A Note From Executive Director, Bruce E. Whitacre:

This has been a watershed in the forty plus year history of Theatre Forward. Four Advancing Strong Theatre grants of $50,000 each advanced progress in equity, diversity and inclusion at our theatres in Dallas, Minneapolis, San Diego and Seattle. My colleagues and I had the thrill of watching culminating performances of Shakespeare plays at Dallas Theater Center and Seattle Rep; a Native American-conceived show, “Stories From the Drum,” at the Guthrie; and tours of Shakespeare and a subscription season play to Latinx neighborhoods in San Diego. We saw firsthand how theatre changes lives.

Another highlight of the year was the release of findings in two key Educating Through Theatre research projects: our “Network-Wide Program Outcomes Assessment” of nineteen programs offered by our theatres and our final report on the two year “Staging Success” program funded by AT&T. Together, with our ground breaking “Unmasking Business Success” in 2015, over the past five years we have studied theatre education from the perspective of business executives, students themselves, and teachers and instructors. This combination of perspectives demonstrates again and again how critical exposure to theatre can be in engaging and encouraging our students to achieve. Theatre Forward is uniquely positioned to further study and support a platform of theatre education programs serving over 500,000 students annually across the country, and we will be exploring new approaches and programs in the coming year.

Also in 2018-19, Bank of America funded the extension for “Advancing Strong Theatre” program under the bank’s exclusive corporate support. In November 2019, we formally launched the new version of this program. Bank of America ACTivate Awards is a multi-year commitment of four grants of $50,000 each a year to theatres committed to programs that meet the needs of their communities and that are sustainable. The first grants will be made in the spring of 2020. This is the largest corporate program Theatre Forward has ever undertaken. The support of Bank of America for this kind of work is a welcome step by a corporation into expanding institutional capacity and programming that goes well beyond the more usual sponsorship/branding program. Our shared objectives in enhancing equity, diversity, and inclusion, and in strengthening service to communities make this truly a game changer for Theatre Forward, Bank of America, and our theatres.

Finally, Theatre Forward has spent the past few months executing an orderly leadership transition upon my upcoming retirement later in 2020. The Board has risen to this responsibility with vigor and clarity in recruiting my successor.

The five years since we rebranded and became a more diversely funded organization have been years of remarkable transformation at Theatre Forward, and in our field. Theatres are adapting, evolving, and innovating to increase access and opportunity for all to be a part of this artform. Theatre Forward is extremely privileged to be a nexus of this great moment in these very dynamic times. I have no doubt we will continue to drive innovation and artistic excellence in the exciting years ahead, drawing upon our current success.

We are thrilled to share with you some of the highlights from this past year.
Our Community of Theatre Lovers

Our supporters make our programs possible. Both corporate and individuals have helped us achieve our goals.

National Society

Our National Society members support our theatres’ efforts to enrich communities and make theatre accessible to all with their generous philanthropic contributions. This year, National Society members enjoyed pre-show dinners featuring special industry guests, invitations to the curated panels of industry professionals to explore all areas of theatre, ticketing concierge service, and more.

Corporate Sponsors

Our corporate partners are instrumental to the work we do. With 30+ corporate supporters, Theatre Forward is uniquely positioned to offer thousands of employees access to affordable and one-of-a-kind theatrical experiences.

Funding grants, such as AT&T’s essential support for our Education research and Bank of America’s support for Bank of America ACTivate Awards made Theatre Forward’s national impact possible.

Ticketing Services

All of our supporters are eligible for our range of benefits.

Save My Seat

Over 20,000 patrons and corporate employees accessed Save My Seat, Theatre Forward’s online ticketing service, offering discount and full-priced tickets to shows in New York and nationwide.

Spotlight Series

We had a total of 17 Spotlight Series Events in 2018-2019 at Broadway’s most popular shows, offering discounted prices to shows like The Cher Show, Wicked, Network, and To Kill a Mockingbird.
Advancing Strong Theatre and the launch of Bank of America ACTivate Awards

Last year, Advancing Strong Theatre launched and funded four programs in four cities across America. This pilot program was an ambitious initiative to enhance the way theatres engage with and strengthen their local community, deepen relationships, and empower individuals, so that everyone, regardless of income, education, age, race, religion, ability, and/or gender identity, could experience theatre and its benefits.

The pilot round of grants was awarded to Dallas Theater Center, Guthrie Theater, The Old Globe, and Seattle Rep. It was clear that these projects have made a substantial impact on the lives of their participants, the theatres, and the broader community through storytelling workshops, free-to-public performances, professional tours to community centers, acting workshops, open mics, and other community events.

As a funder of Advancing Strong Theatre, Bank of America was committed to making this work continue. Now, with an exclusive corporate sponsorship, Bank of America is securing Theatre Forward’s next phase of this grant program on a multi-year basis.

Bank of America ACTivate Awards is a program that makes grants for member theatres that help promote social good by building lasting relationships, one community at a time.

Member theatres will submit their ideas for programming that is intended to build sustainable, authentic relationships with community organizations. Grants of $50,000 or more will be awarded to 4-6 programs focused on equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives.

The first round of grants will be awarded in 2020; the second round will be awarded in 2021, with a potential third round slated for 2022. The grant funds: Free-to-public performances, workshops, potluck dinners, open-mics, and so much more.

Educating Through Theatre

It has been a year of significant accomplishments across the country in our theatres’ education programs. Highlights include:

- Provided funding for education programs in all of our 19 theatres.
- Provided support for “Genesis” at Long Wharf Theatre, engaging seniors in theatre.
- Provided support through our “Making Music” program in four member theatres.

This year, we have also concluded a suite of theatre education research, conducted by independent third party researchers, on the impact of theatre education from the perspectives of business executives, teachers, and students. We continue to find that to deprive students’ access to the arts, deprives them of the opportunity to grow and develop vital life skills. To address this issue, Theatre Forward supports access and opportunity initiatives in our network for educating through theatre at every grade level and beyond.

Visit our website find out more about our research and programming.

Staging Success | After two years of work with AT&T assessing student engagement, we happily report that our research found that the more a student participated in our theatre programing, the higher their school engagement, which was measured by school attendance.

“One thing I learned was how to be more confident in myself and know I’ll do good.”
- Staging Success Student

Network-Wide Assessment | This year, we concluded research at our 19 theatres, looking at outcomes around 21st century skills and academic learning from the teacher/parent perspective.

“As the program went on, he was able to use and strengthen the creative problem-solving skills and verbal-linguistic skills” - Classroom Teacher

Unmasking Business Success | In 2015, we assessed corporate perceptions of job readiness and contributing factors to success in the workplace. Executives noted the significant impact of the arts on their lives.
2018-2019 in Events at Theatre Forward

Theatre Forward continues to advance to American theatre by focusing on activities that aim to increase access and opportunity for all to experience theatre that builds community and sets the stage for individual achievement. Through a number of special events, our supporters gathered, celebrated, and provided financial support to our work.

Chairman’s Awards Gala
April 8, 2019
- Theatre Forward honored Bryan Cranston (pictured above), Dorsey & Whitney LLP (accepted by Robert A. Rosenbaum), and Pamela Farr (Theatre Forward board member) & Buford Alexander.
- The evening included musical performances by Orfeh, George Salazar, Ty Defoe, and Aurelia Williams, and special guest appearances from Jeremy Pope, Regina Taylor, and Paula A. Dominick, Theatre Forward Board Member and Gala Chair.

Broadway Roundtable
January 25, 2019
- The 16th Broadway Roundtable was hosted by UBS. The panel answered questions revolving around the theme of “Community in Theatre”.
- Our panelists included: Victoria Clark (The Light in the Piazza), Larissa FastHorse (The Thanksgiving Play), Julie Halston (Tootsie), Jennifer Ashley Tepper (Be More Chill), Richard Thomas (The Little Foxes), Brandon Uranowitz (Burn This), and Jill Simonson Luciano (Southwest Airlines).

Happy Hours
- Our Monthly Happy Hours are an opportunity for our supporters to network and learn about the theatre industry. Our season closer in June featured theatre columnist, Michael Riedel on the state of commercial theatre.

Creative Conversations
May 15, 2019
- May 15th was the first free-to-public Creative Conversations panel at Steinway Hall. Panelists included: Pamela DiPasquale (Cleveland Play House), Joe Iconis (Be More Chill), Dayron J. Miles (Dallas Theater Center), and Regina Taylor (Actress/Director/Playwright/Producer). They shared their insights on what it means to create and participate in a community. The gathered audience also got a sneak preview of the off-Broadway musical, Broadway Bounty Hunter featuring Annie Golden.
CURRENT FUNDERS
List as of December 2019
We are most grateful to the following funders:

$50,000 and Above
Bank of America ●
Pamela Farr & Buford Alexander ●
Citi ●
The Schloss Family Foundation ■ ●
Wells Fargo ●

$25,000-$49,999
The Augustine Foundation ■
BNY Mellon
Cognizant
Dorsey & Whitney LLP
Goldman, Sachs & Co.
MetLife
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$25,000-$49,999
The Augustine Foundation ■
BNY Mellon
Cognizant
Dorsey & Whitney LLP
Goldman, Sachs & Co.
MetLife
Roe Green ●

$15,000-$24,999
American Express
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$10,000-$14,999
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$5,000-$9,999
AudienceView ↑
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$2,500-$4,999
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Debi Feinman
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Patti & John Heller *
David Katz *
Rob Kaufman *
Evan Ladouceur & Meg Langan ■ ■
Marla Moskowitz-Hesse * ■
The Old Globe
O’Reilly Family *
Leonard J. Oremlead in honor of Rachel Oremlead
Deborah Van Eck * ■
Francine Walker ■
Joseph Yurchik *

* National Society Membership
↑ Includes In-kind support
■ Educating through Theatre Support
● Advancing Strong Theatre Support
◆ Bank of America ACTivate Awards Support

In 2018-2019, Theatre Forward’s financials were:
Revenue - $1,344,485
Expenses - $1,270,548
Net Assets - $73,937
Our 990 is available at theatreforward.org. Financial Statements are available upon request. Theatre Forward is an accredited charity of the Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan New York.

THEATRE FORWARD
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Current as of February 2020

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John Thomopoulos, Ernst & Young

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MEMBER THEATRES

Actors Theatre of Louisville*
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(Houston, TX)
Alliance Theatre
(Atlanta, GA)
American Conservatory Theater*
(San Francisco, CA)
American Repertory Theater*
(Cambridge, MA)
Arena Stage
(Washington, DC)
Center Theatre Group*
(Los Angeles, CA)
Cleveland Play House*
(Cleveland, OH)
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(Dallas, TX)
Denver Center for the Performing Arts
(Denver, CO)
Goodman Theatre
(Chicago, IL)
Guthrie Theater*
(Minneapolis, MN)
Hartford Stage
(Hartford, CT)
Long Wharf Theatre*
(New Haven, CT)
Manhattan Theatre Club
(New York, NY)
The Old Globe*
(San Diego, CA)
Seattle Rep*
(Seattle, WA)
Trinity Repertory Company*
(Providence, RI)
Walnut Street Theatre
(Philadelphia, PA)

*Denotes Founding Theatre

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Photo on Front Cover:
Alley Theatre’s production of Vietgone by Qui Nguyen, directed by Desdemona Chiang. Photo by Lynn Lane.

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