

THE SOONER THEATRE OF NORMAN, INC.

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2022-23





LOOKING BACK, PLANNING AHEAD

This report highlights our most recent completed Fiscal Year, beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023, based on the date it is due to the City of Norman (February 2024).

THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY

Each year for the past 14 years, the City of Norman has invested \$65,274 in funding for salaries at The Sooner Theatre. This amount represented 6.5% of our total budget in FY '23, which was \$1,003,860 and 23% of our contributed income, which for FY 2023 was \$281,310.

We are incredibly grateful to the City of Norman for the municipal funding, and we want you to know how proud we are to be stewards of The Sooner Theatre building.

More than 15,000 audience members attended Sooner Theatre events in person during FY '23. They spent, on average, \$44.21 per person in our community, with an economic impact of \$670,000. That number does not include audiences who viewed Sooner Theatre messaging online or through our social media channels, which was estimated at 224,900. In addition, parents of the hundreds of students enrolled at The Studio of The Sooner Theatre contribute to the economic impact created by The Sooner Theatre by purchasing dance clothes, dance shoes, makeup, hair and wig products and anything else needed. They also frequent restaurants and coffee shops in downtown Norman each week while they wait for students. And, the theatre purchases lumber, fabric and supplies locally to build every set and costume for every show. **Last year, we saw 1137 enrolled in camps and classes** at The Studio of The Sooner Theatre (up 18% from the previous year, **and gave \$38,160 back in scholarships for tuition to 230 students** who could otherwise not afford to participate.

According to the Norman Economic Development Coalition, the input from our salary base and contracted instructors, shows **an economic impact of nearly \$3,000,000.00** in the community annually. We are so proud of the impact we make on the Norman community and on communities surrounding Norman. And, we are extremely grateful for community leaders who understand the impact the arts have on our community!

THE SOONER THEATRE OF NORMAN

The Sooner Theatre is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and is truly a Norman landmark. The theater building is owned by the City of Norman. The Board and Staff of The Sooner Theatre of Norman Inc., are proud "stewards" of the management and activities of the facility, and have made significant investments of time, effort and resources to assure the survival of The Sooner - Norman's Premier Performing Arts Venue and Academy.

OUR MISSION

The mission of The Sooner Theatre is to change lives, offer diverse perspectives and create a cultural connection to the community through the performing arts and arts education.

OUR VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is to create a space for instilling creativity and passion for the arts, while providing a place for students to find their voices. We promote inclusion and healing through the arts and elevate the quality of life by providing diverse performing arts opportunities for all ages in our community.

OUR FUNCTION STATEMENTS

PRESENT quality theatrical productions

PROVIDE quality performing arts instruction for students ages 3-18

PROVIDE a quality venue for the presentation of cultural, artistic, educational and community development activities that improve the quality of life for our citizens and to **SERVE** as an historic anchor for the development of partnerships with other arts and business entities to create a revitalized, downtown arts district for Norman.

DIVERSITY MATTERS

The Sooner Theatre strives to provide programming that is diverse in all aspects. We actively seek ethnic, gender and ability diversity in casting our productions and selecting concert artists. We are diversity conscious in all casting, insuring we are making as diverse decisions as possible while keeping with the intent of the writer and the story we are telling. We welcome ideas in increasing the number of diverse artists, students and audience members in all we pursue. We have spoken to the City of Norman about getting hearing assisted devices. We can print or email large-print programs on request for those with vision impairment, and we also work with groups whose clients may be from under-served populations, including the United Way, Transition House, Norman Public Schools and others. We send information on programming and scholarships to all public elementary schools for distribution to all families in the Norman Public Schools. Theatre doesn't work if we cannot tell stories with ALL types of people and characters to and for ALL people.





THE SOONER THEATRE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President, Lindsay Hawkins, OU K-20 Center
 Vice President, LeAnne Pence, CPA
 Treasurer, Stephanie Keller, Eide Bailly
 Secretary, Kristi Pate, Retired educator
 Past President, Vicki Worster, Total Compliance

Dorion Billups, University of Oklahoma
 Kerri Brackin, Oil & Gas
 Debbie Kelleher, Retired Educator
 Karen McIntosh-Telford, Dillard Cies
 Beth Pepper, Eide Bailly Accounting
 Juan Renteria, Jr., NPS Educator
 Olivia Spruill, NPS Educator

Advisory Members

Jason Olsen, City of Norman
 Mark Ledbetter, Armstrong Bank
 Tom Cooper, Vision Bank
 Chuck Thompson, Armstrong Bank



SOONER THEATRE STAFF

Jennifer Heavner Baker, Executive Director	Darrell Ferguson, Construction Manager
Nicki Kraisky, Business Manager (part-time)	Tish Willis, Studio Manager
Nancy Coggins, PR & Development Director	Brandon Adams, House Operations Manager
	Production Manager position - open

STAFFING

Our mission, function and program direction have, each year, been approved by the City administration, and Municipal money has been provided for The Sooner to have a firm “base” for staffing the facility, and on which to build its activities. According to Theatre Facts, A Report on Practices and Performances in the American Nonprofit Theatre, a typical theatre our size, with a similar County population, and the same amount of programming will have 10 full time employees. Our current staff manages both The Sooner Theatre and The Studio of The Sooner Theatre with 4 full-time and 2 part-time employees. We also

utilize the Federal Work Study program at OU, when the opportunity arises. The Sooner Theatre utilizes contract labor for teachers, directors, choreographers, music directors, musicians and accompanists.

In January 2023, the Sooner Theatre moved **all HR functions to NexTep** in order to be better able to access reporting and to maintain and recruit employees. The Sooner's current \$1,003,860 budget **does not currently include anyone designated to supervise benefits and human resources**, and the theatre does not feel spending money on a full-time staff member to do that is the best utilization of our limited resources. Instead, we will pay an annual fee to have NexTep manage that function for us. NexTep provides health insurance that we cover for our employees, as well as voluntary participation in a 401(k), life insurance, dental and vision insurance, and so much more we could not provide access to without their help.

USE OF PAST CITY OF NORMAN FUNDING

Salaries 2003/2004 \$86,847.27	Salaries 2013-2014 \$197,617.35
Salaries 2004/2005 \$94,534.36	Salaries 2014-2015 \$197,425.55
Salaries 2005/2006 \$108,541.76	Salaries 2015-2016 \$195,934.77
Salaries 2006/2007 \$141,000.00	Salaries 2016-2017 \$205,467.27
Salaries 2007-2008 \$146,473.00	Salaries 2017-2018 \$235,314.47
Salaries 2008-2009 \$187,202.00	Salaries 2018-2019 \$243,693.22
Salaries 2009-2010 \$184,516.00	Salaries 2019-2020 \$254,486.07
Salaries 2010-2011 \$190,950.00	Salaries 2020-2021 \$243,408
Salaries 2011-2012 \$194,600.00	Salaries 2021-2022 \$253,017
Salaries 2012-2013 \$168,832.83	Salaries 2022-2023 \$275,071

The Municipal money we received in the amount of **\$65,274** was approximately **23.7%** of our payroll expenses (FY 2023). We have not asked for or received an increase since 2009, because we try to be mindful of the city's budget restrictions and we are grateful for the continued care of the building. But with a collective increase of 35.4% in our budget costs since the last increase, **we would like to request an increase of \$23,107 for FY 2024-25 to a total of \$88,381.**

Because we receive this money from the City of Norman, we are able to allocate other funding in our budget to programming that supports underserved populations in our community, including scholarships provided to students who otherwise would be unable to participate in performing arts programs due to cost, training instructors to provide specialized instruction for special needs students, and to participate in partnerships with community groups including CCFI and Assistance League to identify and give access to underserved populations.

The Sooner Theatre's **earned revenue includes tickets to productions and concerts, tuition for classes** at our Studio, as well as rentals and concession sales. **Percentage of total budget (\$1,003,860) from ticketing was 25.7%, tuition revenue was 41.4%, rentals and concessions**

is 5.3%, and **contributed revenue donations/fundraisers was 28%** of our total budget.

THEATRE ACTIVITY

Our programs serve **quality of life** needs in the areas of culture, education, theatre and music for an increasing number of citizens. Our product tells what we stand for, what we want to offer the community and how well we know our business. At The Sooner Theatre, we host professional artists to first-timers and foster performers from 3 years old on up. Our presentations reflect our mission, our image and ultimately, they determine our survival. We embrace the fact that we are not just "Community Theatre" but "Theatre for the Community". **More than 15,000** people walked through our doors last year and we were able to track ticket sales to **83 Oklahoma zip codes and 22 out-of-state!** We hope you agree that The Sooner Theatre grants a major return for the City's investment.

In 2002, our Board of Directors approved a programming portfolio consisting of **seven initiatives**.

1. THE MAIN EVENT SERIES is The Sooner Theatre's concert series.

2022-2023 Season: Cutter Elliott Homecoming

Tickets to Main Event concert series shows are based on artist fees and other expenses.

Tickets for the FY '20 concert ranged from \$20-\$25.



2. SOONER STAGE PRESENTS is The Sooner Theatre's self-produced theatrical series.

2022-2023 Season: Little Shop of Horrors, The Wizard of Oz, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

Tickets to Sooner Stage Presents Theatrical productions range from \$12.50-\$35 dependent on discounts.



3. THE STUDIO OF THE SOONER THEATRE is The Sooner Theatre's performing arts academy. The Sooner Theatre's Theatre Arts Education program impacts hundreds of children ages 3-18 each year by providing outstanding performing arts education in a warm and welcoming environment. Year-round classes follow the Norman Public Schools schedule. Fall classes begin in September and offer cumulative learning concluding in April. Summer camps are held in June and July.



The Sooner Theatre's education program began in 2003 with one summer camp production that served 31 children. **Our total enrollment in 2022-2023 was 1137 (up 17% from 2022) from across the metro area.** The program has evolved into a year-round performing arts school with training in the areas of musical theatre, acting, improv, voice, and dance, as well as troupes that perform at various events throughout the community. We also make

it a point to bring in experts in our industry to present Master Classes to our students, and have hosted Broadway performers, National Tour performers, TV personalities, Broadway casting directors, and many others.

Studio students have been seen in many regional productions, including the OKC Philharmonic's *The Christmas Show*, OU productions, singing for the Thunder and Texas Motor Speedway, in many commercials and films and on hit Nickelodeon and Netflix series! Sooner Theatre students were also chosen as the munchkins in the National Tour of *The Wizard of Oz*, Winthrop in *The Music Man in Concert* with Shirley Jones, and Studio students were featured as walk-on roles in the Broadway tours of both *Camelot* and *Waitress*.



In January of FY'22, **Studio of The Sooner Theatre students attended the Junior Theatre Festival** in Atlanta for the sixth year, where our students were adjudicated and attended workshops with 6500 theatre students from across the country. **They were awarded Outstanding Ensemble in their pod and enjoyed all things musical theatre with 6500 attendees from the United States, United Kingdom, China, New Zealand and Australia!** One of their adjudicators stated, "There

must be some 'secret sauce' at that theater in Norman, Oklahoma, we hope you share it with everyone!" They were impressed with all aspects of our students' performance, from skill level, to acting abilities to choreography and so much more!





BEYOND THE STAGE

There is no question that the productions of The Sooner Theatre are magical. The lights, the sound, the costumes, the sets and the talent we are lucky enough to work with - both community theatre and our youth educational productions. But, you might not be aware of all the things that happen ***Beyond The Stage***.

Scholarships

Last fiscal year, The Studio of The Sooner Theatre gave \$38,600 in **scholarships** to 230 students who could otherwise not afford to participate in performing arts classes and camps. This includes awardees of the Laurie McReynolds Memorial Scholarship, which we award by working with local non-profits, counselors and principals at Norman Public Schools elementary schools. This scholarship is awarded to a student from a diverse or underserved background chosen because of either their need for assistance, potential talent or passion for the arts, or because the student could use some help finding his or her voice.



Special Needs Classes



We are excited to offer classes for special needs students. Our **Be My Buddy** class pairs elementary-age students with a student from The Studio's ambassador performance troupes to learn songs and dances. This class has not been able to meet since the pandemic, but we hope to bring it back! We also have a class whose name says it all - **Fabulous Friday**! This group of teens and adults with Down syndrome will change your outlook on life. They are the most joyful, excited group of people you will ever meet. And, they can DANCE! Due to the high-risk population we serve through our

special needs programs, only our Fabulous Friday class was offered this year. **We serve many other differently-abled students in our regular classes including those on the spectrum, hearing disabled, vision disabled and mobility limited students.**

Tuition for Studio camps and classes ranges from \$125 for a one-week summer camp to \$550 for a school year production class. **We normally give back approx. 20% of our annual tuition** revenue in scholarships. For fiscal year 2023, total tuition revenue was \$415,387, and **scholarships given totaled \$38,600, which funded 230 instances of tuition and/or fees** over the last year.

4. SPECIAL EVENTS

We were able to hold both our major fundraising events in 2022-23, and were so excited to have audiences and performers back to help support the theatre! Murder Mystery is our annual fundraising dinner and show written, directed by and starring volunteers in our community. Voice of The Heartland is a bi-annual vocal competition featuring talented singers from around the region. Both events were enjoyed by more than 800 people!



5. RENTAL ACTIVITIES

Community organizations and individuals have the opportunity to rent the theatre for their activities, meetings or performances. Our rental revenue for 2022-23 was \$29,450.



Rental rates are approximately \$800-\$1000 per day for use of the theatre. We also rent the Studio event space for \$300-\$1200 per day.

Example of community rentals

- Various Community Churches
- Hispanic Flamenco Ballet
- Rocky Horror Picture Show
- Julia's Academy of International Dance
- Norman Chamber of Commerce
- Various Weddings & Engagements
- Pageants
- Norman Music Festival
- Various Dance Recitals
- Transition House's June Bug Jam
- Norman Police Academy
- OU School of Musical Theatre

6. SOONER CINEMA is The Sooner Theatre's film and video offerings.

We do not offer a film series at this time, we but normally host several events each year that do show films, including Norman Music Festival, Norman Film Festival, Moore-Norman Technology Center's Red Carpet Film Festival and Earth Rebirth Film Festival (as our production schedule allows).

7. OUTREACH AND DEVELOPMENT is our program designed to "give back". In addition to our programming, The Sooner is deeply rooted in the community.

Our Outreach and Development includes:

Partnering with United Way's Celebrity Sing, Citizen's Advisory Council, Norman Convention and Visitors Bureau, The Norman Public School's Gifted Council and the Norman Arts Council. We are represented at the Norman Downtowner's Association, Norman Arts Council's Roundtable, Norman Rotary, the United Way Cabinet, Assistance League, Norman Public Schools PTA, Norman Chamber of Commerce and several other organizations.

Our Studio Ambassador Performance Troupes, made up of 3rd-12th grade students, also perform regularly in the community. These troupes and soloists have performed for thousands of audience members at various events including: The Norman Music Festival, The Rodeo Opry, The OKC Thunder, OKC Arts Council's Opening Night, OKC Festival of the Arts, The State Fair of Oklahoma, Holiday Open Houses for the Norman Assistance League, Public School assemblies, Devon Arts Day, the 2009 Mayor's Convention, NAC Arts Explosion, The OKC Philharmonic, Allied Arts, The 100th Anniversary of the Depot, Norman Music Festival, Kids for Kids Sake, Earth Day, Texas Motor Speedway, the Andy Roddick Tennis Exposition, Norman's Centennial Follies, Lyric Theatre, Jewel Box Theatre, University of Central Oklahoma, OMEA All State Chorus, Oklahoma City's Centennial Parade, Norman Christmas Parade, Norman Public Schools, Oklahoma Summer Arts Institute, Norman Chamber of Commerce, May Fair, June Bug Jam, The Chocolate Festival, OEC's Annual Meeting and many more!

We also participate as in-kind donors for community events to include:

- Assistance League
- Community After School Program
- Norman Arts Council
- Toby Keith Foundation
- Le Tour de Vin
- United Way of Norman
- Meals on Wheels
- Among Friends ...an Activity Center for Adults with Special Needs
- Travelers Aid & Homeless Assistance Center
- Norman Regional Hospital
- Blanchard, Purcell, Lexington, Washington and other Public School Systems
- Oklahoma Statewide Independent Living Council
- Cleveland County Family YMCA
- Travelers Aid and Homeless Assistance Center
- Norman Public Schools
- Norman Chamber of Commerce
- Meals on Wheels
- United Ministries
- University of Oklahoma
- Oklahoma Youth Orchestra
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Cleveland County CASA

As you can see from this list, the programming portfolio is ambitious. It is designed to provide more activities, for more groups and therefore, more audiences. This is a way to maximize the theatre's appeal by a broader portion of our community, and to hopefully ensure long term fiscal return.

AWARDS AND HONORS

- The Sooner Theatre is **one of three** Norman arts organizations who are current Allied Arts member agencies.
- The Sooner Theatre was the **first (and only, so far) arts organization** to have been awarded the Norman Rotary Clubs' Le Tour De Vin grant and the Impact Oklahoma grant funding capital projects.
- In August 2020, The Sooner Theatre was named as the Oklahoma Center for Non-profits' **ONE Award winner for Arts and Humanities.**

OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME

In addition to the Municipal money, our other sources of income are from our annual Murder Mystery and Voice Of The Heartland Fundraisers, Corporate Sponsorships, Business and personal donations, program advertising, grants from foundations and other granting organizations, ticket revenues from concerts and performances, tuition revenue from our camps and classes and rental fees, both at the theatre and Studio.

Total earned revenue for FY 2023 was \$813,610, which accounted for 81% of our budget. Contributed income made up the remaining 19% of the budget.

"What we put on the stage is not only what the public sees – it is what we are."

-Thomas Wolf



**Thank you for all you do to support the
programs, productions, concerts and
events of The Sooner Theatre!**

**We are very fortunate to live in a
community who understands the value and
the impact of the arts on its citizens.**

We could not do what we do without you!



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