benefit was that we produced a small surplus, which we'll invest in our next challenge: moving beyond startup status.

After three festivals as an all-volunteer organization, we recognize that's not sustainable and we're working on an operating model that is. We'll eventually seek an executive director, though we may take an interim step of hiring marketing, production and administrative help for 2023. We appreciate your participation in and support for the festival, and we hope you'll join us as we take this next step in our evolution.

**“Great and creative
way to adapt to these
challenging times.”**

Peter Hawes, *Acting chairman*

Live Performance

We premiered six original works by Connecticut performers, commissioned all or in part through our Artists' Awards grants. All shows were free, and an average of 165 people attended each show, for a total audience of about 1,000 in this Covid-impacted season.



Photo: Hillary Carrigan

The Skyler Hagner Nonet premiered the suite *Humanity, Memory and Decay*, which uses Italo Calvino's novel *Invisible Cities* as a launching point to explore memory, culture, society's health and the nature of human experience. Hagner also taught jazz composition and arrangement at Guilford High School. Dimensional Dance premiered its work *Prudence Crandall and Sarah Harris: Whole-Souled Women*, which tells the story of the stoning of a Connecticut school that accepted a Black student in the 1830s.



Photo: Bob Handelman

Creative Education

Five festival performers taught 11 free workshops and master classes for Guilford High School students and members of the public—teaching the practice and cultural context of music, dance and drama to nearly 300 students of all ages.

A staged reading premiered lesbian playwright Emily Breeze's *The Homewrecker*, co-written with Marialena DiFabbio and directed by Jessica Slaght. It uses the Helen of Troy story to explore queerness, sisterhood, family and how a small town reacts when a woman comes home "different." Breeze also taught classes at Guilford High School in adaptations, women in musical theatre and making a living as a freelance artist.

"When artists who understand educational theatre and truly are teachers come in to visit . . . the world opens up for these kids."

Cara Mulqueen-Teasdale
Guilford High School Theatre Arts Department Chair



Photo: Peter Hawes

Lively Discussion

Each festival performance was followed by a talkback in which audience members questioned artists about their life stories, cultures, art forms, inspirations, motivations, challenges and messages—and shared their reactions. More than half of every audience stayed around for the talkbacks.



Photo: Peter Hawes



Photo: Rey Yanez

Julie Fitzpatrick, left, interviewed 75 Guilford residents for her play *All the World's a Stage: A Guilford Love Story*, which weaves the words of Shakespeare with diverse voices from the community to reveal how people coped with life in a pandemic and found connection, love and compassion in unexpected places. Fitzpatrick also led a workshop in creating spoken-word dramatic scenes.

The Credits

Without the energy, skill, knowledge and experience, imagination, creativity, passion and dedication of these people and organizations, there could not have been a 2021 festival.



Photo: Joeline Connellan

Thomas/Ortiz Dance premiered the group dance *Together* and performed other pieces, while co-Artistic Director Ted Thomas taught classes in movement and Taylor dance technique. *Together* explored through movement the impact of isolation on individuals and communities.

Volunteers

James Abdelrahman
Noah Baerman
Suzie Balestracci
Susan Cinoman
Christine Cohen
Howard Cohen
Sandy Connolly
Judy Davies
Richard Davies
Joyce DiLauro
Eric Dillner
Alicia Dolce
Thom Duffy
Ted Ervin
Kristy Faulkner
Bill Freeman
Simone Gell
Mark Gothberg
Vera Guibbory
Barbara Hentschel
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Libby Kingsbury
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Paul Listro
Wendi Little
Catherine Maltese
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Tom McCarthy
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Dana Nelson
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Meg Smith
Elise Powell

Evie Velazquez
Sheila Whitman
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Fiona Wood

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Partners

Adams Middle School
First Congregational Church
Guilford High School
Guilford Parks and Recreation
Shoreline Arts Alliance
Shoreline Ballet
Town of Guilford

*We'd especially like to thank
Sheri Cote, Eric Dillner, Jackie Downing,
Andy Eder, Dan Fitzmaurice, Jennifer
Heath, Dee Jacob, Helen Kauder,
Gary Parrington, Liza Petra, Sarah
Shrewsbury and Nick Stuccio for their
advice and guidance as we steered
through the many challenges of 2020-21.*

We are indebted to these angels for their generous financial support of the festival!

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Donors

Gifts received between 1/1/20 and 12/1/21. We sincerely apologize if we have omitted anyone!

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2020-2021 Financial Statement

INCOME

Individual donors

Board \$12,752
Major Donors \$12,250
Other \$2,711
Total: \$27,713

Foundation grants

Community Foundation for Greater New Haven \$4,299
Connecticut Humanities \$4,999
Guilford Foundation \$5,000
Guilford Fund for Education \$3,300
Guilford Rotary Club \$1,000
Total: \$18,298

Sponsors

Francine Collections \$500
Palumbo's Automotive \$1,000
Shoreline Ballet (in-kind)
Walden Hill Woodworks \$500
Total: \$2,000

Other

Advertisers \$1,700
Facebook Campaigns \$555
Free Will Donations \$1,368
Great Give \$8,650
Taste of the Festival Benefit \$14,375
Total: \$26,648

Total Income: \$74,660

EXPENSES

Accounting \$3,500
Artists' Awards Grants \$15,000
Capacity Building \$5,000
Insurance \$2,002
Marketing \$6,021
Performer Fees \$3,300
Taste of the Festival Benefit \$8,586
Production Costs \$24,385

Total Expenses: \$67,794

SURPLUS: \$6,866

The background of the entire image is a photograph of the interior of a tent. At the top, several strings of warm-toned incandescent lights are strung across the frame. The tent's structure, including its poles and fabric, is visible in the upper half. The lower half of the image is filled with thick, white smoke or fog that rises from the bottom, creating a dreamy and atmospheric effect. The overall lighting is soft and warm, with the light from the string lights illuminating the smoke and the tent's interior.

“

We were all craving live performance,
and those who came were generally
uplifted and felt **rays of hope**
from the festival.

The content and subject matter of the
performances were very timely and
appropriate, and offered **different**
perspectives we may not otherwise have
had access to see or hear.

”

Power of people coming together, power
of artists to help us process what is
going on in the world and in our lives.

I wish it was a whole week!