



31st SEASON
ANNUAL REPORT

2015-16

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Working Theater is dedicated to producing new plays *for* and *about* working people.*

Our 31st Season ran from September 2015 to June 2016 and featured the development, workshopping, and production of new plays specifically aimed at reaching our audience of working men and women.

This year we continued our Five Boroughs/One City Initiative, working with over 70 theater artists and serving over 2000 audience members across the 5 boroughs of NYC.

* *working people* refers to the wage and salaried workers of modest means working in factories, stores, offices, hospitals, classrooms, and other workplaces throughout America

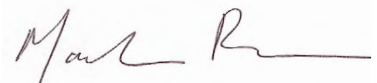
LETTER FROM THE PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Working Theater's 31st Season saw the first full touring production to come out of our Five Boroughs/One City Initiative. The initiative, launched during our 30th year, is creating new pieces of theater in collaboration with venue partners and members of the community in neighborhoods in each of the five boroughs of NYC. We will premiere each of the remaining plays off-Broadway and then tour to the boroughs. This year's production, *The Block*, originated in the Bronx and was written by Dan Hoyle and directed by Tamilla Woodard. Our community and venue partners were CASA, a housing rights group, and New Settlement Community Apartments, a housing development in the Highbridge section of the Bronx.

On June 23rd at 8pm I stood in a large barn-like room at Snug Harbor Cultural Center in Staten Island that we had converted into a theater for the final performance of our borough tour of *The Block*. I gave my final curtain speech of the run to a house of 18 people. I was actually encouraged by the turnout in Staten Island. Most of the people in the audience lived on Staten Island and heard about the production through word of mouth. For the Five Boroughs project to reach its potential we have to keep showing up, keep engaging with our communities and keep bringing great theater to neighborhoods of working people throughout New York City. The Bronx performances of the tour were filled with community members eager to see their stories come to life onstage. We played to sold out houses there, in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens, and I know it is only a matter of time before our Staten Island audiences reach the same numbers. A hit with critics and audiences alike, *The Block*, was an ideal piece to kick-off the multi-year commitment to serving working people in the areas of New York City where they live.

Our 31st Season culminated in the production of *The Block* but was full of many more projects and activities which you can read about in subsequent pages of this report. We spent time in Bushwick working on Ed Cardona Jr.'s *Bamboo in Brooklyn*, directed by Ana Margineanu, hosting community story circles, an extended intergenerational theater workshop, and a staged reading of the play for those community members who helped generate material for Ed and Ana. We spent afternoons on the South Shore of Staten Island meeting with members of the community that Chisa Hutchinson's play *Breaking Bread* is about. And playwright Dan Hoyle led our TheaterWorks! class (which teaches working people to write and perform their own short plays) to members of CASA in the Bronx. Outside of the Five Boroughs Initiative, we were able to host a reading series of a trio of works by three extraordinary theater makers: Kathryn Hamilton of Sister Sylvester, Emma Weinstein and Stefanie Zadravec.

As always I am extremely grateful to Working Theater's Board of Directors for enthusiastically embracing the Five Boroughs/One City project. I am equally grateful to all the artists involved, my partner and the Artistic Director of the project, the insanely talented Tamilla Woodard, and our extraordinary venue partners for taking the leap with us. But, none of this work could happen without the support of YOU: our sponsors, contributors, audience members and volunteers. Thank you for partnering with us in creating theater for and about working people and presenting it in communities where working people live. I look forward to sharing our plays about Queens, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Staten Island with you in subsequent seasons.



- Mark Plesent, Producing Artistic Director

BROOKLYN

STAGED READING:

BAMBOO IN BROOKLYN

by **Ed Cardona, Jr.**

directed by **Ana Margineanu**

with **Edna Lee Figueroa, Nic Grelli, José Melián,
Tyrien Obahnjoko, Michelle RanSui, Reza Salazar**

commissioned by **Working Theater** as part of its **Five Boroughs/One City Initiative**

February 26, 2016

at RBSCC's 10 Forrest Community Room, Bushwick, Brooklyn

Bushwick was recently mentioned in *Vogue* magazine as one of the 15 hippest neighborhoods in the world. While for the long-term residents it has never been hip, it has definitely always been home. Cardona's play weaves a traditional narrative with a surreal exploration of gentrification inspired by the psychedelic murals that cover the walls of this suddenly trendy neighborhood.

Special thanks to Supporters and Friends of *Bamboo in Brooklyn* who contributed their time and stories:

Richard Rathbun · Claudio Aukaman · Dennis Flores Furee · Maya Meissner · Jonathan Auch Kweighbaye

Sergeant Kevin Bryan · Brigette Blood · Sonia Rivera · Alexander Morales · Kenneth Kern · Jeanette Wright · Ingrid Sylvester

Vijai Bissesar · Ana Nogueira · Father Jorge Ortiz-Garay · Dasic Fernandez · Narcissa Ruiz · Father Kelly

Salvation Army Community Center · Angela Battaglia · Liz Aponte · Charlie Maldonado · Francis Blacklock

and to Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council and the staff and crew at 10 Forrest.



Mural by Owen Dipple.

STATEN ISLAND

WORKSHOP PERFORMANCE: *BREAKING BREAD*

by **Chisa Hutchinson**

directed by **Kristin Horton**

with **Richarda Abrams, Ngozi Anyanwu, Nathan Hinton,
Shauna Miles, Benjamin L. Myers, Juney Smith**

created with dramaturgical support from **Theresa Davis**

commissioned by **Working Theater** as part of its **Five Boroughs/One City Initiative**

February 27, 2016

PASS: Performing Arts Salon Saturdays at the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art,
Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Staten Island

You are invited to the Gibilisco Family Reunion dinner! Join us for this immersive event which explores community, family ties and racial tension. Come hungry – baked ziti is on the menu!



Breaking Bread at Snug Harbor Cultural Center. Photos by Lance Rhea.

MANHATTAN

STAGED READING: *TO THE BONE*



written & directed by **Lisa Ramirez**

with **Juliana Aiden, Lucca Damilano, Annie Henk, Bobby Plasencia, Lisa Ramirez, Elizabeth Ramos, Gerardo Rodriguez, Chris Stack, Andrea Thome**

commissioned by **Working Theater**

March 7, 2016

at the **Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, Manhattan**

Inspired by actual interviews with immigrant workers in the poultry processing plants of upstate NY, To the Bone examines the very nature of equality and justice in contemporary America through the eyes of five women whose migration to the U.S. in search of a better life brings its own test of the human spirit.



To the Bone at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Photos by Tuda Sarian.

MANHATTAN

READING SERIES OF NEW PLAYS

April 2016 at the Dorothy Strelsin Theatre, Manhattan

THE MAIDS' THE MAIDS

created by **Sister Sylvester**

directed by **Kathryn Hamilton**

co-written and performed by **Giovanna Almeida, Laudiceia Calixto, Kathryn Hamilton, Rebeca Medina, Rita Oliveira**

object design by **Juan Betancurth** lighting design by **Bruce Steinberg** dramaturgy by **Jeremy M. Barker**

translation & surtitle operation **Vanessa Bretas, Stephen S. Chacon**

previously developed & performed by **Terence Mintern, Isabel Sanchez, Sofia Ortega**

first performed at **Abrons Arts Center**

In The Maids' The Maids, director Kathryn Hamilton and Sister Sylvester company members have partnered with domestic household workers in New York City to devise a response to Jean Genet's notorious 1947 one-act The Maids.



THE BOAT

by **Stefanie Zadravec**

directed by **Daniella Topol**

commissioned by **Working Theater**

with **Nadia Bowers, Leeanne Hutchison, Ted Koch, Sam Lilja, Danny Wolohan**

stage directions read by **Marisela Gonzalez**, stage managed by **Mae Frankeberger**

Set during the unemployment crisis following the 2008 economic collapse, The Boat follows two brothers who struggle financially and emotionally to keep their families afloat after a factory shutdown puts an end to economic prospects in their Upstate NY town.



COME MY BELOVED

created & directed by **Emma Weinstein**

dramaturgy by **Jeremy Stoller**

with **Francesca Choy-Kee, Hannah Hodson, Michael Micalizzi, Caitlin Morris, Emily Shoolin, Justin Weak**s

stage directions read by **Jonathan Draxton**, stage managed by **Mae Frankeberger**

An exploration of Black and Jewish romantic relationships from the 1930's to now, Come My Beloved looks at intimate and familial love as a way of understanding how race has both separated and united us over time.



QUEENS

THE BALLAD OF ELLA MAY

at the IBEW LOCAL 3 WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

written by **Cori Thomas**

music by **Julia Barry**

lyrics by **Julia Barry, Cori Thomas, Ella May Wiggins**

directed by **Stephen Brown-Fried**

music direction by **Julia Barry**, costume design by **Nicole Slaven**

with **Bridget Beirne, Kimberly JaJuan, Sabina Petra**

accompanist **Max Mamon**

stage manager **Will Rucker**

May 23, 2016 at IBEW Local 3, Electchester, Queens

Commissioned by Working Theater and IBEW Local 3, The Ballad of Ella May is a mini-musical about the life of 1920's textile worker, balladier and union organizer Ella May Wiggins.



The Ballad of Ella May at Local 3 IBEW. Photos by Jack Miller, Miller Photography.

OFF-BROADWAY PREMIERE & BOROUGH TOUR

THE BLOCK

by **Dan Hoyle**

directed by **Tamilla Woodard**

developed with **Tamilla Woodard** and **Maureen Towey**

with **Yvette Ganier, Nathan Hinton, Robert Jimenez, Clinton Lowe, Flaco Navaja**

commissioned by **Working Theater** as part of its **Five Boroughs/One City Initiative**

May 28 – June 11: Urban Stages, Manhattan

June 13 – 14 : Ridgewood Bushwick Youth Center, Brooklyn

June 16 – 17: Local 3 IBEW Auditorium, Queens

June 18 – 19: Pregones Theater, Bronx

June 21 & 23: Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Staten Island

Set Design **Raul Abrego** · Costume Design **Sarita Fellows** · Lighting Design **Alan C. Edwards**
Sound Design: **Mark Van Hare** · Props Design **Claire Kavanah** · Dialect Coach **Beth McGuire**
Production Stage Manager **Danielle Teague-Daniels** · Assistant Stage Manager **Genevieve Ortiz**
Production Manager **Tony Crawford** · Associate Production Manager **Randi Rivera**
Casting Support **Annie Henk** · Press Representation **Dan Demello**



Dontrell's just come back from upstate, no, not like Upstate upstate, just with his girl, you know, quiet workin' man life. Now he's back on his block in the Boogie Down, the South Bronx, where he did his dirt years back, but he's not tryin' to be grimy no more. Nah man, he's trying to do good. But do you have any idea what that's really like?



Based on conversations and interviews over two years in the South Bronx and with members of CASA, a project of New Settlement Community Apartments, comes a play that will change the way you look at New York.

The Block was made possible with funds from the **New York State Council on the Arts** with the support of **Governor Andrew Cuomo** and the **New York State Legislature**, public funds from the **New York City Department of Cultural Affairs** in partnership with the City Council, the **Howard Gilman Foundation**, the **Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation**, the **Shubert Foundation**, and the **One World Fund**. Performances of *The Block* in Queens were generously supported by a grant from **City Council Member Rory Lancman**, facilitated through New York City's Department of Cultural Affairs.



Working Theater would also like to thank Joe Docetti and **Local 3 IBEW** for their donation of pipe and drape, and Jose Vargas and the **Bronx UFT** for their donation of sound and lighting equipment for our borough-wide tour of *The Block*.



Special thanks to our borough presenting partners: **Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council & Ridgewood Bushwick Youth Center**, **IBEW Local 3**, **Pregones Theater** and **Snug Harbor Cultural Center**.

And thank you to all of the CASA Members and Bronx Residents who shared their stories for *The Block*.

BRONX

THEATERWORKS!

In our 31st Season, we hosted our 16-week playwriting and performance class for members of CASA in the South Bronx. Students wrote and performed in their own short plays alongside a professional playwright, a professional director & professional actors. The final performance also featured an excerpt from Working Theater's 2016 production, Dan Hoyle's *The Block*.

Final Performance: Thursday, January 21, 2016 at Pregones Theater, Bronx

THE PLAYS:

Two People Go To Vote by **Joseph Cepeda**

Steps by **Althea Matthews**

The Transit by **Joseph Smalls**

Smudge by **Stephanie Londono**

A Walk in the Park by **Porfirio Caraballo**

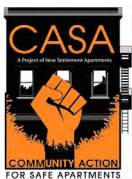
TheaterWorks! Instructor/Director: **Dan Hoyle**

Guest actors: **Yvette Ganier, Clinton Lowe, Flaco Navaja**

TheaterWorks! Stage Manager/ Producing Intern: **Haley Wolf**

The 2016 TheaterWorks! Program was co-sponsored by
CASA and Working Theater

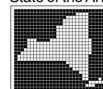
Susanna Blankley, Director, CASA | **Sheila Garcia**, Deputy Director, CASA



Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA) is a membership driven tenant organizing project of New Settlement Apartments that works primarily in the Southwest Bronx whose mission is to protect and maintain affordable and safe housing through collective action.

The TheaterWorks! Program is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and the Axe Houghton Foundation.

State of the Arts



NYSCA



BROOKLYN

BUSHWICK COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

Working Theater partnered with the Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council in Bushwick, Brooklyn to engage the community in workshops, readings and full productions. In addition to the reading of Ed Cardona, Jr.'s *Bamboo in Brooklyn* and the touring production of Dan Hoyle's *The Block*, we presented:

STORY CIRCLES

November - December 2015

moderated by **Reza Salazar** and **Yadira de la Riva**

We hosted 3 sessions of story circles within the community centers of the RBSCC, where residents came together to share stories, hopes and dreams, and to reflect on the meaning of community.

INTER-GENERATIONAL THEATER WORKSHOP

March 5th - 12th, 2016

facilitated by **Tamilla Woodard**

Young adults between the ages of 13 – 19 and seniors 65 or better were invited to a workshop where participants wrote, interviewed and dialogued to create a collaborative original play.



Photos of the Inter-Generational Theater Workshop at RBSCC by David Crespo.

2016 ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY

honoring **EDISON SEVERINO**

Business Manager, LiUNA Local 78

for bridging the gap between the arts, labor & community

May 9th, 2016 at 6pm

at Sardi's Restaurant



featuring cocktails, dinner, dessert, Silent Auction and a “feel good auction” (in which participants bid to donate tickets to community members for our touring production of *The Block*) and entertainment featuring a selection of musical numbers from *the Ballad of Ella May* and a performance excerpt from *The Block*.

Thanks to all who supported the 2016 Annual Awards Ceremony:

VIP Tables:

Asbestos, Lead & Hazardous Waste Laborers Local 78 • Belluck & Fox
Cigna • Greater New York LECET • Laborers Eastern Region Organizing Fund

Patron Tables

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Our generous friends and volunteers:

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2016 Annual Awards Ceremony photos by Grace Côté.

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Working Theater is extremely grateful to all who have supported our 31st Season!

(FY 2015 to date: July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016)

We would also like to give special thanks to those who participated in our new “Financial Resilience Campaign”. Started with a generous \$20,000 grant from the Howard Gilman Foundation, individuals and companies who participated in this campaign donated above and beyond their general annual donation to create a new fund specifically to reduce debt and establish a cash reserve for the company.

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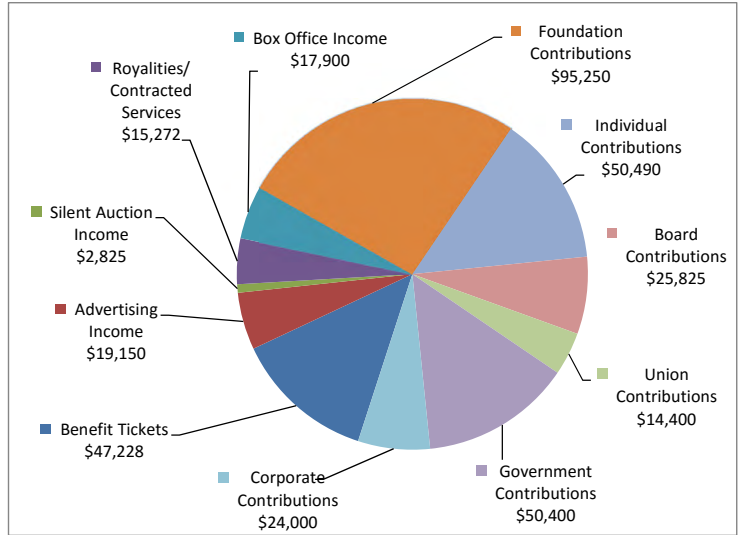
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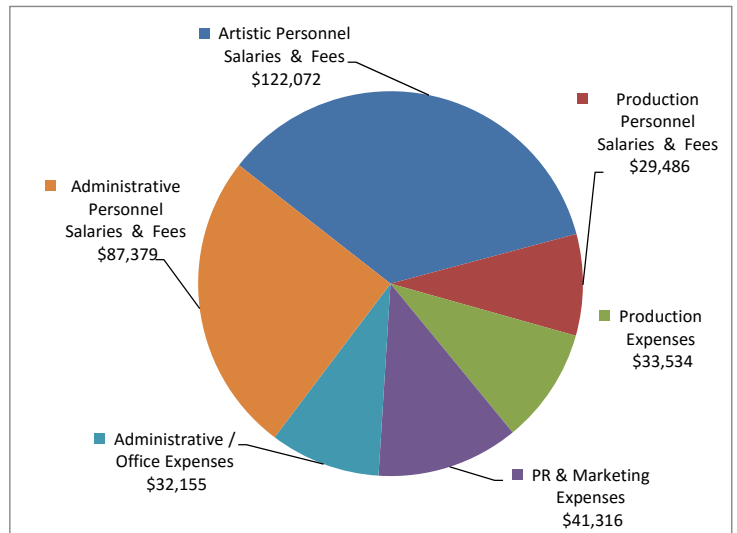
FINANCIALS

The Working Theater Co., Inc Fiscal Year 2015: July 2015 to June 2016

INCOME	
Benefit Tickets	\$47,228
Advertising Income	\$19,150
Silent Auction Income	\$ 2,825
Royalties/Contracted Services	\$15,272
Box Office Income	\$17,900
Foundation Contributions	\$95,250
Individual Contributions	\$50,490
Board Contributions	\$25,825
Union Contributions	\$14,400
Government Contributions	\$50,400
Corporate Contributions	\$24,000
Total Income	\$362,740



EXPENSES	
Artistic Personnel Salaries & Fees	\$122,072
Administrative Personnel Salaries & Fees	\$87,379
Production Personnel Salaries & Fees	\$29,486
Production Expenses	\$33,534
PR & Marketing Expenses	\$41,316
Administrative / Office Expenses	\$32,155
Total Expenses	\$345,942



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SPECIAL THANKS

to our friends and volunteers who donated their time and resources this season:

Cheryl Asher, Rodger Belknap, Sarah Levine, Rebecca Martinez,
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Working Theater is a member of the **Alliance of Resident Theatres / New York**,
the service organization for New York City's non-profit off- and off-off-Broadway theaters,
and **Theatre Communications Group**

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the New York State Council on the Arts,
with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature
and **the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs**,
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2016 subsidized rehearsal studio space provided by the **A.R.T. / New York Creative Space Grant**.





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