



**BRINGING THE WILMA THEATER INTO
THE NEXT CHAPTER**

WILMA

2019-2023

WILMA THEATER'S MISSION

The Wilma Theater creates living, adventurous art. We engage artists and audiences in imaginative reflection on the complexities of contemporary life. We present bold, original, well-crafted productions that represent a range of voices, viewpoints, and styles.

OUR VALUES

As part of the Wilma's ongoing anti-racist work, we defined our organizational values in 2021 through conversations with all Wilma staff, board, and HotHouse Company members:

CURIOSITY

A willing, playful, open-minded approach to each encounter, each person, our work and ourselves with an inquisitive imagination about what may emerge.

COURAGE

A desire to approach our work with boldness and openness, despite fear.

CARE

Thoughtfully considering the needs and wants of others with empathy.

RIGOR

Fostering an environment in which we individually and collectively continue to learn, practice, and deepen our craft.

JOY

Actively creating the conditions for presence, pleasure, and vitality.

COLLABORATION

A mode of working towards a common goal dependent on trust, respect, active listening, and mutual support; in which the ideas and experiences of all participants inform the outcome.

LIBERATION

Inclusivity and equity in our work, ensuring a dynamic and productive environment in which everyone is empowered, heard, and valued.

Photo of *Dance Nation* cast by Johanna Austin.



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FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

It is my honor to serve as the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Wilma Theater, a key fixture of Philadelphia's Avenue of the Arts. I joined the board just as we were announcing the Next Chapter, kicking off Blanka Zizka's vision of shared leadership through an artistic cohort. Days later, the world shut down. And so, the Wilma did **what the Wilma does best: innovated, collaborated, and found new ways to reach audiences and create community through story**. As you'll read in this report, we kept busy! Rather than close, the board and management agreed to keep the lights on during the pandemic through radio plays, digital productions, interactive shorts, and virtual Fêtes. **Streaming is here to stay** as it enables unprecedented access to our living, adventurous art. But it is such a joy to be back in person!

The shared leadership model, a radical experiment at the time, allowed us to not just survive the shutdown, but thrive artistically. As I write this, I am still on a glittery, butterfly-shaped confetti high from attending opening night of James Ijames's **FAT HAM** on Broadway at the American Airlines Theater. The journey of this play from a filmed production directed by Morgan Green in a COVID bubble, to James Ijames's Pulitzer Prize for Drama – **the first Pulitzer Prize ever awarded for a digital production – to a Tony Nominated production on Broadway, co-produced by the Wilma – a Philly first!** – is a testament to the power of regional theater and the Wilma's rightful place among the nation's leading artists.

In addition to enabling this incredible artistic momentum, shared leadership also created an opportunity for increased equity at all levels of the organization. Together, we committed to prioritize our artists along with our art, created new compensation and labor models, refreshed value statements, increased transparency and accountability through a new strategic plan, and added dedicated board seats for HotHouse artists. The board has evolved alongside leadership, and we are stronger for it.

This is a critical moment for American theater. On behalf of my board colleagues, thank you for your continued support of the Wilma, Leigh, Morgan, Yury, and now Lindsay! As we look forward with great excitement to the 2023-24 season, we hope you will consider deepening your connection to us by subscribing and joining a donor circle. Come to an Open Mic night, visit our new Donor & Subscriber Lounge before a show, or bring a group to a talkback with our artists. Your investment will help ensure the Wilma's next chapter.

With gratitude,



Katherine Kelton
Chair, Board of Directors



James Ijames, Katherine Kelton, Leigh Goldenberg
at our 2022 Fête. Photo by Wide Eyed Studios.

FROM OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

As we look back at what the Wilma has achieved during the past three years, all we can think is, “Woah!”

When our shared leadership experiment at the Wilma was announced in February 2020, we could never have predicted that performance venues around the country would be shuttered in response to the pandemic. **At a time when the world was fractured, and people were scared and isolated, theater was a necessity.** With the strong support of our Board, we decided to keep the Wilma open and pivot to new forms of theater, helping audiences to process and connect during an extraordinary time, and keeping our commitment to our staff, our artists, and our community.

When we could not perform on stage, the Wilma released innovative, award-winning digital productions, which earned us critical acclaim (including a Pulitzer Prize!) and remarkable audience growth. We kept gathering any way we could, and, through our HotHouse company and our education and community programs, kept creating work that reflected and responded to the moment.

We brought this innovation and creativity back to the stage in fall 2021. Since then, we have pushed the boundaries of theatrical possibility, creating celebrated work with both local and international artists, and built on our practices of accessibility and digital dissemination to broaden our audiences. Our continued digital productions have demonstrated to a global audience that the Wilma is a place where artists create meaningful work. **For the 2021-22 season alone, over 20% of our total ticket sales were for the digital run of the shows.** We are incredibly proud to be able to continue to offer theater as a means of connection and community to audiences around the world.

Our guiding principle through these difficult years centers on the core of the Wilma’s mission: creating adventurous, relevant, rigorous art. **We believe that our success during this challenging period is a testament to the power of shared leadership in regional theater and are inspired to see colleagues across the country embracing this approach. We are immensely grateful for the trust that our audiences and supporters have placed in our leadership and are inspired by the generosity of our supporters over the years.**

As we begin to plot out the exciting next steps of the Wilma’s future, we invite the world to experience the amazing, uniquely daring theater created in our vibrant Philadelphia home.



Yuri Urnov
Co-Artistic Director



James Ijames
Co-Artistic Director



Morgan Green
Co-Artistic Director



Leigh Goldenberg
Managing Director



INITIAL VISION FOR THE NEXT CHAPTER

In 2019, the Wilma embarked on a new vision for artistic innovation and institutional leadership called “The Next Chapter,” honoring the achievements of the theater’s first 40 years by planning strategically for its next iteration. This unprecedented model capitalized on the work and success of the Wilma HotHouse, our artistic incubator, which ensures a continuous pipeline for the creation of challenging work that speaks to the pressing issues of our time while offering adventurous, experimental theater experiences.

The central element of the Next Chapter was a new model for artistic leadership that would bring three new Co-Artistic Directors into the Wilma to work with co-founder Blanka Zizka to develop future seasons and share the responsibilities of artistically leading the organization. Though new to the Wilma, this vision of artistic leadership was grounded in the proven models of co-artistic direction, focused seasons, and a commitment to producing work that represents a range of voices, viewpoints, and styles. The first year of the initiative, 2019, was spent preparing the organization internally for this exciting transition and speaking to stakeholders and collaborators before we announced our new leadership structure to the public.

The Next Chapter aimed to

- Launch a new model for artistic leadership at the Wilma, infusing our work with a rich range of voices, viewpoints, and styles
- Advance the work of the Wilma’s resident HotHouse Company
- Broaden the Wilma’s audience by deepening our relationship with communities across Philadelphia
- Invest in the Wilma’s future to create stability and a baseline for operating that allows for growth and resilience.



THE WILMA ARTISTIC COHORT: OUR APPROACH TO SHARED LEADERSHIP



After an exciting year of internal planning, the Wilma announced our Next Chapter to the world in February 2020, introducing Philadelphia to the inventive and diverse cohort of theater directors who would join founder Blanka Zizka at the artistic helm of the Wilma. Zizka prioritized finding collaborators at different stages in their careers and with varying artistic viewpoints. These directors, Morgan Green, James Ijames, and Yury Urnov, have invigorated and deepened our programming, by bringing their unique perspectives and experiences to our work. The Cohort works closely with Managing Director Leigh Goldenberg, whose tenure at the Wilma started in March 2020. This model is a bold rethinking of how to structure a regional theater around collaboration, trust, and multiplicity of voices.

The success of the Next Chapter model is also reverberating across the industry. In “Emerging from the Cave” (2021), a field-wide study commissioned by Sundance Institute, the Wilma was cited as an example of collective leadership in action. We hope that our experiments in leadership, ensemble-building, and theater-making will be usefully disruptive and inspiring to our peers, offering an alternative model for regional theater that truly prioritizes the artistic process and invests in the careers of local theater-makers.

One of the Artistic Director Cohort’s key innovations over the Next Chapter period was the Wilma’s hybrid producing model, which grew out of our immensely successful pivot to digital programming in our 2020-21 season. The model entails creating high quality digital captures of the Wilma’s in-person productions so they can be shared with streaming audience around the world, pending rights and licensing agreements. In 2021-22, streaming audiences made up 20%-25% of our ticket sales demonstrating that our flexibility made the Wilma’s work more accessible to audiences in Philadelphia and around the world, even as we returned to in-person performance.

BUILDING THE WILMA HOTHOUSE

The Wilma HotHouse Company, officially founded by Blanka Zizka in 2016, is the Wilma's investment in the development of Philadelphia theater-makers. The company gathers a diverse group of local artists from various disciplines for weekly training sessions and explores new performance techniques and texts, especially those under consideration for season selection. Our artistic programming revolves around the HotHouse and members receive priority casting in our productions, participate in inter-departmental committees, work as teaching artists in our education and community engagement programs, incubate new plays, and, as of 2021, serve on our Board. As an ensemble, this dynamic group shapes every aspect of the Wilma's artistic work. We believe that providing the HotHouse with a balance of financial stability and artistic flexibility demonstrates our holistic investment in members' careers, recognizing the importance of the art they create at the Wilma and outside of it.

Having regularly trained and performed together for over five years, the company has formed an ensemble that is recognized for their exceptional capacity for daring and artistic risk, regularly receiving acclaim in the local arts community and from our guest artists from the national and international theater scene.



“It was incredible to be able to make work through the Wilma during the pandemic. In a time when the world was plagued by lack of connection, lack of artistry, and lack of artistic colleagues, we were making new languages and hacking existing technology to tell a new story. We had a platform to build new skills, and draw on the ones we already had to develop a deeper and more vibrant creative relationship.”

-Ross Beschler
Wilma HotHouse Company Member

THE WILMA COMMUNITY RESPONDS TO COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic arrived soon after we announced our Artistic Director Cohort, and as we were deep in our planning for the 2020-21 season. However, due to our strong collaborative leadership team, our Board of Directors, and longtime supporters and foundation partners, the Wilma was able to stay fully staffed and operational through the initial shutdown, and the extended closure of performance venues in Philadelphia during our 2020-21 season.

Instead of cancelling our remaining scheduled productions in the 2019-2020 season and going dark in 2020-21, the Wilma pivoted to new forms of theatrical engagement:

We created a radio play version of Aleshea Harris's *IS GOD IS*, the final show of our 2019-2020 season, and offered our past production of James Ijames's *KILL MOVE PARADISE* to stream to audiences around the world as a fundraiser for Black Lives Matter Philadelphia.

Blanka Zizka directed *CODE BLUE*, a short digital production co-created by and with HotHouse company members in response to the socio-political unrest following the murder of George Floyd in June 2020.

CODE BLUE became a model for our 2020-21 HotHouse Shorts: seven short, experimental performances that ranged in topic and form, devised and produced by our HotHouse Company members and available to stream for free anywhere in the world. These shorts not only gave HotHouse artists the opportunity to stretch their creativity, they also provided another way for the Wilma to provide employment to artists during the pandemic shutdown.

In 2020-21, we produced site-specific digital captures of our productions of *HEROES OF THE FOURTH TURNING* and *FAT HAM*, creating this work safely with our cast and crew in a remote location, with advance quarantining to establish a "bubble" and regular testing throughout the process. These productions were critical and commercial successes that also enhanced the Wilma's national and international reputation as an innovative and artistically excellent regional theater.

Our ability to innovate quickly and creatively meant that the Wilma never fully closed its doors or furloughed any employees during the pandemic.

DID YOU KNOW?

FAT HAM by James Ijames, winner of the 2022 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, is the first play to win that was eligible based on a digital production. The play was nominated after its world-premiere, directed by Morgan Green, as part of the Wilma's 2020-21 all-digital season!

The Broadway co-production has **FIVE TONY-NOMINATIONS!**

PRODUCTION HIGHLIGHTS 2020-21

LEAD ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: YURY URNOV



HEROES OF THE FOURTH TURNING

Dec 1-20, 2020

By Will Arbery

Directed by Blanka Zizka

Sold Out Run!

HEROES received several mentions in *The New York Times*, who called the production “unmissable,” and was named one of the best plays of 2020 in the *Wall Street Journal*. Along with this national attention, the production had a global audience from more than ten countries. HEROES was nominated for a Drama League Award.



FAT HAM

April 29-May 23, 2021

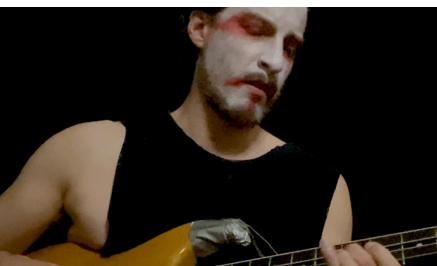
World Premiere

Winner of the 2022 Pulitzer Prize for Drama

By James Ijames

Directed by Morgan Green

FAT HAM received rave reviews in *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker* and was viewed by nearly 9,000 patrons in over a dozen countries. This digital production was also the center of our flagship education program, Wilmagination, during the 2021-22 school year, bringing this Black, queer reimagining of Hamlet to high schoolers across Philadelphia.



HOTHOUSE SHORTS | 2020-2021

Devised and directed by the HotHouse Company

Titles: HOLD FAST, THE ROT, THE FLOOR WIPERS, THE LAGNIAPPE PROJECT, EXPIRED, CODE BLACK PLANET, and CLAY. Aside from their role in our artistic season, these shorts became the cornerstones of our education and community engagement initiatives as they pivoted to online or hybrid formats for the 2020-21 year. The performances were released online for free.

"The sure touch of the writing and especially of the performing mean that the comedy isn't canceled by the intimations of tragedy. Instead, you laugh with a catch in your throat, and the whole thing evaporates before you can ask too much of it. That's smart, and something I wish other sketch shows, some of which are televised on Saturday nights, would learn from."

Jesse Green, *The New York Times*,
Review of *The Floor Wipers*

Readings for Belarus

In addition to these mainstage productions, the Wilma presented readings of *INSULTED: BELARUS(IA)*, by Andrei Kureichik, in solidarity with the people of Belarus, and an interactive Zoom performance of *THE STATE VS NATASHA BANINA*, by Yaroslava Pulinovich, in partnership with Arlekin Players.

THEATER FOR AUDIENCES EVERYWHERE

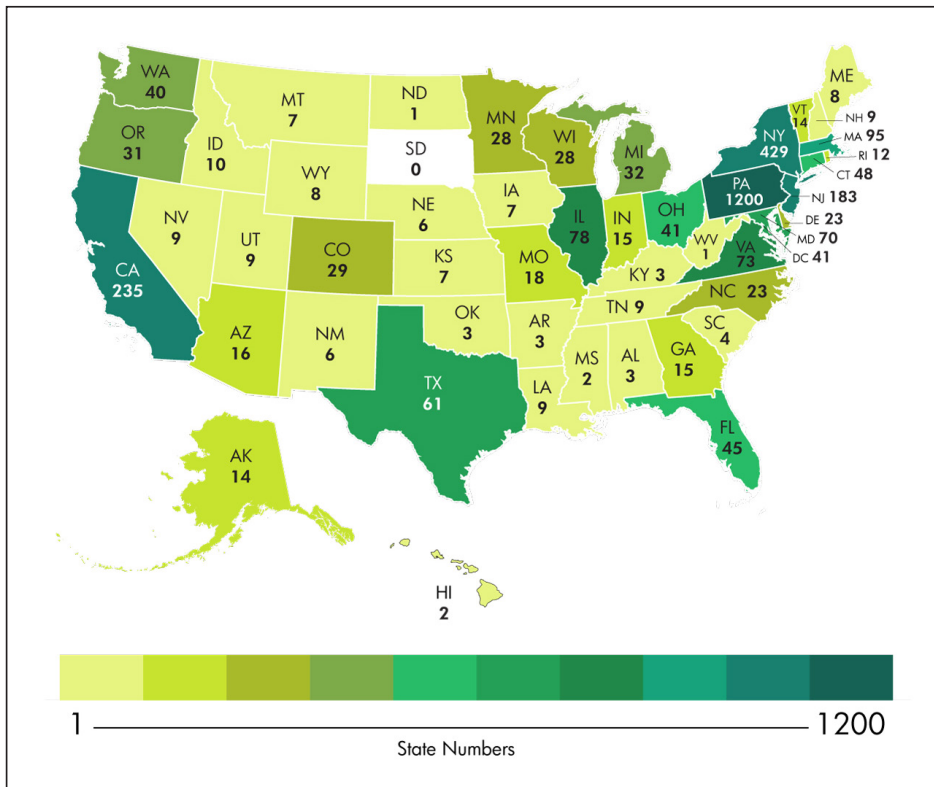


Since returning to live performance, the Wilma's artistic leadership has continued to adapt our hybrid producing model so that we can continue to offer the majority of our productions to stream to audiences around the world. Working with a Director of Photography on each production, we are constantly reassessing our camera configurations, sound recording techniques and editing styles so that our digital captures are both technically excellent and perfectly aligned with the artistic needs of each production, to create a distinctive viewing experience with digital audience members in mind. Our hybrid producing model also expanded our capacity for long distance collaboration, as we have become increasingly fluent in video conferencing technologies not only for our internal meetings, but rehearsals and public-facing events. The continuation of the hybrid model has enabled us to grow our audiences and the Wilma's regional, national, and international profile by allowing us to share our work with audiences around the globe.

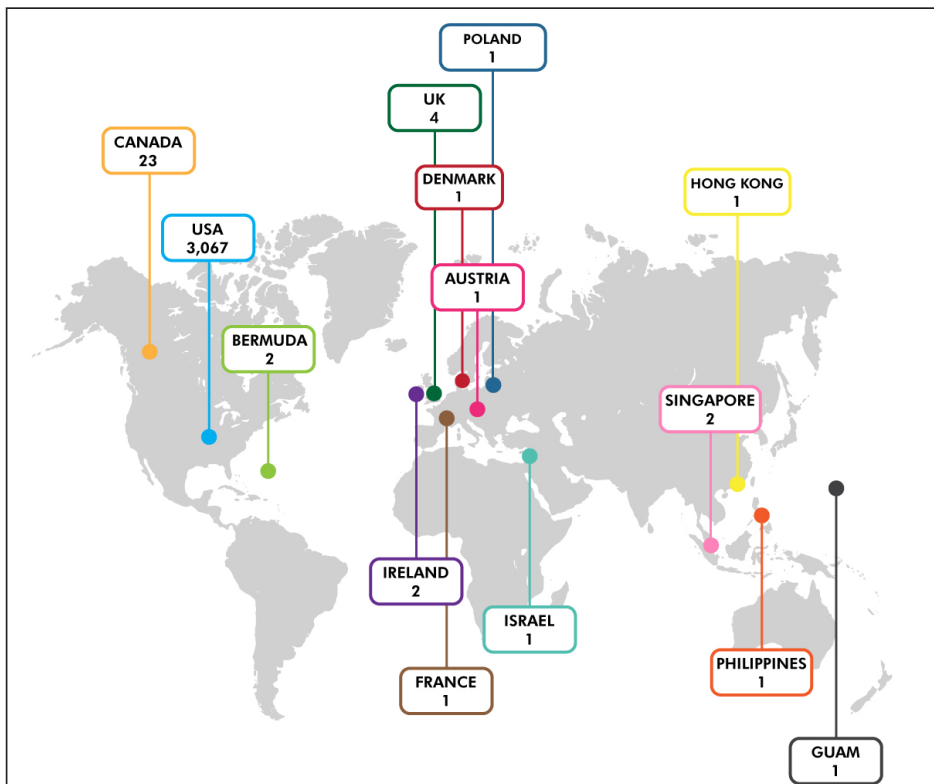
Behind the scenes photos of Heroes of the Fourth Turning.
By Campbell O'Hare.

The Wilma's digital productions have enabled us to expand our accessibility services. Past digital captures have offered:

- + Open Captioning
- + Audio Description
- + Spanish Language Captioning



PURCHASES BY STATE FOR HEROES OF THE FOURTH TURNING



PURCHASES BY COUNTRY FOR HEROES OF THE FOURTH TURNING

PRODUCTION HIGHLIGHTS 2021-22

LEAD ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: JAMES IJAMES



MINOR CHARACTER Six Translations of Uncle Vanya at the Same Time

October 5-November 7, 2021

Digital Run: October 25-November 7, 2022

By New Saloon

Directed by Yuri Urnov

Our buoyant return to in-person theater, MINOR CHARACTER enjoyed three weeks of in-person performances, followed by a two-week digital run. This digital capture was the center of one of our Wilmagination classroom residencies, and students generated new theatrical monologues in response to the characters' predicaments.



THE CHERRY ORCHARD

April 12-May 15, 2022

Digital Run: May 2-15, 2022

Created by Dmitry Krymov and the HotHouse Company

Directed by Dmitry Krymov

Sold Out Run!

We presented a smashing new adaptation of THE CHERRY ORCHARD conceived and directed by renowned theater artist Dmitry Krymov in a four-year collaboration with the HotHouse Company. The production was almost entirely sold out for the in-person run. CHERRY ORCHARD garnered significant national and international press, in the form of reviews and articles that contextualized Krymov's artistic practice, and the impact of the war in Ukraine on his work and livelihood (*American Theatre Magazine*, *BBC*, *Washington Post*, *Vulture*).

LEAD ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: JAMES IJAMES



FAIRVIEW

May 31-June 26, 2022

By Jackie Sibblies Drury
Directed by James Ijames

Extended by Popular Demand!

The season closed with a thought-provoking production of FAIRVIEW, directed by Lead Artistic Director James Ijames. Our production of FAIRVIEW sought to reclaim space and narratives for Black people, while also asking the audience to reckon with their own comfortable anonymity and their seemingly innocuous roles in putting Black bodies on display. This play contributes to the ongoing conversation regarding representation for Black and Indigenous peoples, and other people of color in the arts, and the Wilma is thrilled to have had the opportunity to stage the first production of FAIRVIEW in Philadelphia, and to have the play extended due to popular demand. We also piloted two new programs during the run of FAIRVIEW. We offered “**Pay-What-You-Wilma**” tickets at every performance in our extension, enabling audience members to purchase tickets to FAIRVIEW at any price point. We also hosted our first **Wilma Dialogue**: a new offering for teams and businesses who want to a unique professional development, team-building, and continued education opportunity.



A reading of BAD ROADS | March 31, 2022

By Natal'ya Vorozhbit
Directed by Yury Urnov

We felt compelled to respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as it deeply affected artists working on our production of THE CHERRY ORCHARD. We featured work of Ukrainian visual artists in our lobby and hosted a one-night reading of BAD ROADS, by Ukrainian playwright Natal'ya Vorozhbit, with proceeds supporting the Voices of Children Foundation in Ukraine.

DEEPENING OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PORTABLE STUDIO

Portable Studio, now in its sixth full year, offers professional development and artistic enrichment to underserved communities, in partnership with mission-based organizations and their constituents. Over the past two seasons, Portable Studio has developed specialized programming to align more closely with the needs of our partner organizations and participants. Over the past several years, with support from the William Penn Foundation, Portable Studio has:

- Published a zine featuring participant writing and artwork with Philly House
- Received a grant from PA Humanities to expand our Conversation Circles Collaboration with the Free Library, where English Language Learners use theater techniques to practice their language skills
- Piloted “Solo Studios” where teaching artists connected one-on-one with elders from the Philadelphia Senior Center over phone or email to produce creative work shared in a fall 2021 showcase hosted by the Bearded Ladies Cabaret and at a video screening at the Wilma in fall 2022
- Worked with artist Robert (aka Bobby) Evans and Temple’s Institute on Disability to create a piece in response to the artist’s pandemic experience
- Coordinated Cultural Accessibility training for Wilma Staff with Art-Reach
- Hosted a panel entitled “Lost in Translation, Found in Performance” which brought together bilingual theater-makers, ASL translators, and MINOR CHARACTER creative team members in conversation around the production

The Wilma continues to offer subsidized ACCESS tickets in a partnership with Art-Reach, an organization which builds accessible opportunities in the arts by partnering with over 200 cultural organizations. The demand for these tickets greatly increased in the 2021-22 season and the Wilma is thrilled to partner with Art-Reach to make theater more accessible for those in our community.



Photo of Portable Studio participants at a preshow event.



OPEN MIC NIGHTS

For each of the Wilma's mainstage productions HotHouse member Jaylene Clark Owens hosts an Open Mic Night, in-person at the Good Karma Cafe, which is onsite in our theater on Broad and Spruce Streets. This evening event gives local artists from a variety of backgrounds the opportunity to present their own work, inspired by the themes of our current production. In addition, an established local artist to be featured during the evening, which further connects the Wilma's work with the broader arts community



INTRODUCING WILMA DIALOGUES

In spring 2022, the Wilma successfully piloted a new offering just for corporate partners, called Wilma Dialogues, which offers specially curated experiences that align with professional development, DEIA training, or creative teambuilding needs. The dialogues offer a unique experience of the Wilma's work, deepened by a discussion facilitated specifically for each group at a private reception on-site, led by one of our teaching artists or a DEIA professional.



THE LET OUT

In fall 2022, we brought back post-show talkbacks, now in a new format called The Let Out. These provide the audience with the opportunity to have an insightful conversation with the creative team of the production. Usually hosted by a member of the Wilma HotHouse Company, this discussion series gives audience members a unique look behind the scenes and an opportunity to ask questions about the performance and creative vision.

From top to bottom:
Open Mic Host Jaylene Clark Owens.
Wilma Dialogues discussion run by Co-Artistic Director, Morgan Green.
A Let Out discussion after a performance of *Kiss* with *Kiss* director Fadi Skeiker and host Justin Jain.

PRODUCTION HIGHLIGHTS 2022-23

LEAD ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: MORGAN GREEN



THOSE WITH 2 CLOCKS

October 6–16, 2022

Digital Run: October 21–November 6, 2022

Created by Tall Order

World Premiere!

The Wilma was proud to present the world premiere production of *THOSE WITH 2 CLOCKS*, devised and performed by Philadelphia superstars Jess Conda, Jennifer Kidwell, and Mel Krodman (as Tall Order). The play was a fast-paced, genre-defying production combining sketch, drag, and cabaret styles, culminating in an immersive dance party. This piece represents the Wilma's ongoing commitment to supporting edgy, experimental projects and investing in the work of Philadelphia artists.



SCHOOL PICTURES

November 2–20, 2022

Digital Run: November 21–December 4, 2022

By Milo Cramer

Directed by Morgan Green

World Premiere!

In the second world premiere of the season, we presented a warm and humorous portrait of modern school life written and performed by Milo Cramer, one of the co-creators of *MINOR CHARACTER*. This song cycle was a peek into the lives of young people facing the trials and tribulations of today's education system, and the tutor trying to figure out his place in their world. We are excited that this piece will be moving to Playwrights Horizons in New York, NY as part of a solo show series in fall 2023.

Top Photo: From *Those With 2 Clocks* of Jennifer Kidwell and Jess Conda by Johanna Austin.
Bottom Photo: From *School Pictures* of Milo Cramer by Johanna Austin.

LEAD ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: MORGAN GREEN



KISS

January 31 – February 19, 2023

Digital Run: February 20-March 5, 2023

By Guillermo Calderón

Directed by Fadi Skeiker

The Wilma was proud to welcome Syrian-born University of the Arts Professor Fadi Skeiker, making his Wilma debut, as director of KISS, which featured members of the Wilma HotHouse Company. A play about representation and the limits of cultural understanding, this production also featured exquisite projection mapping by Alan Price of the University of the Arts' Center for Immersive Media, bringing a new dimension to the Wilma's stage.



ETERNAL LIFE, PART 1

April 11- 30, 2023

Digital Run: May 1-14, 2023

By Nathan Alan Davis

Directed by Morgan Green

World Premiere!

Do you want to live forever?

A family in the near future tries to live well (and forever?) amidst space travel, an ancient goose, and a mysterious man peddling an immortality elixir. Again featuring members of our HotHouse Company, this piece uses a science fiction lens.



TWELFTH NIGHT

June 6-25, 2023

Digital Run to Follow

By William Shakespeare

Directed by Yury Urnov

To close out our season, we will present a classic – with a Wilma twist! Under Co-Artistic Director Yury Urnov's direction, this beloved play transformed into a modern tale about gender fluidity. Set on the beach, this romp also features members of our HotHouse Company. In addition, this production will mark Resident Stage Manager Patreshettarlina Adams' 100th show with the Wilma, a celebration for us all.

EDUCATION AT THE WILMA

CULTIVATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ARTISTS AND AUDIENCES

Wilma Education aims to cultivate a lifelong appreciation for theater by increasing student access to professional theater and performing artists through a suite of carefully crafted programs run by our world-class team of teaching artists. Our programs are offered free to public school students in the School District of Philadelphia, or highly subsidized in the case of university students from across the country who participate in Wilma Classroom. Our flagship education program, Wilmagination, offers extended residencies in School District of Philadelphia public schools led by our teaching artists—theater professionals who collaborate with classroom teachers to deliver specialized educational programming using Wilma productions in alignment with district curricula. Students in this program meet with their teaching artists for several weeks over the course of a semester, see a Wilma production, and engage with additional guest artists. These residencies culminate in a presentation of student work developed in response to the production the students see whether that be at the Wilma during a student matinee, or one of our streamed productions.

Students who thrive in their residencies and want to continue engaging with Wilma artists after school can participate in our Wilma AllStars program, which helps students further develop their collaborative muscles, and gives them even more access to professional theater artists.

Wilma Classroom enables secondary school and university teachers to incorporate Wilma productions into their curricula by offering ticket subsidies, educational materials, and often pre- or post-show workshops or discussions with guest artists. With our pivot to hybrid producing, we've seen exceptional growth in this program, as students around the country can stream select Wilma digital work.

In the past three seasons:



1000 students participated in Wilmagination residencies at our six partner high schools.



Our **Wilma AllStars** worked with Kirstie Floyd as their first “playwright-in-residence” to workshop a new play called *Dojo Nation*



Over **2000** students across the country saw Wilma productions as part of the Wilma Classroom program



Invested considerable **resources in training** our teaching artists in effective digital pedagogies and key cultural competencies, including antiracism and trauma-informed teaching

The Wilma, in collaboration with our partners Theatre Horizon and Philadelphia Young Playwrights, **received a major 3-year grant** from the Greenfield Foundation to develop the Philadelphia Teaching Artist Institute to ensure that teaching artists working across our city have access to high quality professional development.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our Commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

The Wilma has committed to long-term, organization-wide antiracist work to develop our values and institutional practices and procedures that promote equity and inclusion on a structural level. We have reimagined our hiring practices and revised our employee handbook. For two seasons, we hired an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion officer on each production, and have since evolved that work into an ongoing staff role. We continue to invest in relationships with BIPOC designers and directors and are committed to ensuring that there are BIPOC artists on all our creative teams.

These new protocols align with the demands set forth in the “We See You White American Theater” statement, a vital document developed by a coalition of BIPOC theatermakers that challenged traditional theater institutions to better align our stated antiracist values with our practices. We recognize that while we have BIPOC leadership at the Artistic and Board levels, and diversity across many vectors in our HotHouse company, the Wilma is still primarily a white-led institution, and we are taking steps forward on a journey to create a space that fosters a sense of belonging for all who enter our doors. You can read our full response and commitment here: <https://wilmatheater.org/blog/our-response-to-we-see-you-white-american-theatre/>

Growth and Reflection

Throughout the life of the Next Chapter, the Wilma has participated in several field-wide studies to enhance our understanding of our audiences and how to market and price our productions most effectively. We have had the privilege of working with leading arts consultancies such as WolfBrown, TRG, and Capacity Interactive. Our Marketing Department was also awarded a grant from Americans for the Arts’ “Ask the Experts” program to work with Miriam King on embedding equity in our marketing strategy.

Our Development Department also found new ways of connecting with our supporters. We developed the Honorary Producers Circle program to offer special benefits for donors who provide season-long support at a high level, providing behind-the-scenes access to Wilma productions, listings in our WilmaBill, and special events with the Artistic Director Cohort. We also initiated the Aurora Circle, a program for theater enthusiasts who seek deeper engagement with Wilma productions through special receptions, talks, and Q&A sessions throughout the season.

In response to the challenges of COVID-19, the Development Department was particularly successful at advocating for the Wilma with government agencies and programs to ensure that we got sustaining funding from federal and state governments. These one-time infusions of funding helped the Wilma continue producing our digital amid the widespread shutdowns.



Photo from *Kiss of Anthony* Martinez-Briggs, Sarah Gliko, Justin Jain, and Taysha Marie Canales by Johanna Austin.

THANK YOU!

Thank you to all who have supported us over the past three years.

WE THANK:

- Our Board members for their steady guidance and bedrock support
- Our Honorary Producers for believing in the Wilma's artistic vision
- Our individual donors for their extra donations during difficult times
- Our Subscribers and ticket buyers for their flexibility as season plans shifted
- Our many foundation-funders who waived restrictions and dug deeper to help tide us over
- And the federal government, who provided extraordinary support when it was needed most

Together, you made our Next Chapter a success!

FÊTE 2022: A Toast to Blanka

In June 2021, inspired by the success of our Next Chapter, our legendary founder and Artistic Director, Blanka Zizka retired after over 40 years at the helm of the Wilma. Known as "a luminary of theater's avant-garde" (*New York Times*) Blanka directed over sixty productions at the Wilma and beyond, known for her close work with contemporary writers such as Tom Stoppard, Dael Orlandersmith and Christopher Chen. Blanka's commitment to investing in the careers of Philadelphia artists lives on in the Wilma's HotHouse Company, our resident company of actors and frequent collaborators, which she founded in 2016.

After two years of digital fundraising events, the Wilma was thrilled that our first Theatre Lovers Fête to be back in person was the event where we celebrated the incredible impact that our founder, and now Artistic Director Emeritus, Blanka had on our theater and the industry as a whole.

WILMA BOARD AND STAFF, 2023

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Blanka Zizka

STAFF MEMBERS

Lead Artistic Director, 2022-23 Season: Morgan Green

Co-Artistic Directors: James Ijames and Yury Urnov

Managing Director: Leigh Goldenberg

Artistic Director Emeritus: Blanka Zizka

ARTISTIC

Producing Director: Kellie Mecleary

Artistic Administrator: Mariah Ghant

HotHouse Company: Krista Apple, Ross Beschler, Taysha Marie Canales, Keith Conallen, Melanye Finister, Sarah Gliko, Suli Holum, Justin Jain, Anthony Martinez-Briggs, Jered McLenigan, Campbell O'Hare, Jaylene Clark Owens, Brandon Pierce, Steven Rishard, Brett Ashley Robinson, Matteo Scammell, Lindsay Smiling

Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

Initiatives: Noelle Diane Johnson

Wilma Acting Fellows: Bash Bastian, AJ Garrett

Literacy Intern: Kristina Neal

EDUCATION

Education Director: Anne K. Holmes

Resident Teaching Artist: Lee Minora

Teaching Artists: Taysha Marie Canales, Chris Davis, Kirstie Floyd, Nick Hatcher, Donovan Lockett, Brennen Malone, Anthony Martinez-Briggs, Lee Minora, Taylor Mitchell, Campbell O'Hare, Lillian Ransijn, Taj Rauch, Sunflower B. Rose, Devon Sinclair

PORTABLE STUDIO PROGRAM

Program Director: Lee Ann Etzold

Portable Studio Program Coordinator: Wi-Moto Nyoka

Portable Studio Artists: Patreshettarlina Adams (she/her), Chris Davis (he/him), Debra Disbrow (she/her), Lindo Jones (he/him), Donovan Lockett, Tommy Mavra, Anthony Martinez-Briggs (he/they), Cat Ramirez (they/she), Lillian Ransijn (she/her)

DEVELOPMENT

Development Director: Jessica Betts

Individual Giving Associate: Brittney Anderson

Development and Executive Assistant: Danielle Pisechko

MARKETING

Marketing Director: Bill D'Agostino

Visual Communications Manager: Kristin Finger

Marketing and Communications Assistant:
Cat Bohnenberger

BUSINESS/ADMINISTRATION

Business Associate: Minna Tran

PRODUCTION

Production Manager: Matt Zumbo

Resident Stage Manager: Patreshettarlina Adams

Technical Director: Benjamin Henry

Crew Head: Elliot Greer

Head Electrician: Ben Levan

Head of Properties: Kimitha Cashin

Wardrobe Supervisor: Lily McClure

Audio Engineer: Eddie Smith

OPERATIONS AND FACILITIES

Operations and Facilities Manager:

Peter Escalada-Mastick

IT Systems and Data Associate: Alyssa Cole

BOX OFFICE

Box Office Manager: James Specht

Patron Services Liaison: Sarah Blask

Box Office Staff: Kylen Bailey, Owen Groce, Francesca LaRosa

House Managers: Katherine Desimine, L. Elwood, Ana Kola, Gio Maneri, Javier Mojica, Rasheda Sesay

SPECIAL THANKS TO FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, BLANKA ZIZKA



In our most difficult hour, Blanka gave us light in the darkness...

“ Our history as an acting company is centered around physical connection. One of Blanka’s impetuses for starting an acting company (The HotHouse), was to train a group of artists to develop a greater sensitivity to physical life. We work on connecting to each other and audiences in a visceral way. Blanka’s invitation in our training was to **deepen our artistry through physical connection** in hopes to understand each other beyond psychological analysis. Suddenly we were faced with a pandemic, halting all public gatherings and cut off from each other. Being a part of the HotHouse and being able to continue to collaborate as artists during the pandemic was truly remarkable. Because we had been working with such sensitivity to each other, **our art became a true source of connection.** In a time where a sense of isolation was rampant, Blanka and the Wilma provided opportunities to continue to practice our craft, explore our collective experience through art, and innovate ways to reach audiences. Not only were we able to find ways to produce theater, but because of our training with Blanka, we renewed our passion, we grew as artists, and we grew as a company. **We responded to the pandemic with art.** It was such a gift. ”



From top to bottom:
Photo of Blanka Zizka from HotHouse workshop.
Photo of Blanka Zizka from 2022 Wilma Fête.
Screenshot from *Heroes of the Fourth Turning*, directed by Blanka Zizka.

*-Lindsay Smiling
Wilma HotHouse Company Member*