DOBAMA THEATRE
21 / 22 ANNUAL REPORT
LOVE & RESPECT
After eighteen months of planning, re-structuring, and reflection, the 2021-22 Season was a year of action! Dobama reopened to live audiences with a quirky crowd-pleasing air guitar play about the importance of finding “your people” in AIRNESS. We wisely decided to forgo mounting a holiday show in anticipation of a likely winter surge of COVID-19 (which sadly came to pass). Instead, our next mainstage show was Madeleine George’s HURRICANE DIANE – a script that approached climate change and American consumerism in an epic and hilarious storm of comedy. March brought Pulitzer Prize winner James Ijames’ KILL MOVE PARADISE to the Dobama stage. This long-planned production addressed the epidemic of police violence in a play that is both confrontational and full of joy and hope. The mainstage season ended with a brand new version of Aaron’s Posner’s LIFE SUCKS. This funny and moving show about the joy and hardships of life was particularly relevant given all we’d been through as human beings in the past year and a half. All of Dobama’s mainstage productions featured some sort of breaking of the fourth wall – involving audiences in the live theatre experience in ways that could not be achieved watching TV on their couches.

Mainstage productions were just a piece of what made this past season special. Last fall we presented the first-annual Heights Halloween Festival – a free community event that attracted an estimated 5,000 people and that featured costumed character side stages for meet-n-greets, games, a DJ, circus performers, large-scale puppets, a scavenger hunt, and lots of candy. Education programming ramped up again with a return to in-school playwriting workshops and live performances of the 44th Annual Marilyn Bianchi Kids’ Playwriting Festival. Significant progress was made in connections with area public schools, and we anticipate a 500% increase in workshops for the 22-23 Season. The Playwrights’ GYM offered a festival of ten-minute plays, SUMMER SHORTS, that moved and delighted audiences.

Most importantly, Dobama got the opportunity to put many of the important commitments made during the pandemic shutdown into practice. Dobama operated with new team members and a new team model. The theatre shifted our production schedules to also include a week of rehearsal but add an additional day off each week. And we re-launched the Board of Directors with a larger, more representative group, operating in a format centered on strategic conversations. Guided by our Love & Respect Document, a new strategic plan will be completed in 2023 and we continue this important work.

The 21-22 Season was a success by any reasonable measure. We re-opened safely, served our community in important ways, and put into practice the commitments we developed in the 20-21 season. We're grateful to our members, donors, grant organizations, audiences, artists, and volunteers for making it happen.

With Love & Respect,

Nathan Motta, Artistic Director
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MISSION

DOBAMA THEATRE IS DEDICATED TO PREMIERING IMPORTANT NEW PLAYS BY ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING PLAYWRIGHTS IN PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTIONS OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY. THROUGH THEATRICAL PRODUCTION, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, AND EDUCATION PROGRAMMING, DOBAMA NURTURES THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEATRE ARTISTS AND BUILDS NEW AUDIENCES FOR THE ARTS WHILE PROVOKING AN EXAMINATION OF OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD.

VISION

DOBAMA THEATRE PROFESSIONALLY PRODUCES URGENT, ENGAGING, EXCEPTIONAL THEATRE IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS UNCEASINGLY EQUITABLE, SAFE, AND NURTURING TO EVERYONE IN THE COMMUNITY WE SHARE.
CORE VALUES

COMMUNITY
Dobama nurtures personal and professional relationships in and outside of the theatre community by supporting the growth of local theatre artists and by reaching out, giving back, and embracing each of our neighbors in the Northeast Ohio region.

JUSTICE
Dobama humbly serves each individual person, honoring the dignity of all. Dobama puts love into action in the ongoing pursuit of justice.

ARTISTRY
Dobama creates extraordinary theatre through dynamic, provocative productions and fearless programming that asks burning questions about the human experience.

(RE)EVOLUTION
Dobama makes bold change by putting people first and ensuring that everyone has a voice in that change. We consistently, audaciously adapt and hold ourselves accountable in our commitment to lead with integrity, grit, and radical kindness.
“You are a treasure in this community.”
- Maxine C.

“I am unfailingly impressed by the quality of Dobama productions; truly first-rate. As is the staff!”
- Donna K.

“I recommend Dobama to everyone I see. I really appreciate the quality and the challenge to think in different ways. I feel fortunate to have such a wonderful theatre right here in the Heights.”
- Kathy F.

“Thank you for all you do to enrich our lives.”
- Kathleen D.

“Hurricane Diane was one of my absolute favorite things I have ever seen at any Cleveland theatre. What an incredible production with brilliant performers. I only wish I could see it again and again!”
- Tara C.

“We appreciate all you have done to help us feel safe [during COVID-19].”
- Martin P.

“Please keep up all the good things you do. You’re unique and very deeply treasured.”
- Jack L.
SYNOPSIS: When Nina enters her first air guitar competition, she thinks winning will be easy. But as she befriends a group of charismatic nerds all committed to becoming the next champion, she discovers that there's more to this art form than playing pretend. AIRNESS is an exuberant reminder that everything we need to rock is already inside us.

“This is the first show in Dobama’s redesigned space, with the audience placed in a slightly curved seating area that embraces the stage, and it’s a huge improvement that brings the action closer to every patron. Scenic designer Aaron Benson’s set ... takes on the angular shape of many electric guitars. And T. Paul Lowry’s projections add an interesting dimension to the proceedings.”

CHRISTINE HOWEY, Cleveland SCENE

“As we sit in the intimate, cozy Dobama space at the organization’s first production since the coronavirus pandemic began ... our hearts might be in our childhood basements, jumping up and down on a bean bag chair with our own air guitar in our hands. That is what this play not only allows us to do but demands of us.”

SHERI GROSS, News-Herald

2021 BEST ACTOR - TREY GILPIN
CLEVELAND CRITICS CIRCLE
“What do you get when you cross a Greek tragedy with a modern-day soap opera? You get a hurricane of epic proportions that swoops through Dobama Theatre in Cleveland Heights, leaving audiences laughing, soul searching, gasping and thoroughly entertained in its wake.”

SHERI GROSS, News-Herald

“Dobama’s production is compelling. It is well-conceived, well-cast and technically masterful. The ensemble cast is flawless. Amiee Collier ... is other-world perfect as Diane. She has a keen sense of comic timing and is bigger than life in transforming herself into a real ‘dyke’ god.”

ROY BERKO, Broadway World

SYNOPSIS: Meet Diane, a permaculture gardener dripping with butch charm. She’s got supernatural abilities owing to her true identity - the Greek god Dionysus - and she’s returned to gather mortal followers and restore the Earth to its natural state. Where better to begin than with four housewives in a suburban New Jersey cul-de-sac?

DIANE: Nervous? Don’t be. It’s going to be okay. It’s going to feel amazing to save the world.
KILL MOVE PARADISE
by James Ijames

SYNOPSIS: Kill Move Paradise tells the story of Isa, Daz, Grif, and Tiny, four Black men stuck in a cosmic waiting room in the afterlife. This biting, funny, hopeful requiem for Black lives illustrates the possibilities of collective transformation and radical acts of joy.

“Black victims of fatal police brutality have their say in ‘Kill Move Paradise’ at Dobama... There are many wry laughs... but each one is fitted with a razor edge that cuts as it amuses. It’s a risky high-wire act that Ijames has constructed, but under the direction of [Nathan] Henry... we are honored to experience it.”

CHRISTINE HOWEY, Cleveland SCENE

“The Dobama production is brilliantly staged... [the cast] work as a well-oiled unit to create a vivid depiction of the misguided mistreatment of young Black men in America. This is an absolute must see production!”

ROY BERKO, Broadway World

GRIF: And they tell us when we are boys ‘don’t get too close to the sun. Don’t fly too high.’
LIFE SUCKS

sort of adapted from UNCLE VANYA
by Anton Chekhov

by Aaron Posner

DIRECTOR: Nathan Motta
FEATURING: Christopher Bohan*, Chennelle Bryant-Harris, Andrew Gorell*, Jourdan Lewanda, Steve Marvel*, Anne McEvoy, Nicole Sumlin*
SCENIC DESIGN: Brian Seckfort
LIGHTING DESIGN: Marcus Dana
SOUND DESIGN: Richard Ingraham
COSTUME DESIGN: Tesia Dugan Benson
PROPS DESIGN: Andy Zicari
INTIMACY CHOREOGRAPHY: Casey Venema
STAGE MANAGER: Rachel Twardzik*
ASST. DIRECTOR: Sara Young
ASST. STAGE MANAGERS: Elizabeth Cammett, Andy Zicari

* Member Actors’ Equity Association

SYNOPSIS: In this raw and hilarious reimagining of Chekhov’s timeless classic, a group of old friends, ex-lovers, estranged in-laws, and lifelong enemies gather to grapple with life’s thorniest questions – and each other. What could possibly go wrong?

“[The play’s] impish tone could quickly get silly in less sure hands, but Motta knows what to do with Posner’s rich material, and they join forces to weave the seven characters and their stories into a seamless and hilarious theatrical feast.”

CHRISTINE HOWEY, Cleveland SCENE

“Dobama’s production, under the direction of Artistic Director Nathan Motta, is close to perfection. The cast ... is strong, with each actor clearly developing their character. The beautiful set, lighting and sound all help develop the correct moods.”

ROY BERKO, Broadway World

VANYA: I fantasize about a life before we knew how to fantasize.
**FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

The Young Playwrights Program was more active than ever this year, and there’s still room to grow. The 2021-22 school year involved a total of 15 classroom visits at Cleveland Heights-University Heights elementary schools (mostly in person, but some virtual), as well as 7 on-site sessions hosted at Dobama. All told, we worked with about 350 students between kindergarten and eighth grade, in comparison to the previous year’s 80 – more than a 400% increase.

In addition to our traditional partnership with Lake Erie Ink, I and other teaching artists were invited to participate in family events at Fairfax and Canterbury Elementary Schools, spreading word of Dobama’s programs beyond the classroom. This growth is projected to expand 2022-23 workshops to more than 100, extending to cities like Avon Lake, Bedford, Cleveland Municipal Schools, and more. We look forward to continuing to serve our community.

Thank you to our dedicated partners in the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, the David and Inez Myers Foundation, the Harry K. and Emma R. Fox Foundation, and the Music and Drama Club for their continued support of this vital program.

Sincerely,

Carrie Williams  
Education Director

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**Marilyn Bianchi Kids’ Playwriting Festival**

From **183 total entries**, 24 winners were chosen by a team of local playwrights, teachers, and theatre artists. As always, ten of those plays were fully produced on Dobama’s stage by a team of more than 50 artists in the **44th Annual Marilyn Bianchi Kids’ Playwriting Festival**. Winning plays featured subjects ranging from an evil magician and teleportation to suicide and the war in Ukraine. Dobama is proud to continue this important tradition.
Because theatre is a living art form, each experience is unique. For anyone who has ever missed out on seeing a play at Dobama, there’s always that urge to want to see what it is they missed. Be it through production photos or even reading comments on social media, people genuinely want to know more about Dobama, so we make it our priority to give them access.

But we are in the business of experiences. With that, we decided to take our engagement one step further by creating a free community event during the fall season: Heights Halloween Festival. With a DJ, dance floor space, in-person pop culture character meet-n-greets, craft activities and a community candy crawl for kids, this event broadens our outreach and offers another way to look at who we are and how we serve our community through theatrical arts.

The festival was completely free, took place in the center of the business district, and attracted an estimated 5,000 attendees. If it sounds like a lot of work, it is – but it takes such a labor of love to be of service to our city, including the respect to include all of its members, regardless of their economic situation.

Dobama engages people through love and respect.

Warmly,

Mariah Burks
Director of Engagement
Dear friends,

What a year this has been. A thrilling reopening, a tightrope walk of virus surges, and an incredible amount of support from the community.

As we close the book on the 21/22 Season, I am happy to report that Dobama’s future looks bright. By carefully planning a manageable season and applying for relevant government assistance, we were able to make important upgrades: we updated our seating system for better ADA compliance and audience experience, increased the size of our endowment to ensure sustainability, and produced our first season that included a paid internship program.

It is entirely due to your support that we are in such a strong position as we carefully plan for the future. Our upcoming 22/23 Season includes two world premiere productions that we developed during the COVID pause, further solidifying Dobama’s position as a champion of new work and growing our image on a national scale.

Onward,

Colin Anderson
Director of Production

According to financials audited by McManamon & Co, LLC. Full audited financial statements available upon request.
Dobama Theatre recognizes the generosity of the many individuals who sustain us with contributions throughout the year. Each gift is significant regardless of size, both to us as an organization and to the donor. We have combined the following names to acknowledge the significance of those gifts, large and small. Thank you; we would not be here without you. This listing includes donors from July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy. Please call 216.932.6838 with corrections.

**21/22 SUPPORTERS**

Anonymous  
Marilou Abele  
in honor of Hope Hungerford and Mark Hardenbergh  
Abe Adams  
Mary Adams  
Laurie Albright and Brian Larsen  
Susan Alcorn  
Jeffrey Anderle  
James Anderson and David Wittkowsky  
Colin Anderson  
in memory of Mary Ann Sword  
Anthony and Cheryl Barabani  
Cathy Barber  
James Barthelmes  
Benham and Carol Bates  
Bill and Victoria Bauer  
Ara Beal  
Lynda Bender  
Elliot and Roni Berenson  
Teddi Gibson Bianchi  
Michael and Jennifer Bier  
Tom and Dorothy Bier  
Anne and Glenn Billington  
Mark and Kathleen Binnig  
Jean Bloomfield  
Chris Bohan  
Geoff and Julie Bonebrake  
Daniel and Shelley Boyle  
Barbara Bradley  
Frank Brandt  
Vincent Briley  
Penny Brill  
Dolores Brown  
James F. Brown and Jean T. Stevenson  
John and Ellie Brucken  
Bill and Carol Bruml  
Daniel Brustein and Joan Trey  
Jane and Eric Buder Shapiro  
Laurie Buss  
William D. Buss, II  
Katie and Dennis Cahn  
Jack and Janice Campbell  
Spencer Caress and Jackie Feldman  
Joan Carney  
Eric Coble and Carol Laursen  
Cindy and Tim Carr  
Lindgren Carson  
Joyce and Pat Casey  
Michael and Lois Cellura  
Ken and Grace Chalker  
Dr. Alan and Mrs. Channing  
Susan and Laurence Channing  
Ramona Charles  
Michele Clark  
Thurma Clemenza  
David and Sandra Cobb  
Jennifer Coleman  
Barbara Colombi  
Chrstal Contini  
Tom and Anita Coo  
Jutta Corrigan  
Barbara Cross and Roy Call  
Brian and Donna Culley  
Maxine Davis  
Anne DesRosiers  
Collin Dewyre  
Janet Dodrill  
Joyce Dodrill Krieger and Mark Krieger  
Carol Dolan  
William Doll  
Dennis Dooley  
Jeffrey R Dross and Michele J. Ladoucer  
Cynthia Druckenbrod  
Marcel and Jackie Duhamel  
Alicia Durett  
Patricia G Egan  
Matt and Tammy Eiben  
Linda Eisenstein  
Bob Ellis  
Barry and Barbara Epstein  
Deena and Dick Epstein  
Judy and Joe Erlichman  
Barbra Estrada  
John Ewing  
Marian Fairman  
Jenna Fink  
Felicia Finkelstain  
Jane Finley  
Nancy Fleming  
Donna Fox and Loren Smith  
Jonathan Freeman  
Jana Friess  
Judith Ryder Frumker  
Gregory Fulkerson  
LaCresia Smith Gaines  
Rosemary Gallagher  
Jack Ganz  
Don, Joe, and Mia Buchwald Gelles  
Enid German-Beck  
Jill Gerson Parker  
Anant and Pratibha Ghatage  
Kathryn Gibbs  
Marvin Gisser  

*Left to right: Mell-Yonti Bowens, Darius J. Stubbs, Aumar-Malik Culbreth, Ananias J. Dixon*
Laurie Ross
Heather and Irwin Ross-Lowenstein
Michael Ruffing
Patrick and Amy Runnels
Ron Rydarowicz and William Figner, Jr.
Bradley Sales
Allen Salzberg
Myra Samsa
George and Constance Sapin
Erin Scerbak
Mark and Shelley Scher
Toni and Donald Scherzer
John and Barbara Schubert
Martha and David Schubert
Michael Schwartz
Theresa Schwarz and Peter Bohan
Gunter Schwegler
Benjamin Scolaro
Gary Scott
David Sedwick
Kim Sherwin
Debby Shewitz
David Shifrin
Larry and Aya Shlachter
Faye and David Sholiton
Tony Sias
Dean and Judith Sieck
Jim Simler and Amy Zhang
Maxine Singer
Norman and Patricia Singer
Raj Singh
Michelle Smith
Rebecca Smith
Michael Smith
Jane Smith Stewart
John Sobonya
Judith Sockman
Patricia Speelman
Bonnie Spiegle
Robert Spross
Margaret Stager
Jennifer Stapleton
Laura and Darrell Starnik
Darwin Steele
Lorelei Stein-Sapir
Carolyn Steiner
Nancy Stemmer
Dr. Myron “Bud” Stern and Ruth Cantleberry
Don and Jackie Stimpert
Anita Stoll and Pete Clapham
Jerry and Ellen Strand
Bob Strother
Audrey Strother
Nicole and Eugene Sumlin
Theodore Takacs
Frank and Victoria Titas
Leonard and Kerstin Trawick
James and Debra Vail
Martina Veigl
Val Vinyar
Kate Viasek
Kileen A. Vogel
Nancy Wareham
Mary Wehrle
Annabelle Weiss
Rona Weiss
Yoash Wiener
Mary and Bill Wilkinson
James and Eileen Wilkoff
Rebecca Willson
Diane Wish
Sharon Yarnell
Rachel Zake
Kurt Zake
Kurt and Barbara Zoss
Thomas Zych

The theatre’s rebranding gives a fresh aesthetic, based in core values.

We unveiled a new logo this year, accompanied by complementary branding as Cleveland’s Off-Broadway Theatre and a commitment to Love & Respect - all three unified with a new font and color palette. The new branding centers the unique sans-serif typeface “Bayard”, which was inspired by Bayard Rustin’s signs from the 1963 March On Washington For Jobs and Freedom. Now Dobama Theatre has a unified, dynamic look that represents who we aspire to be as a company.

Bayard Rustin was a close advisor to Martin Luther King and one of the most influential and effective organizers of the civil rights movement, leading a number of protests in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, as well as a public advocate on behalf of gay and lesbian causes during the 1980s. Bayard provided Martin with deep understanding of nonviolent ideas and tactics at a time when he (MLK) had only an academic familiarity with Gandhi. Bayard was also instrumental in the formation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), proposing to King in December 1956 that he create a group that would unite black leaders in the South who possess “ties to masses of people so that their action projects are backed by broad participation of people.”
UPCOMING 22/23 SEASON

THE THIN PLACE
by Lucas Hnath
OCT 7 - 30

THE LAND OF OZ
book & lyrics by George Brant
music by Nathan Motta
DEC 2 - 31

STEW
by Zora Howard
JAN 27 - FEB 19

THE OTHER PLACE
by Sharr White
MAR 10 - APR 2

WHAT WE LOOK LIKE
by B.J. Tindal
APR 21 - MAY 14

21/22 DOBAMA STAFF

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Nathan Motta

DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION
Colin Anderson

DIRECTOR OF ENGAGEMENT
Mariah Burks

CONNECTIVITY DIRECTOR
Elise Kuklinca

DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS
Darius J. Stubbs

EDUCATION DIRECTOR
Carrie Williams

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
Marcus Dana

RESIDENT LIGHTING DESIGNER
Marcus Dana

RESIDENT SOUND DESIGNER
Richard Ingraham

RESIDENT PROJECTION DESIGNER
T. Paul Lowry

RESIDENT COSTUME DESIGNER
Tesia Dugan Benson

RESIDENT PROPS DESIGNER
Vanessa Cook

RESIDENT WARDROBE
Lady Jen Ryan

RESIDENT SCENIC ARTIST
Justine Schneider

RESIDENT INTIMACY DIRECTOR
Casey Venema

RESIDENT STAGE MANAGER
Joel Rathbone*

BOX OFFICE MANAGER
Owen Schneider

FRONT OF HOUSE
Delaney K.D. Hagy
Heather K. Pederson

INTERNS
Jamie Cohen-Kiraly
Shaun Furter
Grace Ingham
Maureen Penko
Gwen Sour
Kitty Wen
Andy Zicari