

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2021
JULY 1, 2020 - JUNE 30, 2021

A MESSAGE FROM A.B.L.E.

Confession: I'm way behind schedule writing this annual report.

It feels like we have been running 100mph since March 2020. Our plans have changed, then changed again...and again...and again. I'm sure you've dealt with your share of changes too - maybe moving homes, switching jobs, losing loved ones, finding new ones. When you're so focused on taking the next step, it's hard to stop, slow down, and look back.

But reflection is a crucial part of our creative process at A.B.L.E.. That's how we learn and grow.

At the end of every rehearsal, we share our "roses" - what we loved about rehearsal - and our "thorns" - something that we didn't like or that we would like to do differently. Looking back on this year, we had plenty of thorns. Zoom fatigue, lagging internet signals, and tight living quarters posed challenges for our entire team. But in the middle of so much global chaos and uncertainty, we had roses too. A.B.L.E. saw unprecedented growth. We reached far outside of our home in Chicago to connect with participants, guest artists, and audiences from around the world. We welcomed new actors, new volunteers, and saw a simply astounding increase in new supporters (check out page 5!).

My rose from this year is the power of our A.B.L.E. community. It's because of this community - because of YOU - that when the world flipped upside down, we were able to create new ways of working together. Whether you've logged in for one of our virtual shows, volunteered with an ensemble, attended a professional development workshop, committed to become a monthly donor, or shared on social media, you've kept us connected and creative. You gave us the support we needed to try new things, to take artistic risks, and to keep creating. You've helped us to thrive.

So take a moment with me. Take a breath. And take a look back at what we have accomplished together.

But then, let's get back to work...

KATIE YOHE
EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



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

8 INTERACTIVE STORIES - YOU BRING THEM TO LIFE!

ANTHOLOGY

Devised by the A.B.L.E. Ensembles



ENSEMBLES

142

hours of rehearsals

5

international guest
artists

5

virtual events

929

tickets sold and
more than 1500
streams

In FY21, A.B.L.E. added a 4th ensemble to our weekly schedule, allowing us to welcome new and returning actors to our virtual rehearsals. The groups collaborated to produce two digital productions:

- **ABLE Anthology** a collection of 8 sensory immersive virtual stories
- **Romeo & Juliet Remix** a feature-length adaptation weaving together Shakespeare's words with original pieces by the cast.

To help our ensembles stay connected and engaged, we delivered customized Story Kits with visual aids, activities, and sensory supports.

A.B.L.E.'s ensembles also collaborated with guest artists from around the world who introduced us to different stories, cultures, and ways of communicating.



WORKSHOPS & OUTREACH

24
hours
of programming
offered

9
new curriculums
developed

A.B.L.E.'s workshops and outreach programs allow us to reach new participants, and to share our methodology with the wider community.

In FY21, ABLE teaching artists developed curricula for 5 new virtual workshops including Storytelling, Ensemble Building, and Shakespeare. These sessions adapted previously successful workshops for Zoom by incorporating new visual aids, games, and activities. In addition to being fun and educational for participants, these sessions also helped A.B.L.E.'s teaching team test different technology and refine their online teaching skills.

ABLE invested in our professional development program and developed 4 new trainings for teaching artists and arts professionals interested in deepening their practices for inclusion and accessibility. These included "Learners with Down Syndrome and Autism" and "Person Centered Language and Communication."

FY21 by the Numbers



59

individuals with varying disabilities served through all of A.B.L.E.'s programs.



21%

of all participants received free or reduced-rate registration, and we gave more than \$4000 in Technology Assistance

participants Zoomed in from



9

different states, as well as 17 Chicago wards, and 12 Illinois suburbs



1420

Hours volunteered across all programs and events by **26 volunteers**



125

dance parties kicking off various rehearsals and workshops



250

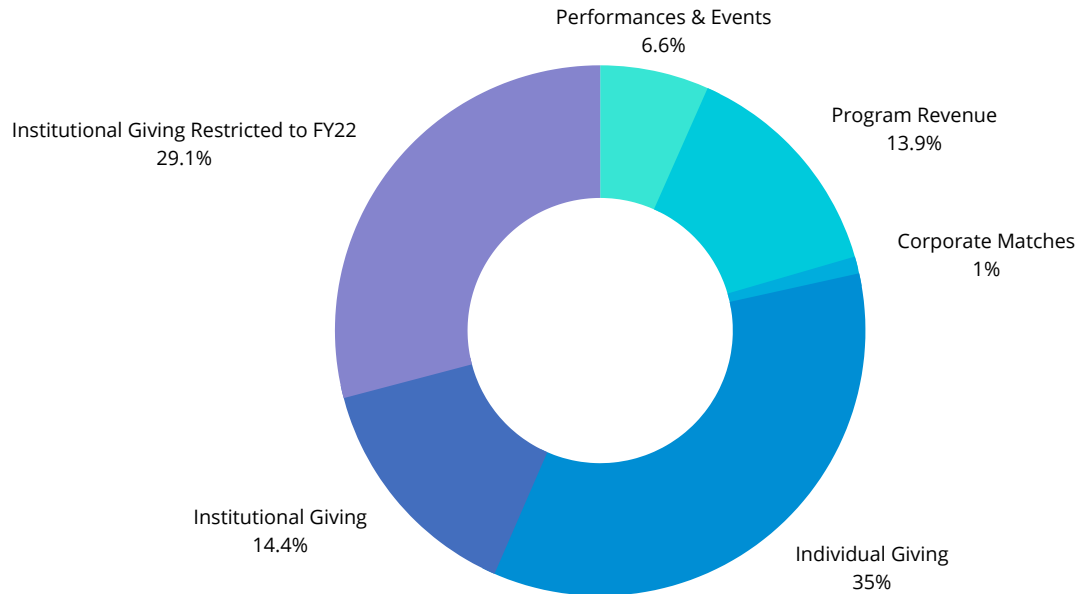
Story Kits mailed to actors, volunteers, and audiences to keep people engaged and creative at home

FY21 Income

\$229,405

In the midst of the pandemic and the ensuing economic uncertainty, our community rallied around us in a truly remarkable way. **We saw a 65% increase in individual and institutional giving compared to FY20.**

If we can sustain this growth, we hope to **decrease our reliance on program registration fees** and ease the financial burden placed on participants.

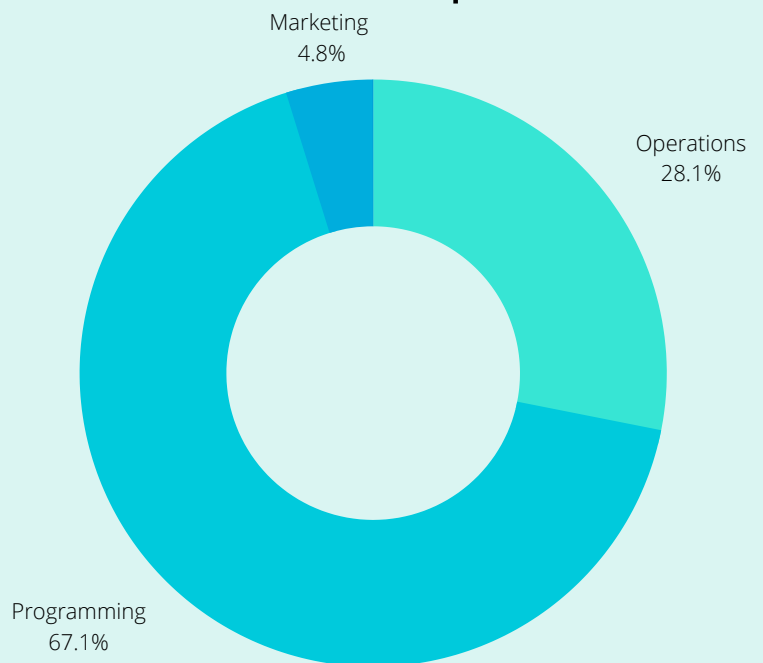


FY21 Expenses

\$113,767

Without hosting major in-person events, we were able to save on occupancy and fundraising expenses and **build our cash reserves.**

These funds will support increased staffing levels, new programs, and provide a much needed safety net for the future.



LOOKING FORWARD

This year, we celebrated our 5th anniversary. We will continue to do our best to ensure everyone is A.B.L.E. to connect, contribute, and create in FY22. Our goals for the year ahead include:

- Create more leadership opportunities for individuals with disabilities inside the organization through our **Program Advisory Council** and the new **Creative Associates Program**.
- **Return to in-person sessions and establish new venue partners** outside of our current artistic home in Lincoln Park.
- **Expand workshop offerings** to engage our ever-growing program waitlist.
- Reinvent our process for recruiting and training new teaching artists to appeal to a wider pool of applicants. We plan to **hire 2 teaching artists** under this new structure.
- Continue our efforts towards **diverse board recruitment**, prioritizing board members who have a lived experience of disability, and/or those who come from historically under-represented groups.
- **Expand our new Technology & Transportation Assistance Initiative** to reduce the barriers for participating in our programs.
- **Offer a minimum of 6 Professional Development sessions** to share our learning and best practices with the wider artistic community.
- Build on our success with institutional and individual giving by **growing revenue at least 20%**

Like many theatre companies around the country, this year A.B.L.E. took a hard look at Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and how we can do better for our community.

In March 2021, we completed our first organization-wide diversity survey. The survey confirmed what we already knew - that A.B.L.E. is a largely white organization, and we must work harder to ensure individuals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds feel included in and represented by our work. Our benchmark survey also highlighted the importance of ensuring the financial accessibility of our programs, recognizing and supporting our many LGBTQIA+ community members, and engaging participants from different age ranges.

Learn more about our DEI goals at ableensemble.com/diversity-equity-inclusion

Thank you to our FY21 Supporters

We believe everyone is A.B.L.E. to contribute.

With gifts ranging from \$5 to \$25,000, this year an unprecedented number of supporters proved what we can accomplish when we work together.

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Melissa Ventura
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Monica Sarmiento	Peter Cornell	Sabrina Zoppa	Susan Symcak	Wende Schott
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Nan McCann	Polly Yukevich	In Honor of Sandia & Sedona Coleman	Suzuko Kern	William Leclercq & Mary Jo Tuohy
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Nancy Harvey	Raechel Hubbert	Sarah Ball	Tammy Cho	Yvonne Afbale
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Natalia Soler	Raquel Rochelle	Sarah Piano	In Honor of Terry Atkinson	
Natalie Danak	Ray Marocco	Scott Quinn	Terry Desmond	
Natalie Tadych	Rebecca Hawkes	Sean Okerberg	Terry Tescula	
Natalya Chernyak	Rebecca Snedeker-Meier	Sedona Coleman	Terry Tuohy	
Neal Bader	Renata Janik	Shannon Diegel	Theresa Grzeslo	
Nese Orbey	Rhoda Reeling	Sharon Coleman	Tim & Colette Diegel	
Nic Hamel	Richard Alvarez	Sharon Doughney	Timothy Downey	
Nick Trakas	Rick Holland	Shawn Marie	Timothy Hartnett	
Nicki Peterson-Pearce	Riz Gilani	Shawna Bowman	Tina Carlson & Thomas Boyd	
Nicole Tini	Robert Fox	Shelby Deutsch	Tina Reynolds	
Nina Godles	Robert Mardirossian & Mary Alice Lavin	Shelby Smith	Tina Unbehaun	

Corporate Matches

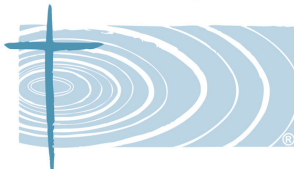
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Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ



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*This list reflects donations received of June 30, 2021.
 If you believe there is an error to your listing, please contact us.*

A.B.L.E.'s 2020-2021 Season Team

Actors

Colleen Altman
Eli Alvarez*
Colin Baar
Quincy Bane
Marissa Bloodgood
Christian Boyd
Rachel Buchanan
Jack Butler
Sandia Coleman
Benjamin Collins
Martin Conway
Alena Counter-Brown
Matthew Danaher

Sophie Earvolino
Samuel Floersheimer
Ryan Foley
Emmett Fox
Peter Grzeslo
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Andrew Kosnik
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Lucas Miezal
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Maddi Perez
Justice Peters-Farrell
Sam Petri
Sam Radinsky
Jake Solworth
Hannah Vilic
Lucy Walsh

Volunteer Facilitators

Nette Angelini
Amy Bahr*
Chloe Belongilot*
Maryann Carlson*
Claire Chrzan
Sedona Coleman*
Kara Davidson

Shannon Diegel
Mary Feigenbutz
Megan Gray
Chelsea Hosler
Perry Hunt*
Peyton Leonard*

Lauren Lynch
Samantha Malone*
Kate McDuffie
Ben Raanan
Jenna Rapisarda
Maddie Rostami

Mary Ruppert
Shaina Schrooten*
Margaret Sheils
Beth Sherwood
Susan Sjodin
Lindsay Stock
Polly Yukevich

Executive Artistic Director

Katie Yohe

Program Coordinator

Emma MacLean

Teaching Artists

Braden Cleary
Kiaran Hartnett
Kaylie Honkala
Lawrence Kern
Arin Mulvaney
Sean Okerberg

Program Intern

Abaigeal O'Donnell

Board of Directors

Nancy Buchanan
Greg Desmond
Jenny Fisher
Joe Marren*
Marcela Sarmiento
Dennis Rossow
Kendra Van Kempen

Video Production

Brock Alter
Alex Sokol

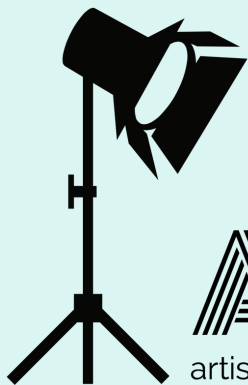
Guest Artists

John Nyrere Frazier
Katie Mann
Myrto Papoulia
Varshini Pichemuthu
Claudia Rebolledo Sanchez
K. Crom Saunders

Special Thanks

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



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