



Young
Audiences
Arts for
Learning

Oregon & SW Washington

Annual Report



20 22

WHEN I BEGAN AT YOUNG AUDIENCES in Spring of 2021, there was a great deal of uncertainty about what the future would hold. Would classrooms reopen full time? Would visiting artists be invited back into schools? A year later, at the end of our 2021-22 fiscal year, we are starting to get a clearer picture of what the “post-pandemic” world will look like, and the crucial role that the arts will play in our recovery as a community.

Creating a sculpture, storyboarding an animation, or choreographing a dance all require that we blend the creative and logistical parts of our brains, connect with our bodies, and collaborate with our partners. The arts allow us to process and express our emotions while solving complex problems. This deep engagement sparks learning and connection, exposes us to different ways of thinking, and requires us to work collaboratively with others. These benefits are so valuable as our schools and communities rebuild from two years of separation.

Schools have reached out with excitement to invite artists back into their classrooms and once again place creativity and connection at the center of student learning. We gathered together to cheer on teen-led concerts and runway

fashion. Our community has certainly not put the pandemic completely behind us, but together we are recovering and building resiliency for the inevitable next challenges we will face as a community.

Please enjoy reading about the programs that have brought joy, connection, and learning to over 40,000 young people this year, and join me in thanking the dedicated staff, talented artists, and supportive board and funders who have made this work possible. My first year at Young Audiences has taught me that when we come together with a shared commitment to transforming learning through the arts, there is nothing we can't accomplish.

Warmly,
Lauren Jost, Executive Director



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Young Audiences operates in the present-day Portland Metro area of Oregon and in surrounding areas including Central Oregon and Southwest Washington. We wish to communicate our gratitude for the privilege to live, work, and play in these lands. We recognize and acknowledge that all of these spaces have been and continue to be the home lands of over 380 different tribes of people including the Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Chinook, Tualatin, Kalapuya, Molalla, and many others.

As part of this recognition, we must also acknowledge the harm that is done to these many indigenous peoples by separating them from their lands and homes and extracting the resources and

wealth from the land. We also acknowledge the systemic policies of genocide, relocation, assimilation, and cultural erasure that still impact many Indigenous/Native American families today. It is only in the acknowledgment of this harm that we can begin to move forward. Young Audiences of Oregon & SW Washington commits to partnering with indigenous people and tribal communities in ways that work towards repair of this erasure and harm.

As settlers on these lands, we pay respect to past, present, and future Indigenous peoples, families and leaders. We offer gratitude and care as we pledge to make ongoing and accountable efforts to recognize their knowledge, creativity, and resilience.

Equity

The board and staff of Young Audiences of Oregon & SW Washington believe in the power of the arts to engage and empower individuals and communities. We believe that through a rich and versatile arts education, young people will creatively transform their schools, neighborhoods, and beyond. Art can be an agent of personal and social liberation, and we believe this is essential to our mission to inspire young people and expand their learning through the arts.

We have a responsibility to continuously work to dismantle the barriers to arts education for all young people. Research shows that arts education has an overwhelmingly positive impact: increased critical thinking abilities, higher test scores, better attendance and graduation rates, and improved confidence and motivation are just a few examples. This impact is especially significant for communities that often do not have equitable opportunities for discovery, exploration and self-empowerment through the arts.

Our staff, board, and artist roster are continuously exploring how inequity has shaped our practices and perspectives, and challenging ourselves to repair the harm that has come from inequitable structures and practices. We are currently detailing an Equity Action Plan that addresses both our internal structures and external role in creating an accessible, inclusive, and equitable organization that champions abundantly accessible arts experiences for young people.

2021–Present

Equity Action Plan

2019–21

Equity Policy

2018–19

Equity Statement and Racial Focus

2018

Equity Definition

Staff Introductions

Nikki DePriest joined Young Audiences in April, 2022. Nikki is a visual artist and advocate for arts education in the Portland area who works in ink, watercolors and oils to convey an expression of whimsical beauty, often portraying the experiences of black and indigenous folx with a heavy focus on self-care practices and joy.

It was her investment in her own arts education, where she received her degree in Illustration from FIT in New York, further studying painting techniques in Italy, the Caribbean islands and various communities within Turtle Island, that continue to inform her how creating art is an ultimate bridge builder.

She is excited to join the YA community as the Communications Specialist and hopes to bring with her, both equally valuable, the professional and non-professional work and experiences that have informed and shaped much of who she is today.



Our Staff



Nikki Depriest



Allie Maki Maya



Kristi Riedel



Ryan Higa



Maia McCarthy



Kim Strelchun



Lauren Jost



Ryn McCoy



Allena Vestal



Brett Kimball



Melody Mikkelsen



Christi Zorrilla Soto



Josephine Kuever



Koko Olszewski

Hybrid Work

Our artists are back at school, and our staff is back in the office. Sort of. Young Audiences has transitioned to a permanent hybrid work environment, where staff are free to choose the workplace that works best for them, home or office. We come together as a full staff a couple times a month to collaborate and build community. What does this mean for our artists and partners? Many of our planning meetings happen virtually now, and if you plan to come by our office for an in-person meeting, make sure to coordinate with the staff for access so we can be there to welcome you!



Partnerships that led to Growth

Esper House

In 2022, Young Audiences reviewed proposals from a diverse group of consultants, looking for the right partner to guide our strategic planning. We were fortunate enough to contract Toni Tabora-Roberts of Esper House as our guide through this process.

Toni Tabora-Roberts has more than 25 years experience working in the nonprofit, public, and private sectors doing leadership development, program management, communications, community engagement, and organizational development. She founded Esper House in 2015. She has a particular passion for arts, culture, media, education, sustainability, and social justice. Her approach is grounded in interpersonal connections, experiential engagement, collaboration, care, and culturally responsive, strengths-based facilitation.

Young Audiences will be releasing our new strategic plan in December, 2022.



Shilo

In 2022, Young Audiences began partnering with Shilo George on our equity and staff culture work. Shilo M. George, MS (she/her/hers) is a Southern Cheyenne-Arapaho and Scottish international speaker, trainer, and owner of Łush Kuntux Tumtum Consulting, which means “a great awakening of the heart and spirit” in the Chinuk Wawa trade language. Her workshops and presentations explore the intersections of race, sexuality, body size, and trauma (both

individual and inter-generational). Shilo trains others on systems of oppression, trauma informed care, and proactive ways that businesses and organizations can create policies and environments that promote diversity, equity, and healing.

Shilo’s work with Young Audiences is deepening our work with equity, access, and inclusion, and challenging us to think expansively about our work with each other and in our community.

Young Audiences heARTs teachers!

In January 2022, just as we thought schools were “getting back to normal,” the Omicron variant put intense pressure on an already stressed school system. As community partners, we saw first-hand how hard teachers were working to make sure schools could stay open. Young Audiences wanted to make sure that teachers know how much they are appreciated and return some of the love they give so freely to our children.

We created and delivered care boxes filled with wellness goods and art resources to 5,400 teachers across Oregon and SW Washington to let teachers know they are appreciated and encourage them to take a few moments of self-care. Teachers are the heart of our community, and Young Audiences is here to support and celebrate the educators who nurture our children.





Roster Programs

Our artist roster connects schools with arts enrichment programs through residencies, workshops, performances, family nights, and more. These services are available in 28 communities in SW Washington, Portland Metro, and Central Oregon.

Young Audiences' roster of 140 teaching and performing artists were finally able to get back into schools during the 2021-22 school year! While things still didn't feel completely "normal," the joy and smiling eyes as students made art together were a welcome return.



Service Area

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 Amity | 15 North Plains |
| 2 Beaverton | 16 Oregon City |
| 3 Bend | 17 Portland |
| 4 Boring | 18 Redmond |
| 5 Brush Prairie | 19 Ridgefield |
| 6 Camas | 20 Salem |
| 7 Corbett | 21 Sandy |
| 8 Cornelius | 22 Scappoose |
| 9 Fairview | 23 Troutdale |
| 10 Gresham | 24 Tualatin |
| 11 Hillsboro | 25 Vancouver |
| 12 Hubbard | 26 Vernonia |
| 13 Lake Oswego | 27 Washougal |
| 14 Milwaukie | 28 West Linn |

PROGRAM NUMBERS:

Total Programs:	1,180
Residences:	817
Arts Experiences:	102,908
Workshops:	221
Performances:	137
Teacher Workshops:	5

SWWA

5th grade, Hathaway Elementary in Washougal with Marjorie Anderson. *"Our students had such an amazing time last year with Marjorie and Macbeth! We couldn't have been happier with our experience!"*

—From their theater teacher

New Roster Artists



Montrell Goss-Chillin' the Poet:
poetry & creative writing. PDX



Jill Giedt:
ballet & dance. PDX



Yumi Torimaru-Takahachi:
performance & residency; Japanese folk music & instruments. PDX



Stefano Laboni:
clown performance. PDX

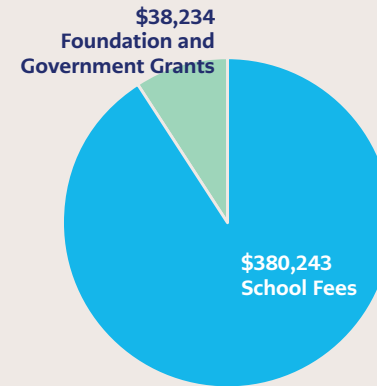


Supernova the Strongwoman:
strong woman and acrobat performance. PDX



Lindsay Kay:
creative movement-hula hoop. Central Oregon

Program Funding



Thank you to these funders who subsidize artist programs for Title 1 schools in geographically specific areas:

- » Far West Recycling, Beaverton
- » The Firstenberg Foundation, SW Washington
- » The First Interstate Bank, Central Oregon

Equity priorities

Since 2017, the Roster Diversification Initiative has focused on bringing culturally specific artists onto our roster. We are proud to offer the region's most diverse artist roster in terms of cultural artforms, artist identity, and art-forms!

Right Brain

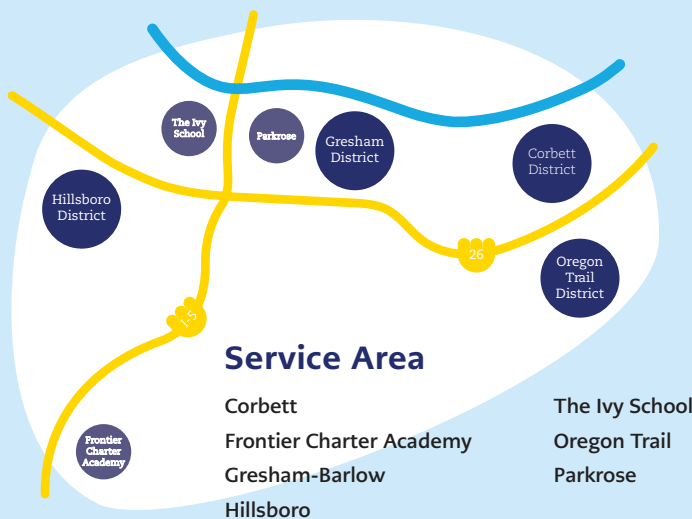
The Right Brain Initiative, now in its fifteenth year, is a district-wide arts partnership that integrates the arts across the school curriculum. Our arts integration staff and teaching artists collaborate with teachers for innovative residency experiences, and in-depth professional development for all teachers in the school. This approach leads to improved arts and academic outcomes, but more importantly, cultivates a district-wide culture of creativity and innovation.



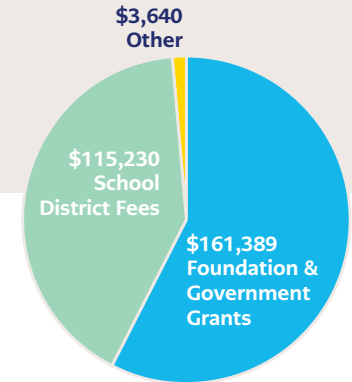
298
residences

24,773
arts experiences

4
average
sessions per
residency



Right Brain Funding



HILLSBORO

Lincoln Street Elementary students and staff were excited to fire up their kiln and explore the science of earthen clay with artist Jess Graff. Students in the upper grades integrated art with their science units, creating landforms and animal habitats.

CORBETT OR GRESHAM

CAPS students worked with TA Robyn Ulibarri from Oregon Ballet Theatre. Robyn worked with the whole school on using dance/movement to understand and express various topics. The middle school students' work focused on properties of weather.



Equity priorities

Right Brain programs ensure that the arts are integrated into every classroom in participating schools, which means no one is left out. Because the funding comes directly from the districts, all schools receive equal services that are not dependent on parent groups or outside fundraising. Right Brain also serves a high number of rural schools, ensuring equitable access for remote areas of our region.

Fun for the Arts (FFA)

After multiple years of analyzing data and feedback, in 2021 we launched **Fun for the Arts**, our new and improved version of our school-based fundraising program that raises dedicated arts funds for classrooms. Instead of individual “Run for the Arts” events at each school, we hosted a one-day Dance-A-Thon, “Fun for the Arts,” on February 4, 2022. All funds raised on that day were equitably distributed to the 12 participating schools. Based on this successful pilot, we are excited to expand Fun for the Arts in 2023 and beyond!

12
participating
schools



3,388
participants

25%
high frl
schools

1,413
ffa household
donors

\$76,570
funds raised

Program Numbers

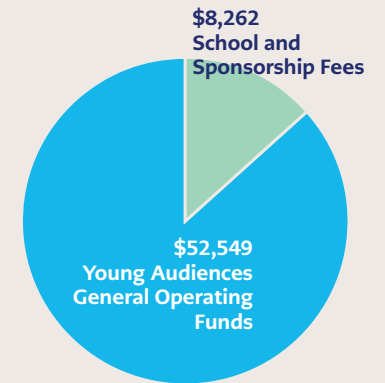
“We love Young Audiences and the work they do promoting quality and diverse arts access for students in our city. We’ve partnered for around 9 years and know that if they’re working on a new model for fundraising, we’re in! We want to be involved because we’ve had such a good experience over time and know they work with integrity and passion.”

—Le Monde feedback

“I know that the old RFTA model built decades ago further created inequities in our schools so I’m so thrilled that this tide is turning. Congratulations to you and the YA team for pushing this change through. You have PPS’ full support!”

—From Kristen Brayson, PPS Arts

FFA Funding



Equity priorities

Systemic racism has contributed to persistent income inequality and access to equitable education, resources, and to quality arts experiences. In the 2019-2020 school year, the lower income schools participating in Fun for the Arts raised ~\$8 per student while the higher income schools raised ~\$40 per student. This gap reflects the historically inequitable access to resources in our communities and in our education system for our students. In the pilot year of this program in Spring 2022 we were able to distribute \$26.15 per student! The arts can be a transformative force in education. Moving to a community-wide fundraiser rather than focusing on individual schools helps us to close the opportunity gap and provide more equitable access to the arts for all students.

Career Connections

Young Audiences' out-of-school Career Connections programs for teens partners middle and high schoolers with professional designers and sound engineers to learn the art of fashion design and live music production, expanding their career options while investing in the future of our region's creative economy.



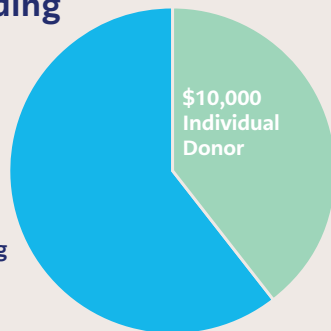
SH/FT

Young Audiences' SH/FT program celebrates "teens, queens, and fashion dreams" by creating upcycled fashion for a live, drag runway event. This innovative program pairs teen designers with veteran designers to create unique fashion inspired by, and then modeled by, beloved local drag queens at a live fashion show. Six teams design and create a one-of-a-kind look using only recycled and upcycled materials. The program culminates with a live runway show that celebrates the ingenuity of the young designers and the vibrancy of our LGBTQIA+ community.



SH/FT Funding

\$15,278
Young Audiences
General Operating
Funds



Equity priorities

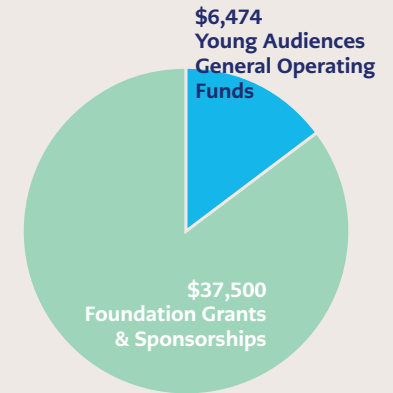
LiveSET focuses on recruiting young women, non-binary youth, and youth of color to help correct the under-representation of those populations in the music-engineering field. All of these services are fully-subsidized and offered free-of-charge to participants.

LiveSET

LiveSET provides technical and artistic training in music engineering for high-schoolers who are primarily from communities underrepresented in the field of professional sound engineering. Through hands-on classes taught by real-world professionals, participants learn about the craft and science of sound design, then cap their experience by engineering a public concert or recording.



LiveSET Funding



Friends of Noise partnership

Program graduates have gone on to enroll in college sound-engineering programs and apprentice in professional settings such as music festivals, and we partner with Friends of Noise, a music non-profit, to create paying work opportunities at all ages shows in the region so that LiveSET alumni can go straight to work.



Equity priorities

SH/FT focuses on recruiting youth of color and LGTBIA+ youth. All of these services are fully-subsidized and offered free-of-charge to participants.

Teaching Artist Studio and Educator PD

Creating a community with abundant arts education means cultivating a community of professional teaching artists! Young Audiences is proud to offer professional development to artists on our roster, as well as artists and educators in the community at large. Our wide selection of professional development services for teachers and artists includes one-time workshops, job-embedded training, and a year-long cohort, the Teaching Artist Studio.

Teaching Artist Studio

This year-long cohort invites 12 artists to dive deeply into what makes arts education effective, and how their own creative practice is integrated into their work with youth. Cohort participants get to put their learning into action by partnering with a local school and testing their new curriculum with the support of TAS instructors.

This year's structure and focus was greatly influenced by the past two year's pandemic. All full cohort meetings were kept virtual, allowing for greater geographic diversity in our participants. In addition, program facilitators went deeper this year. They brought more of themselves into the meetings. This had a positive impact on the cohort members, and each clearly showed up to the best of their ability at any given moment. Teaching artists frequently remarked on a desire to focus on fostering relationships in their classrooms, to structure learning experiences that acknowledged the importance of process, and to promote liberated and inclusive arts learning spaces.

It changed my life, my past, my present, and my future. The direction of my path in art, the way I communicate with having accessibility needs met, and that I will be applying what I have learned to the very schools I attended as a kid.

—From a participant

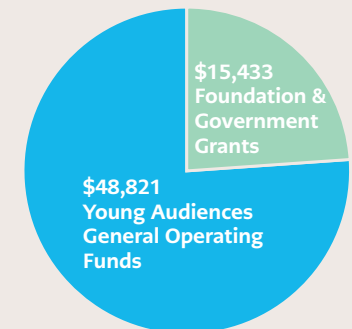
Workshops and training

Young Audiences provides workshops and trainings for educators focusing on specific topics like equity in the arts classroom, art-form skill building, and activating the creativity in your teaching practice.



Portland Creative Laureate Joaquin Lopez joined our Right Brain team at a Teacher PD at Quatama Elementary in Hillsboro in August. Teachers explored storytelling, movement and two styles of printmaking.

Teaching Artist Studio & Professional Learning Funding



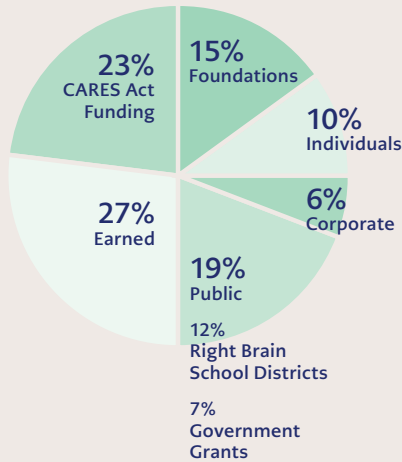
Equity priorities

In order to cultivate a diverse field of teaching artists in our region, this program is offered free of charge to program participants.

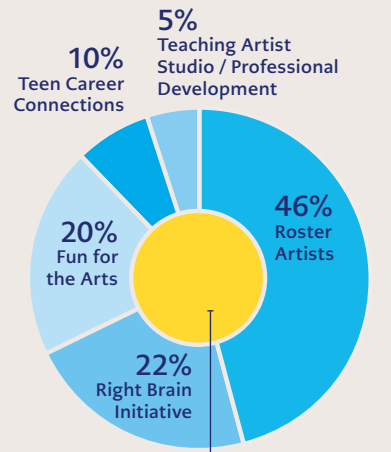
Data and Accountability

This year included plenty of challenges, and Young Audiences was able to meet those challenges with creativity, thanks to the growing contributions of our diversifying base of supporters — whether you are a long-time funder or brand new donor to YA, we appreciate your choice to help inspire young people and expand their learning through the arts! Please visit our website for our full audited report. Thank you!

Income



Expenses



Core Mission Work
 • Staff support
 • Finance and governance
 • Strategic partnerships and fundraising

Our Board

Welcome new Board Members: Kathy Darnielle and Kevin Nesse!

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

President

Lisa Harley

Vice President

Tania Flynn

Past President

Britton Smith

Treasurer

Jarkko Cain

Secretary

Steven Heinze

BOARD MEMBERS

Kathy Darnielle

Pam Sporborg

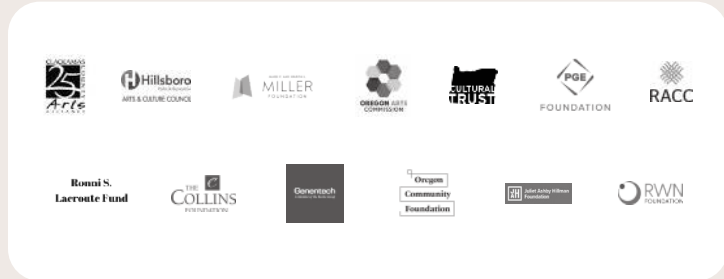
Chris Gilbert

Alexia Wellons

Kevin Nesse

"I joined the Young Audiences board to make sure today's youth continues to enjoy the arts."
 —Kathy

Thank you



Biam Systems

- BNSF Railway Foundation
- Far West Recycling
- First Interstate Foundation
- Firstenberg Foundation
- Fortis Construction, Inc.
- H.W. Irwin & D.C.H. Irwin Foundation
- Herbert A. Templeton Foundation
- Howard S. Wright Construction

Hyphn

- Juan Young Trust
- Jubilation Foundation
- JW & HM Goodman Family Charitable Foundation
- Lease Crutcher Lewis
- Les Paul Foundation
- Maybelle Clark Macdonald Fund
- MUFG – Union Bank
- National Endowment for the Arts

Nike

- OCF Joseph E. Weston
- Pledgeling Foundation
- Public Foundation
- OnPoint Community Credit Union
- Oregon Screen Impressions
- Radler White Parks & Alexander
- Ronald W. Naito MD Foundation
- Rose E. Tucker Charitable Trust

Our Right Brain School District Partners:

- Corbett
- Gresham Barlow; a founding school district
- Frontier Charter Academy
- Hillsboro; a founding school district
- The Ivy School
- Oregon Trail
- Parkrose

- Spirit Mountain Community Fund
- The Jackson Foundation
- The Swinerton Foundation
- Warby Parker
- Washington County
- Wells Fargo
- Young Audiences, Inc.

Aaron Jost

- Alexia Wellons
- Amanda Corrigan
- Amy Williams
- Andre Middleton
- Ann French
- Anne Gurnee
- Anne Koch
- Babs Nichole Davidson
- Barbara and Charles Rhyne
- Barbara and Keith Campbell
- Ben and Briana Mathias
- Brett and Melyna Kimball
- Britton Smith and Malindi Zimmer
- Carin Rosenberg and Eric Lawrence
- Carlos Maya and Allie Maki Maya
- Carol and Walt Smith
- Carolyn and Maurie Arnston
- Cary Clarke and Meri Dunn
- Catherine Trevison
- Charles and Kyle Fuchs
- Christine Bourdette and Ricardo Lovett
- Christopher Selid
- Claressa and Mike Bauer
- Cordell and Maja Berge
- Courtney Dailey
- Dan and Heather O'Leary
- Dana Kleine
- Dana Melnick
- David E. Adams
- David Rice
- Delinda and Lawrence Talbott
- Derek McClenahan
- Dolores Judkins
- Doug and Theresa Lovett
- Douglas Haughton
- Douglas Kintzinger
- Drew Roslund
- Elizabeth Dye
- Eric Cain and Ann Williamson
- Erika Foin and Eric Houghton
- Erin Cry
- Erin Smith and Jin Han
- Gabe and Margaret Goddard
- Geraldine Williams
- h Keton
- Heather Bacon-Shone
- Heather Keton
- J. Clayton and Sudee Hering
- Jack Rosenberg and Diane Doherty
- Jacquelyn Groah
- James Weider
- Jan and Kirk Robertson
- Janis Hill
- Jarrold Heath
- Jeana Watkins
- Jed and Ann Rakoff
- Jeff Hinshaw
- Jennifer Barnette
- Jennifer Dolan
- Jennifer Yocom and Josh Billeter

Jessi Podd

- Jill and Ken Jernstedt
- Josephine Kuever
- Judy and Michael Rompa
- Julia Miller
- Julia Monaghan
- Karen Morgan
- Karen Rembold
- Karen Rich
- Kathren and Mike Cavanaugh
- Katie Clark
- Kaye G Clarke and Steve Johnson
- Ken and Dot Griggs
- Kevin Nesse and Stephanie Selinger
- Kimberly and Timothy Strelchun
- Lauren and Zachary Jost
- Lisa and Bob Harley
- Marangal Domingo
- Marcia Tonkin
- Margaret Hoch and Brian Anderson
- Marie VerMeer
- Martha Moore
- Matthew Akerson
- Maureen Luksic
- Melissa M Smith and Tyler Smith
- Melissa Stiles
- Melody and Cris Mikkelsen
- Michal and Joey McCamman
- Nancy Jaksich

Nicole Y Higa

- Olliemay Phillips
- Parker Lee
- Rachel Goodloomis
- Raffaella Barbey
- Rebecca Schoon
- Rebecca Wynne
- Richard and Pat Bryant
- Richard Solomon and Alyce Flitcraft
- Robyn Luchs
- Ronni Lacroute
- Sara Hobson
- Scott Clark
- Sean and Erin Osaki
- Sonji Moore
- Stanley and Susan Penkin
- Steven and Gregory Heinze
- Susanne Barrer
- Tania and Thomas Flynn
- Teresa Koberstein
- Teresa Kraemer
- Thomas and Melinda Goldsmith
- Thomas Balmer
- Timothy Kalberg
- Valvette Janine Thorpe
- Vanessa Gavrich
- Vicki and Gary Chambers
- Vicki Pratt
- Walker Paynter
- William Miller

Strategic Plan

2023–2026

Every few years, a healthy organization creates a strategic plan for the next 3–5 years. That process felt almost impossible during the last few years, and Young Audiences is not alone in choosing this year to step back, evaluate our work, and dream of new possibilities. Our community is beginning to recover from years of pandemic-related disruptions, and we are challenged to meet the new needs of students, artists, and our own staff as we grapple with the legacies of shutdowns, racial reckoning, and the many other cultural shifts that have occurred during the last several years. This moment in time requires a wide view, to understand the forces that have shaped our world and our organization, and to envision the future we want to help shape.

In this moment, with a blend of new and veteran staff and board leadership, we have chosen to engage in a year-long process of listening, reflecting, and visioning about what it is that our community needs, and the unique ways that Young Audiences can be of service. This process has helped us to discern our organizational priorities, as well as the values and mission that are the foundation of our work.

Some of these priorities will be large and visible, including a new name and

branding identity, and a new partnership structure for Right Brain. Others will be less immediately visible, but essential to a sustainable future: a deep investment in equity across our organization and a culture-shift toward advocacy and abundance. However, they are all connected by our vision of a world where arts and creativity are valued as essential, and abundantly accessible to all.

Our six decades of bringing the arts to young people in Oregon and SW Washington have given us a strong foundation on which to build this bold vision of the future, and our dedicated staff, board, and artists are all deeply engaged in creating the pathways to make it possible.

Thank you to everyone who has engaged in this process and shared your wisdom and perspectives. This strategic plan will guide us through the next years, whatever they may bring, by helping us center our mission, our vision, and our values as we make decisions and adapt to a rapidly changing world.

Thank you,
Lauren Jost and Lisa Harley
Executive Director and Board President

Mission—Our Role

Our mission is to connect young people with diverse arts and creative experiences, and make the arts abundantly accessible in their schools and communities.

Vision—Our Dream

We envision a world where arts and creativity are valued as essential, and abundantly accessible to all.

Core Values— What Drives Our Work

Creativity as Essential—

We believe joy, curiosity, and creativity are the foundation for learning, innovation, and new ways of thinking.

Diverse Voices, Inclusive Spaces—

We believe in centering a diversity of thought, experience, and perspectives, and working together to create liberatory spaces where all can thrive.

Purpose—Why We Exist

We champion diverse arts and creative experiences, and work to make them accessible to young people in their schools and communities.

Arts for all—

We believe arts, culture, and creative expression are human rights, and should be welcoming and accessible for all people.

Interconnectedness—

We believe that collaboration is vital to creative and equitable work, and relationships in our community should be rooted in care, connection, respect, and support.

History and Current Context

Our organization, Young Audiences of Oregon & SW Washington (YA), was founded in 1958 as an independent affiliate of the country's largest arts-in-education organization. YA has grown and evolved from presenting only classical music performances in our early years to currently offering a full range of educational arts programming in multiple disciplines and cultures—the only arts organization in the region to do so. Primarily serving the Portland metropolitan area (including Washington's Clark County), four years ago we expanded our service area to include three counties in Central Oregon (Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook counties). Our teaching artist professional development program, Teaching Artist Studio, serves teaching artists statewide.

Prior to the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, Young Audiences had just achieved two major organizational milestones. The first was the acquisition of the Right Brain Initiative, which had been co-managed by YA and RACC (Regional Arts and Culture Commission) since its founding in 2005. In 2020, YA took over full management of this nationally-recognized program. The second was that a large liability of net unrestricted assets was eliminated after 7 years of a financial strategy of austerity. This elimination of "the deficit" led to YA having a reserve fund for the first time in over a decade, and the ability to invest in some organizational areas that had

declined during that period of austerity, particularly staff salaries.

These two major developments were quickly overshadowed by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures that followed, as 95% of YA programs typically take place in schools. YA's newfound financial stability, along with strong leadership and federal COVID-related funding has enabled YA to weather the pandemic without layoffs or accumulating debt, and to provide continuity of service in exceptional circumstances. YA has also seen a great deal of staff turnover during this time. A third of the staff has been with the organization less than 2 years, including the Executive Director and Development Director. The transition of leadership has been remarkably smooth, thanks to the strong collaborative leadership between the board and directors' team.

Currently, YA faces a number of challenges and opportunities. Being responsive to the changing landscape of schools and districts in this later pandemic time, YA's funding must expand to meet the needs of educators, families, teaching artists, and staff. YA is also on a learning journey about what it means to be an organization that advances equity, inclusion, accessibility, anti-racism, and liberation. Building from YA's long tenure and respect in the community, the organization is poised to grow and evolve in its arts education leadership role.

Strategic Planning Process

YA's strategic planning process began in Spring 2022 with the formation of the Strategic Planning Design Team, a diverse group of organizational leaders, including staff, board, and a teaching artist to shepherd an inclusive process. We began by gathering information and input from our stakeholders to better understand the current state of YA and our operating environment, and to surface priorities and ideas for the future. More than 100 stakeholders were engaged, including educators, teaching artists, students, parents, staff, and board members. We received feedback and ideas through listening sessions and through online and informal in-person surveys. The staff and board then engaged in deep conversations about our vision for the future, the values that drive our work, and the priorities and pathways forward. These important discussions helped us refresh the organizational Mission and Vision, identify and commit to our Core Values and Purpose, and develop Strategic Priorities and Goals which will guide us over the coming years.

Strategic Priorities and Goals

IDENTITY

- Strengthen YA's identity and messaging in order to better support our advocacy and program work.
- YA will build on the organization's legacy of work in arts education by evolving identity and messaging to better position the organization to do advocacy and programs.
- YA's name and brand identity will better reflect YA's role in the ecosystem of arts and education. We will create messaging and communications that are welcoming and inclusive of the diverse communities that we serve.

ADVOCACY

- Advocate for arts education as essential and accessible to all.

As equitable arts education continues to be under-resourced within the education system, YA will strategically and proactively invest time and resources into arts education advocacy.
- YA will build relationships with education leaders at all levels, and research current priorities, needs and opportunities for arts education. We will deepen partnerships with current district partners, while expanding connections to new districts and schools. YA will engage diverse community members and partners in advocacy work.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to all of our stakeholders—including staff, board, teaching artists, educators, students, and parents—who shared their thoughts with us through listening sessions, community engagement events, and surveys, including:

PROGRAMS

- Strategically grow program offerings.
- YA’s program work will evolve to sustainably and more effectively meet the needs of our communities.
- We will deepen investment of time and resources in the Right Brain Initiative and other district level partnerships, Career Connections Programs, and teaching artists support including establishing relationships to root our program in Central Oregon. We will explore emerging opportunities to broaden participation in revenue generating programs such as Right Brain Initiative and other district level partnerships, Fun for the Arts, and Summer Programs. We will utilize our newly developed Mission Vision Values and Purpose statements to inform programmatic evaluation.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Invest in YA’s infrastructure to be sustainable, accountable, and equitable.
- As YA evolves, we want to ensure that it is a great workplace and a healthy organization.
- We will diversify our funding and raise sufficient funds to grow and deliver excellent programs and support staff with competitive wages and benefits. We will refine policies and foster a learning culture to support accountability and equity for staff, board, teaching artists, educators, schools and students.

Teachers and principals from three school districts who participated in listening sessions: Gresham-Barlow, Hillsboro, North Clackamas

BIPOC Teaching Artists who participated in a listening session

Partner groups in Central Oregon who participated in a meet and greet

YA Summer Campers who engaged in on-site surveys

Staff: Nikki DePriest, Ryan Higa, Lauren Jost, Brett Kimball, Josephine Kuever, Allie Maki Maya, Maia McCarthy, Melody Mikkelsen, Koko Olszewski, Kristi Riedel, Kim Strelchun, Allena Vestal, Christi Zorrilla Soto

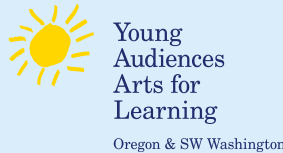
Board: Jarkko Cain, Kathy Darnielle, Tania Flynn, Chris Gilbert, Lisa Harley, Steven Heinze, Kevin Nesse, Britton Smith, Pam Sporborg, Alexia Wellons

BIPOC Teaching Artist Consultant: Nelda Reyes, AB Cultural Drivers

Right Brain Program Evaluation Consultant: Jenn Katona, 3 Looms Consulting

Equity Consultant: Shilo George, Lush Kuntux Tumtum Consulting, LLC

Strategic Planning Consultant: Toni Tabora-Roberts, Esper House LLC





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