



**SHAKESPEARE**  
in Action

# Annual Report

## 2022

Enriching Toronto communities through  
the growth and support of performing  
arts programs

*shakespeareinaction.org*

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# Letter from the AD



2022 was a busy year for Shakespeare In Action! We continued our tradition of animating Memorial Park with our annual summer production; produced a new original Shakespeare adaptation for our schools at our home in Artscape; and our youth production, Act Now, saw local youth take the stage in a scary, holiday-themed play. We facilitated over 75 school workshops both in person and online, and expanded our in-studio programs for youth, creating opportunities for your people to explore their impulses in writing, spoken word, music, puppetry and scene work. Our summer camps returned in person with multiple locations and a new partnership with Syme Woolner Neighbourhood and Family Centre. We presented films, digital plays, pop up programming, and programming for festivals in the Weston area. We also celebrated the 200 year history of Central United Church, a landmark hub in our Weston community. And through all of this, we saw a change in leadership at SiA, saying goodbye to Artistic Director David di Giovanni in July and Managing Producer Tamara Freeman in October. I started as the Artistic Director in October and welcomed Jackie Williams, our new General Manager, to the organization in November. So, to say the least, 2022 was a busy year for us!



Cameron Grant  
Artistic Director

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, we began the Artists Supporting Community Initiative (ASCI), which provided paid opportunities for out of work artists to assist emergency frontline agencies (food delivery for seniors, food prep, etc), as well as piloting free Pop Up Programming in the summer 2020, which continued into 2021. In 2022, we continued this work by becoming a lead ambassador for the Toronto Youth Vaccine Engagement Strategy, taking on a leadership role in supporting the city of Toronto's campaign to get youth vaccinated in the North West area of the city. At the time, this was necessary and important work to help keep our community safe during a global health crisis. We now find ourselves in a less critical point in the pandemic, a time where we can step back from the role we filled in the previous years and return our focus to our mandate. As the new Artistic Director, I find this to be an exciting opportunity. It means spending some time reflecting on who we are, who we have been in the past, and where we would like to go. It means returning to our core work and refining our mandate with all the learnings and insights we have been fortunate to gain over the past few years.



I believe SiA plays a unique role in Weston, and in the performing arts community. We go into 2023 as an award-winning theatre company, with a deep focus on youth programming. We are a company that attracts artists who are interested in the power of community, and how it can embolden and enliven their creative impulses. We are quickly becoming an incubator for community-engaged theatre, a model that brings professional artists and community members together to create meaningful theatrical experiences that speak to themes, stories and experiences within the community. Our educational programs continue to offer a pathway for young people to deepen their interest in theatre, hone their skills, and share their voices.

2022 has been a big year filled with a lot of organizational change at SiA. While our evolution will continue into 2023, I also see this year as an opportunity to establish stability as we continue to refine who we are after so much expansion and change during the pandemic. I am looking forward to an exciting season ahead!

Best wishes,

Cameron Grant  
Artistic Director

# Mission and Vision

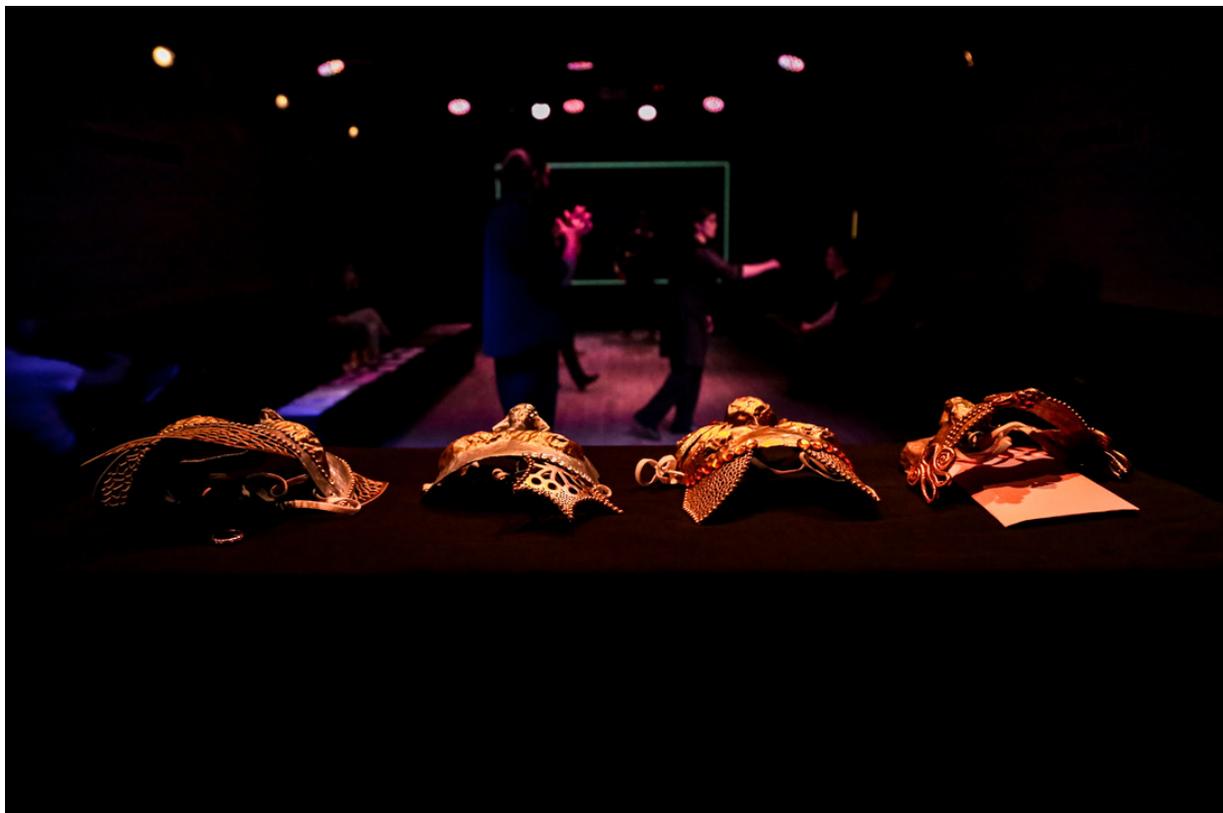


## Mission

Shakespeare in Action's mission is to nurture and develop the next generation of performing artists, arts workers, educators, and audiences through the exploration and performance of classical and contemporary stories that are relevant to our community.

## Vision

SiA's vision is the creation and ongoing support of an accessible, collaborative, and relevant performing arts ecosystem anchored in community.



# Leadership Team



## Cameron Grant Artistic Director

Cameron is an actor, playwright, theatre creator and artist educator who has worked actively in the theatre community since graduating from the Theatre and Drama Studies program at Sheridan College and the University of Toronto Mississauga. As an actor, Cameron has performed in productions with Thousand Islands Playhouse, Soulpepper, Stratford Festival, 4 seasons at the Shaw Festival, Talk Is Free Theatre, Theatre Animal, Theatre Erindale, Secret Shakespeare Series, Canadian Rep Theatre and Clay and Paper Theatre. His other creative work includes assistant directing Nina Lee Aquino in Theatre Erindale's *cecil hotel*, participating in the Factory Theatre's director's training program, *Factory Foreman 2022*, and assisting Cherissa Richards on *Harlem Duet* at Bard on The Beach. His first play, *Meet Chloe*, explores the challenges Black students face in the education system and the lack of Black curriculum content in the study of Canadian History. *Meet Chloe* received its premiere at Carousel Players.

Cameron also works as an artist educator, and has developed and facilitated workshops for The City of Brampton Performing Arts, Theatre Direct, The Shaw Festival, The Rose Theatre, Suitcase In Point Theatre, high schools across Ontario, and has taught at Toronto Metropolitan University. He was the co-facilitator for the first cohort of the Heartbeats in Performing Arts program at the City of Brampton Performing Arts (2021) and supported the program as a mentor in 2022 while he also completed an internship in artistic leadership with City of Brampton Performing Arts, funded by the Canada Council for the Arts.

## JR Williams General Manager

JR Williams is a newcomer to Toronto with a background in nonprofit project management. They earned their Master of Arts degree in Psychology from The New School before spending several years as Associate Director of a nonprofit serving survivors of gender-based violence. Within academia, JR specialized in the psychology of identity within a social and interpersonal context. They have significant experience in community-based and narrative-based research methods and data analysis. As Associate Director of a nonprofit, they were responsible for multiple facets of the organization's functioning.

Eventually deciding that storytelling was the purpose of life, they started pursuing production work for both stage and screen. They are originally from Montana, can tell you where to get the best pizza in Brooklyn, and are usually found playing *Dungeons and Dragons*.

# On Stage



## *Harabogee and Me (할아버지)*

Shakespeare in Action's Summer 2022 production was an original work by MJ Kang, directed by Brenda Kamino. The play follows the story of Helen, an energetic and impatient six-year old whose family moved to the Mount Dennis community from South Korea. She wants to play with her Harabogee (grandfather), but Harabogee would rather tell Helen Korean stories he grew up learning. "Harabogee (할아버지) & Me" is a fun, family-friendly, and imaginative story that follows Harabogee recounting Korean folktales to his grand-daughter. Over one hour, four actors embody tigers, deer, frogs and seeds as Harabogee seeks to instill in Helen a deeper appreciation and understanding of where she comes from. The free production ran for nine performances over two weeks in Memorial Park.



# On Stage



## *Romeo and Juliet. And Action.*

Our Fall 2022 production was an adaptation of Romeo and Juliet titled “Romeo and Juliet. And Action.” in the Rockport Performance hall at Artscape Weston Commons. This fun adaptation of Shakespeare's famous tragedy was designed specifically for the active participation of the audience, and provided a unique theatre-going experience in which young audience members took on the roles of Romeo and Juliet amongst a cast of professional actors. The play ran for two weeks and saw a great turnout from the community, with school groups coming from across the GTA to participate. We also opened up two shows to the public!



# Study Hall



## Act Up!

Act Up! was a six-week exploration of different acting skills that provided an opportunity for budding young thespians to explore and grow in their acting. Kids ages 7-10 and 11-14 learned Stage Combat, Improv, and Clown comedy at our studio in Artscape Weston Common.

## Act Now!

Act Now! is an 8-week program in which youth participants build and create their own production. This year, theatre professionals led our young thespians in the creation of a spooky, holiday-themed adaptation of Frankenstein. Participants were involved in the entire theatre creation process, culminating in a weekend of fantastic performances for members of the community.



# Study Hall



## Speaking Up: Voices of the Community

Youth from South York performed Spoken Word pieces at the Oakwood Village Library as part of a free event for families, children and youth. In addition, there were youth and professionally led poetry and spoken word workshops provided free to the community. Videos of our participants' amazing work are available on Shakespeare in Action's instagram.



## Summer Camp

Our two-week camps had campers design their own costumes and sets, bring some of the greatest plays to life, learn new games and ways to use their creativity, and more! This year, our youngest campers performed Romeo & Juliet, while older campers took on Julius Caesar.

# In The Community



## February Film Festival: Thyrone Tommy's "Learn to Swim"

In February, SiA hosted a showing of local director Thyrone Tommy's film "Learn To Swim" with the generous support of Castlepoint Numa. The film is a musical meditation on love and loss, the film follows Dezi (Thomas Antony Olajide), a doggedly private, very talented sax player, and Selma (Emma Ferreira), a vivacious but less experienced singer. When they meet, sparks fly, but their respective emotional baggage and their temperaments make the road to romance bumpy at best. The free film screening also featured a talkback with Thyrone Tommy.

## Weston: Then and Now

Central United Church celebrated its 200th birthday in March of 2022, and SiA was a partner in hosting a fun celebration of local art and history. For three days, Central United Church opened its doors for a free event exploring Weston's history. Local artists created different installations and experiences for guests to freely explore, accompanied by local historical artifacts, live performances, and more.

## Backstage Centre Technical Apprenticeship Program

The Backstage Centre Technical Apprenticeship Program (BCTAP) is an innovative performing arts technical skills development program that provides paid job training in theatre production to youth. This year, a total of twelve youth participated in the program, receiving mentorship in skills such as directing, producing, lighting and sound, and other aspects of production.

# In The Community



## Beyond My Skin

Our Beyond My Skin exhibit engaged six Black youth from the Scarlettwoods Community to tell intergenerational stories of their families. Led by local artist Sharon Glaves, youth participants created an exhibit featuring 19 photographs and accompanying audio pieces in Raymore Park. The exhibit featured stories of their families arrivals in Canada, their challenges, and various stories of hardship, victory, family and food.

## Toronto Youth Vaccine Engagement Strategy

In 2022, Shakespeare in Action became a lead ambassador for the Toronto Youth Vaccine Engagement Strategy (TYVES). This campaign provides information and opportunities for vaccination to local youth. SiA was a driving force behind the work to increase COVID-19 vaccination rates among youth in the northwest region of Toronto, partnering with other local organizations to host information and vaccination events.



# Looking Ahead



## Young Creators Theatre Project

The Young Creators Theatre Project is a theatre creation program exploring gender based violence in Shakespeare. Participants will be paired with theatre professionals over several sessions to create an entirely new show based on exercises and discussions surrounding gender-based violence. The workshop will culminate in a community performance involving the program participants and theatre professionals in May.

### Otîhêw

Otîhêw is a Métis-Cree re-imagining of Othello by PJ Prudat. In this new adaptation of the classic tragedy, Otîhêw is an affluent “child of the fur-trade”/Métis woman bound in the historical “custom-of-the-country” to Desmond, an Afro-Indigenous fur-trader employed by the imperial trading and trafficking institution that drove colonization over sovereign Indigenous lands. The production will run over three weeks with 14 free public performances at Memorial Park.



# Looking Ahead



## In The Works

In The Works is a new initiative that will support the commission of new plays to be developed and produced by Shakespeare in Action. Under this initiative, commissioned playwrights will be provided with studio space, workshop resources, dramaturgy and support to develop their work from the page to our stage.

The Book of Kit and Mel, by Deivan Steel and Garry Williams, has been in development with Shakespeare in Action since 2021. Shakespeare in Action will continue to develop this piece, bringing it under the banner of our In the Works initiative. The Book of Kit and Mel is an original TYA musical that introduces the language and stories of Shakespeare through the lens of two young orphaned sibling musicians, Kit and Mel. Through the course of their adventure exploring some of the Bard's most well-known motifs, Kit and Mel wrestle to find their own unique voices and identities as artists and as young human beings stepping into a chaotic world.

## Backstage Center

## Technical Apprenticeship Program

The Backstage Centre Technical Apprenticeship Program (BCTAP) is an innovative performing arts technical skills development program that provides paid job training in theatre production to youth. Participants are mentored by industry professionals to gain unique and valuable experience they can bring with them into the workforce. 2023 will see a newly enhanced version of the BCTAP that puts participants directly into assistant or apprentice roles within our productions, working directly with production mentors throughout the production period. Through the BCTAP, SiA will support the development of emerging directors, designers, stage managers, producers, and technicians during our 2023 SiA Summer in Memorial Park production, Otîhêw.

# Looking Ahead



## Act Now!

Act Now! is an 8-week program in which youth participants build and create their own production. Led and supported by professional artists/artists educators, participants are guided through the theater creation process, developing, rehearsing and performing a script with the goal of developing creativity, strengthening communication skills and exploring acting skills in a fun and collaborative environment. This year's Act Now! program will begin in October and end in December.

## Nuit Blanche: Undocumented Stories

SiA will collaborate with Artscape Weston Commons and UrbanArts to participate in Nuit Blanche, an annual all-night celebration of contemporary art, produced by the City of Toronto in collaboration with Toronto's arts community. SiA will partner with Access Alliance to present Undocumented.Stories a multimedia exhibit featuring stories by undocumented Toronto residents about the challenges of living with precarious status.



# Looking Ahead



## Keele Community Hub Workshops

SiA will partner with Frontlines, Keele Community Hub and the City of Toronto to deliver weekly after school programming to teens at the Keele Community Hub, Spring through Fall, 2023.

## School Workshops

SiA will continue to offer a full series of fun, participatory workshops for engaging students in decoding Shakespeare's text to make it actionable. Led by artist educators, students are given the tools to confidently take on speaking classical text, and the self-reliance to overcome challenges associated with studying Shakespeare's language.



# 2022 Outcomes



**75** School Workshops

**5** After School and Summer Programs

**2** Stage Shows

**5** Community Programs

**950** Audience Members

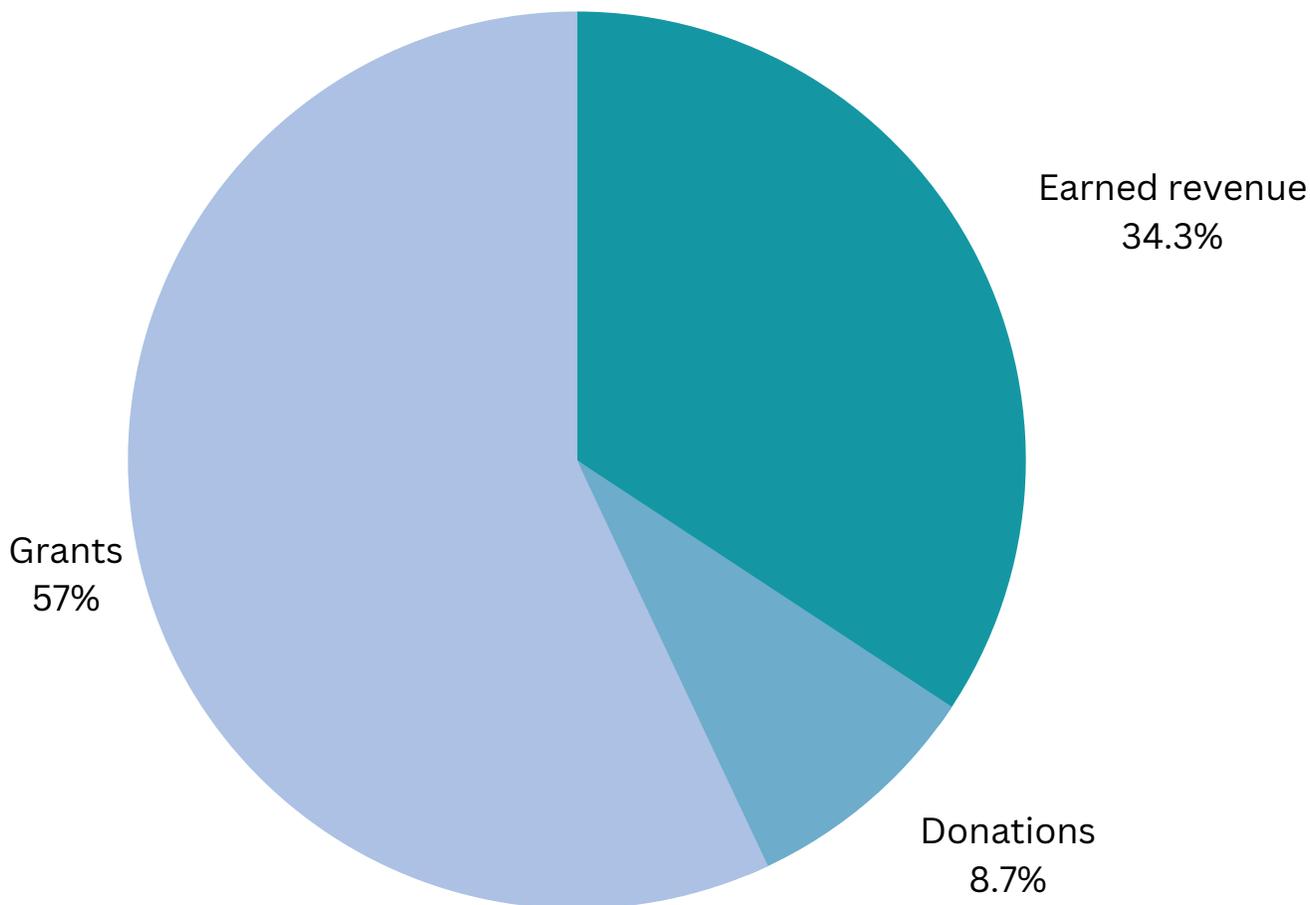


# 2022 Financial Report



## Resources

Earned revenue	\$247,454
Donations	\$63,078
Grants	\$411,642
Total	\$722,174

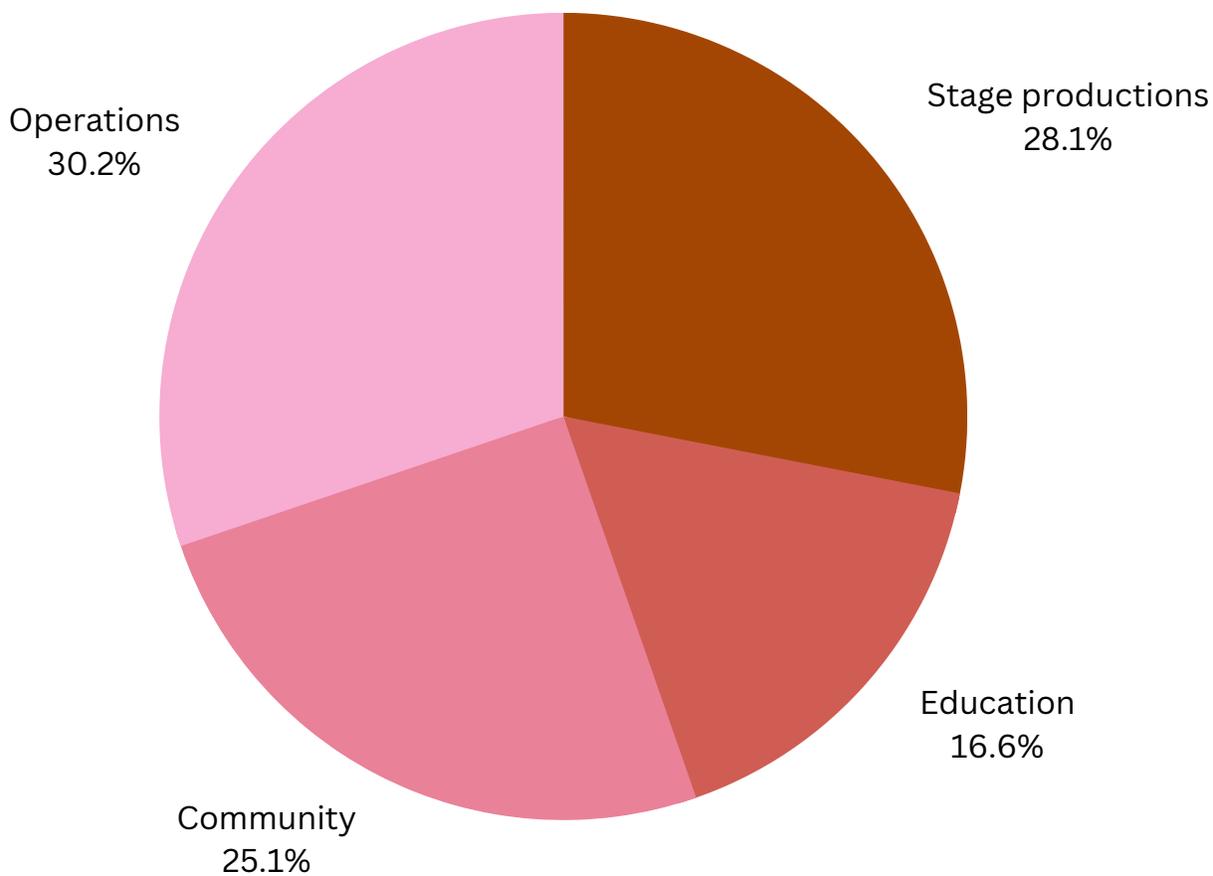


# 2022 Financial Report



## Expenses

Stage productions	\$202,088
Education	\$119,680
Community	\$181,030
Operations	\$217,585
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$720,383</b>



# Our Supporters



# Thank you!

# Learn more



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