

ANNUAL REPORT



2022-23



CONTENTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT	3
TREASURER'S REPORT	4
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT	5
GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT	6
TOUCHSTONE THEATRE 2022 - 2023	7
OUR SUPPORTERS 2022 - 2023	9
AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022-23	attached

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



This past year has been one of tremendous growth and achievement for Touchstone and I am incredibly proud of all that we have accomplished.

Our 2022-2023 season boasted amazing productions. *Yaga* featured both established and emerging actors and highlighted a powerful female figure. Our spring collaborations brought two exciting and successful productions: *Okinum*, presented with the *PuSh Festival*, and *The Wrong Bashir*, in association with the Firehall Arts Centre. I am so proud that Touchstone supports and showcases the immense talent within our community and celebrates the diversity of Canadian playwrights. Thank you to the leadership and staff who have worked hard to bring new perspectives and voices to Touchstone's productions.

In addition to our regular programming, Touchstone brought the long-awaited Lawyer Show, *Mamma Mia!* to the stage. I was very honoured to share the stage with 30+ lawyers, all working hard to create a high-quality show full of heart and fundraising for Touchstone in this well-loved tradition. Kudos to the talented cast, who contributed thousands of volunteer hours, and to the Touchstone staff, who

produced this demanding show without a partnering company this year. *The Lawyer Show* not only raises funds for Touchstone, it builds a community of supporters and connects the members of the legal profession. Stay tuned for next year's Lawyer show, *Into the Woods*.

Roy Surette announced his retirement this year, effective after the 2023-2024 season, and we have just commenced our search for Touchstone's next Artistic Director. While I am excited for Roy's journey, I am also very sad to say goodbye. He brought an amazing vision with his return to Touchstone in 2017. He has championed emerging Canadian playwrights and actors as well as supported continuing opportunities for established artists. His approach to programming has been exciting, thoughtful, and responsive. Thank you for your dedication to Touchstone, Roy.

I would like to thank all the Board members for their work and support and bid a grateful farewell to outgoing Board member Navi Gill. Finally, thank you to all our funders, partners, donors, volunteers, and audience members for your support.

Linda Sum
President
Touchstone Theatre Society

TREASURER'S REPORT



I'm delighted to present a summary of our fiscal year that concluded on **June 30, 2023**.

Financial Audit Confirmation:

Touchstone's auditor, Rolfe Benson LLP, has successfully completed the financial audit, affirming the accuracy of our financial statements as of June 30, 2023. Our fiscal year's financial performance and cash flow adhere to the Accounting Standards for Not-for-Profit Organizations.

Financial Highlights:

In alignment with the strategy employed in FY2022, we closed this fiscal year with a planned deficit, drawing from the special project reserve fund established during the COVID-19 shutdown years. The Board approved a net fund transfer of \$116,532 from the Special Projects reserve fund to the General Fund. This decision addresses the operating deficit and ensures financial stability for the upcoming fiscal year. As of year-end, Touchstone's accumulated fund balances total \$84,461, with a cash balance of \$128,649.

To fortify our fiscal health, \$30,000 from the BCAC Arts and Culture Impact Program has been deferred. Moreover, under the Canada Emergency Business Account ("CEBA") program, we received \$60,000 in previous years. Notably, \$20,000 of this loan is forgivable if fully repaid by January 18, 2024.

As of June 30, 2023, \$40,000 remains outstanding. We plan to repay this amount before December 31, 2023, to avoid additional interest costs, impacting our cash flow for the next fiscal year.

Acknowledgment and Gratitude:

Your continued support, whether from patrons, community members, funders, or donors, is not only appreciated but essential for sustaining the vibrancy of Touchstone Theatre. We deeply value the partnership with our patrons, sponsors, and your belief in the transformative power of theatre.

As Treasurer, I have the pleasure of working with an amazing group of talented board members who generously give their time and support. I also want to thank the amazing team at Touchstone who made this season a success.

In closing, I extend sincere appreciation to all patrons and donors once again. Your loyalty and passion fuel our endeavors. We hope to continue engaging and enchanting you in the upcoming 2023-2024 season.

Respectfully submitted,



Lynn Zhou CPA, CGA
Treasurer
Touchstone Theatre Society

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Touchstone Theatre's 2022-2023 season was an enormous success. Our two mainstage productions, *YAGA* by **Kat Sandler** and *The Wrong Bashir* by **Zahida Rahemtulla**, both received critical acclaim and exceeded box office projections.

With a desire to enhance healthy practices *YAGA*, followed a five-day week rehearsal structure (rather than the allowable six days) adding an extra week to the project. This was greatly appreciated by the company as there was a lot of heavy lifting in the complex and wonderfully theatrical play. Our creative team included an intimacy director, fight director, as well as early-career designers **Ryan Cormack** and **Hina Nishioka** and seasoned pros **Sheila White** and **Mary Jane Coomber**. Our outstanding cast featured **Colleen Wheeler**, **Genevieve Fleming**, and newcomer **Aidan Correia** (who will play *Tartuffe* in 2024). Audiences praised *Yaga's* feminist perspective and clever blend of police procedural and Ukrainian folklore. It was great to perform on the Cultch Historic Stage.

The Wrong Bashir by Zahida Rahemtulla was the largest Flying Start project ever undertaken. Casting three generations of Ismaili characters was a massive task, and we had the pleasure of meeting many new artists through the process. In the end, we secured a dynamic team of 10 actors that included seasoned professionals **Parm Soor**, **Seth Ranaweera**, and several novice actors as well. Zahida's father, **Salim Rahemtulla**, made his stage debut stealing hearts as the dementia afflicted patriarch and **Aman Mann** and **Sabrina Vellani** were wonderful as Bashir and his sister. The entire cast rose to the challenges with grace and playfulness. **Daniela Atencia** demonstrated exceptional work both as a dramaturg and director of this world premiere production and we received financial support from Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre and some generous donors, as well as our longstanding presentation partner the Firehall Arts Centre.

In Feb 2023, Touchstone, the PuSh Festival and Anvil Centre co-presented *Okinum*, by Anishinaabe multi-disciplinary Quebec based creator **Emilie Monnet**. Drawing inspiration from the world of dreams and intuition, *Okinum* stands as "an ode to reclaiming language and reconnecting to one's ancestors". The piece was performed in English, French and Anishinaabemowin, and interweaved performance, visual storytelling, and a haunting live score. It was only available for two performances due to their touring schedule and played to appreciative sold-out audiences.

Mamma Mia! Our Lawyer Show musical finally made it to The Waterfront stage, following three years of Covid cancellations. It was a glorious success with a cast and band of thirty-five amazing legal and business professionals. We are now working to address the rising costs of producing so that we can capitalize on this unique and labour-intensive fundraising venture.

Melody Anderson was the recipient of the second ever David King Prize with her lovely elder driven comedy *Home*, which received a wonderful reading at The Post.

I made the difficult decision to end my tenure as Artistic Director at the end of the 23-24 Season, in order to pursue some personal goals and aspirations. I have been privileged to lead the artistic aspects of Touchstone for six adventurous years and I am grateful to the amazing colleagues, board members and supporters and look forward to Touchstone's continued success.

It's a special and valuable company and despite the many challenges faced by arts organizations deserves to flourish. Thanks to all for your contributions. I'm very much looking forward to an ambitious and challenging final season.

Respectfully,

Roy Surette, Artistic Director

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT



What a fantastic **46th season**, filled with success along with a dash of trials and tribulations.

The office was a whirlwind of activity at the start of our season with Play Club passes sale, our first production, *Yaga*, Fluevog fundraiser and

the casting then workshop of *The Wrong Bashir*, our Flying Start production. We also received news that our long time Lawyer Show partner Carousel Theatre would no longer be doing the Lawyer Show with us. We decided to take this huge commitment on ourselves. We value the relationship we have with the Legal Community and could not afford to lose the funds that are raised from the show.

Shoe-In Touchstone Fundraiser at Fluevog on 4th was a great success. A lovely crowd of people attended. Our musical guest, the **Krystle Dos Santos** duo, was fantastic! We had a number of food and drink sponsors for the event and lovely prizes! We reached our budgeted goal of **\$5,000**.

Yaga, presented at the Cultch's Historic Theatre was not only a fantastic production, written by **Kat Sandler** featuring **Colleen Wheeler**, **Genevieve Fleming** and **Aidan Correia**, and directed by Roy, but our box office surpassed expectations and grossed over **\$40,000**.

In the second part of our season, we had our PuSh presentation of *Okinum* by **Emilie Monnet** at the Anvil Theatre and *The Wrong Bashir* by **Zahida Rahemtulla** at the Firehall Arts Centre. Concluding our season with The Lawyer Show, *Mamma Mia!* at the Waterfront Theatre!

Our PuSh presentation, *Okinum* at the Anvil Theatre was limited by only two performances and seating

restrictions; the Revenue was \$4,815.33. We retained a small percentage of that revenue for our box office totalling \$714.

The Wrong Bashir was great fun and a big success! Our projected box office was \$18,000 (we projected low as we were not sure of our ability to get audiences out as last season with COVID was a big challenge). Our final box office gross was over **\$35,000**.

We also learned that the 22-23 season would be the last year we have support from the RBC Foundation's Emerging Artist Fund which provided \$20,000 over two years. It was proposed and accepted that the Board put \$20,000 of our earned revenue in a restricted fund to be used over the next two seasons in support of the next Flying Start Program.

Although COVID was less a concern as the previous few years, it still remained a potential showstopper. We received one last BC Arts and Culture Resilience Supplement, an unexpected supplement which was greatly appreciated.

The Lawyer Show, *Mamma Mia!* was a real mixed bag. The show was fantastic! We surpassed the long-term goal of **\$100,000** in gross revenue. Our sponsorship was a bit low, but we still managed to get a Big Night Out Sponsorship for each evening. However, doing it on our own was double the work but not double the revenue. The cost of doing theatre and inflation has resulted in increased costs for theatre rental, tech, and fees. The final revenue netted by the company was approximately **\$30,000** which was similar to what would have been half the revenue in preCOVID times.

General Manager | Touchstone Theatre



TOUCHSTONE THEATRE 2022-2023

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Linda Sum	President
Leslie Stark	Vice President
Lynn Zhou	Treasurer
Rebecca Frame	Secretary
Elaine McHarg	Member at Large
Navi Gill	Member at Large
Vince Kanasoot	Member at Large

STAFF

Roy Surette	Artistic Director
Susan Shank	General Manager
Daniela Atiencia	Associate Artistic Director
Katherine Krampol	Communications & Business Manager
Jessie Lee	Bookkeeper

Touchstone 22/23 Season

Yaga by Kat Sandler

Pic 1: (left to right) Aidan
Correia, Genevieve Fleming
Pic 2: Colleen Wheeler

Images by Pedro Augusto Meza



Okinum by Emilie Monnet

Pictured 1-2:
Emilie Monnet

Images by Yanick McDonald

The Wrong Bashir by Zahida Rahemtulla

Pic 1: (left to right) Aman
Mann, Leena Manro, Hussein
Janmohamed, Parm Soor
Pic 2: Salim Rahemtulla

Images by Matt Reznik



The Lawyer Show 2023 Mamma Mia! (left image) Shoe-In Fluevog Fundraiser (right image)

Images by Pedro Augusto Meza

OUR SUPPORTERS 2022 - 2023

Touchstone Theatre gratefully acknowledges the support of the following organizations and individuals.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES



Canada Council
for the Arts
Conseil des arts
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CITY OF
VANCOUVER | Cultural
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INDIVIDUAL DONORS

\$5000+ Bonnie Mah

\$3000+ Salim Rahemtulla, Roy Surette

\$1000+ Elizabeth Reid, Tracy Proke, Marietta Kozak and Peter Hall, Ken Gracie and Philip Wardell

\$300-\$999 Rena Cohen, Katrina Dunn, John Cooper, Rebecca Frame, Julia Gibson, Elizabeth Hall, Sharon Kahn, Wendy Lee, Sandra Marquardt, William Millerd, Karen Martin, Leslie Stark, Elizabeth Snow, Leong Holdings

Up to \$299 Darren Barefoot, Linda Belton, Sherry Bie, Michelle Bjornson, David Bloom, Dawn Brennan, Robert Burns, Duane Campbell, Donna Celle, Sally Clark, Judith Coffin, Larry Colcy, Fiona Coupar, William Davis, Susan Dickson, Jason Dubois & Clayton Baraniuk, Ian Farthing, Jane Flick, John Heroux, Pamela Hawthorn, Stephen Heatley, Marcella Helmer, Victoria Henderson, Jane Heyman, Diane Kent, Kevin Kerr, David Kerr, Erica Levy, Rhona Lichtenwald, Linda Sum, David Secord, James Mactier, Anne Mathisen, Elaine McHarg, Michael McLaughlin, Carol Newson, Julia Nichols, Alice Niwinski, Kathryn Oliver, John Malcolm Page, Rachel Peake, George Plawski, Tracey Power, Suzanne Ristic, Shamim Shivji, Kathryn Shaw, Elizabeth Snow, Jane Stokes, Sally Stubbs, Anona Thorne, Camilla Tibbs, Sean Vanderfluit, Shellina Velji, Susan and Michael Walsh, Jerry Wasserman, Glynis Whiting, Lynn Zhou

DAVID KING PRIZE DONORS

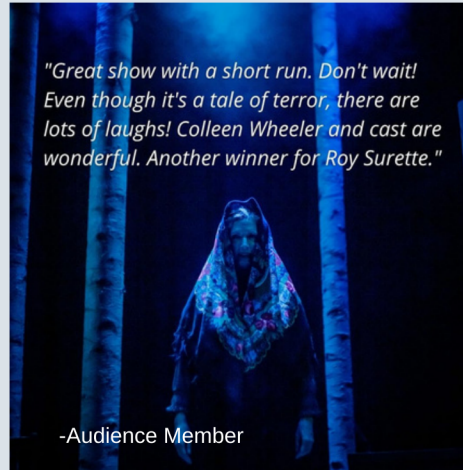
Fran Gebhard, John Cooper & Esther Chetner, Off the Page, Jan Van't Hof & Harriet Hunter, Marcus Youssef, Greg Klassen, Debra Wiens, Jay Brazeau, Renee Ethans, Anthony Pare & Dawn Allen, Virginia King & John Penman, Hollie Mackie, Susanna Bell-Irving Gray, Rory Runnells, Sally Stubbs, Judy Cook, Susan Tessler, Leslee Silverman, Lynn Stoffman, Barbara Lobb, Lauren MacDiarmid, Peter Hill, Maureen & Hugh Taggart

Reception to YAGA by Kat Sandler



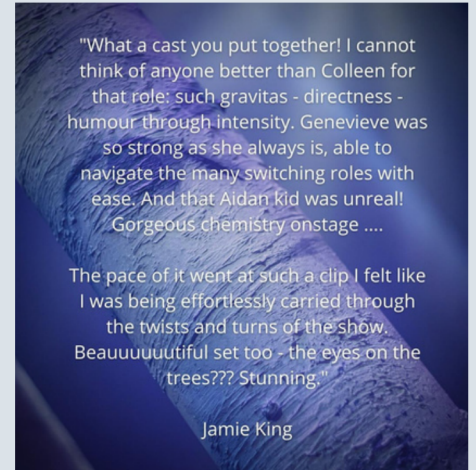
"Phenomenal "procedural" AND refreshingly dystopian tour-de-force performances by this top notch trio. Terrific writing, directing & design. Go see it!!

-Audience Member



"Great show with a short run. Don't wait! Even though it's a tale of terror, there are lots of laughs! Colleen Wheeler and cast are wonderful. Another winner for Roy Surette."

-Audience Member



"What a cast you put together! I cannot think of anyone better than Colleen for that role: such gravitas - directness - humour through intensity. Genevieve was so strong as she always is, able to navigate the many switching roles with ease. And that Aidan kid was unreal! Gorgeous chemistry onstage

The pace of it went at such a clip I felt like I was being effortlessly carried through the twists and turns of the show. Beauuuuuutiful set too - the eyes on the trees??? Stunning."

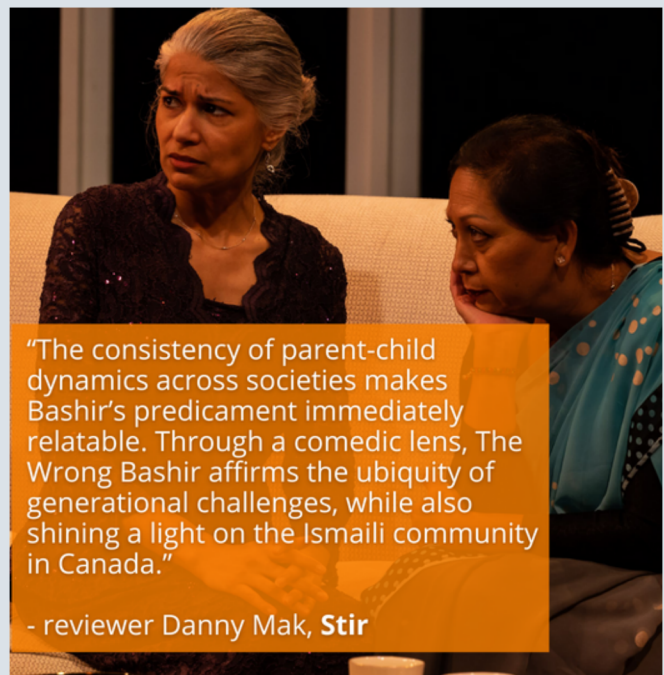
Jamie King

Reception to THE WRONG BASHIR by Zahida Rahemtulla



"It's great to see a show about immigrant identity that doesn't fall into familiar assimilationist tropes. And it's great to see a stage crowded with actors, most of whom I've never encountered before, doing so well with such a devilishly tricky form of comedy."

- reviewer Colin Thomas on *The Wrong Bashir*



"The consistency of parent-child dynamics across societies makes Bashir's predicament immediately relatable. Through a comedic lens, *The Wrong Bashir* affirms the ubiquity of generational challenges, while also shining a light on the Ismaili community in Canada."

- reviewer Danny Mak, *Stir*

ARTIST FEEDBACK & TESTIMONIALS



“This was the first-time being part of an all South-Asian professional theatrical production in Canada where my first hand lived experience was embedded in the cultural context, language, idiomatic nuance and content of the play. I'm so grateful to Zahida for having the courage and so thoughtfully bringing life to this cultural community that informs and shapes my way of being in the world. Participating in the show enabled me as an actor to bring a depth of sincerity to a familiar character and integrate guidance from the director to create rich relationships with the other characters. As a cultural and language consultant I got the chance to provide intimate nuance and context to the actors, and to the atmosphere of the play. This is significant because I got to bring my fullest self, all my multiple identities and embodied knowledge to the theatre; and, I did not have to leave parts of myself outside the theatrical door. It was amazing to see how our Ismaili experiences resonated with the other actors who came from different South Asian cultural backgrounds. To hear the laughter and joy in the audience relating to my lived experience otherwise misrepresented or not understood in larger society, was an affirming feeling of belonging and artistic contribution.”

-Hussein Janmohamed, actor *The Wrong Bashir* & Ismaili Consultant



Flying Start provides a rare, important service in the Canadian theatre community by fostering the creation of new professional playwrights. While there are development opportunities for emerging playwrights, there are less initiatives that see new playwrights all the way through to the professional stage. Flying Start has played this key role in sparking the careers of so many playwrights.

The program also provides an opportunity to work with Daniela Atencia, who is a gift to any playwright and play she works on! She is a dramaturg and director who really gets behind the plays she takes on, and her patience hearing ideas aloud and original approach to new play development moved *The Wrong Bashir* to a new level.

Through Flying Start I saw my dream of seeing *The Wrong Bashir* on stage come true. It started my career as a playwright, and I hope it can do the same for other early-career playwrights too!

-Zahida Rahemtulla, playwright *The Wrong Bashir*