A Message from the Board of Directors

"Sweet are the uses of adversity which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in his head." — As You Like It, 2.1.12-14

The past year has been rife with adversity. 2021 has required patience, creativity, flexibility, empathy, kindness, and generosity, seemingly in endless supply. Everyone involved with Flatwater Shakespeare Company, from our stellar leadership to our newest cast members, has demonstrated these qualities over and again. But, the response to that adversity has indeed been sweet: in June Twelfth Night, a year in the making, finally marked Flatwater’s return to live, in-person performances. Despite some trials and tribulations—and a few severe thunderstorms—the show was a triumph. We were also overjoyed to see Little But Fierce return, in person, this past summer as we continued to provide free and fun educational programming to Lincoln kids. The pandemic has made many things difficult, but it also encouraged experimentation and innovation in response. New works, new talents, and new ideas emerged as Flatwater conquered challenges with creativity. In September, we premiered a fun, engaging, and thoughtful festival of one-act plays, Unshaken, and an uproarious and inventive two-person A Midsummer Night’s Dream. These exciting new works and new ways of presenting Shakespeare were also important opportunities for Flatwater to grow and to reach new audiences. We are especially thankful for our partnerships with The Mill and The Indian Center, which provided the venues for these shows. In addition, the artistic and education team behind A Midsummer Night’s Dream prioritized outreach, and wowed hundreds of students at Blue Hill Community School, Harvard Elementary School, Sutton Elementary School, and the Malone Community Center. We are extremely proud of everything that Flatwater Shakespeare Company has accomplished in this year of adversity.

We would not have had these bright moments in the past year without the continued support of our donors—individuals, foundations, and corporate entities alike. 2022 will bring more challenges as well as new leadership for our company, but we will continue Flatwater’s essential mission to provide quality education, entertainment, and outreach to the Lincoln community and beyond. There is still much uncertainty in our world, but we find our mission more important and inspiring than ever. We cannot wait to see what 2022 will bring.

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Flatwater Shakespeare Company 2021

Additional 2021 Offerings

Flatwater Shakespeare Company 2021

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<th>Ashley Kobza</th>
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2021 Board of Directors:

Chair—Kelly Stage
Vice Chair—Marthaellen Florence
Secretary—Gwyn Evans
Treasurer—Kelly Medwick

Diane Bartels
William Bryant
Lauren Durban
Jeff Korbelik
Amy Miller
Rob Sharp
Earlier this summer, a seven-year-old Indian immigrant boy named Umer was zipping along the sidewalk on his scooter near his home, when he came upon Flatwater’s production of Twelfth Night. Afterward, Umer ran around asking cast and crew members what they were doing, and then he came and found me again. He thanked me and told me a lot about himself as he was more than welcome.

“Thank you for letting me have a chair,” he said.

“Ha. That’s funny,” he said.

“This is a play,” she explained and encouraged him to join the audience as he was not alone.

“What’s a play?” asked Umer.

“This is a play,” she said.

He asked our education director, who happened to be nearest the sidewalk, “What’s this?”

“What’s the name of this movie?”

“Thank you for letting me have a chair,” he said. It was written by a guy named Shakespeare.”

Though my varied work experience both in- and outside the theatre gave me a strong foundation, there was a great deal about leading a nonprofit theatre that I cannot begin to imagine.

I have strived to lay a solid financial foundation for the long term health and growth of the company. Through tight budget oversight, expansion of funding applications and donor outreach, Flatwater has been able to increase programs and increase accessibility to both theatre and theatre education in Lincoln and rural communities across southeast and south central Nebraska. We continue to produce Shakespeare in a more traditional “full length” (it’s never ‘really’ full length) shows and also reach a broad range of community members including young children through our Short Shakes productions and our new educational tour, creating positive entry points into the joy of theatre. We believe these young people will grow into lifelong theatre supporters who know they have a seat at the Shakespearean table.

In 2021, we were able to add a part time Education Director to our small staff. Ashley Koeba’s creativity, experience, and passion for theatre education brought a new vitality to our educational programs. I have no doubt that education and outreach can grow exponentially and have an impact that I cannot begin to imagine.

I would have dissolved in the regulations of nonprofit funding without the support of Linda Zinke, FSC’s Operations Manager, and would have been out of my depth for certain without the wise guidance of Resident Scholar Stephen Bueller.

The possibilities are limitless. We have a solid foundation on which to grow. We have 20 seasons of high quality theatre under our belts. We survived the heartbreak loss of our 2020 season and seized the opportunity to return, refresh, and renew in 2021. Flatwater is a part of beautiful community of artists seeking to welcome more and more people into the stories.

I take my bow here at the end of 2021 and trust the story will continue. Break all the legs, the possibilities are limitless. We have a solid foundation on which to grow. We have 20 seasons of high quality theatre under our belts. We survived the heartbreak loss of our 2020 season and seized the opportunity to return, refresh, and renew in 2021. Flatwater is a part of beautiful community of artists seeking to welcome more and more people into the stories.

Umer, and Summer, and Shakespeare 

This story was told by Executive Artistic Director Summer Lukasiewicz at Ignite Lincoln 13, August 2021.

A Message from the Ongoing Executive Artistic Director

Though my varied work experience both in and outside the theatre gave me a strong foundation, there was a great deal about leading a nonprofit theatre organization that I had to learn on the job. There were many mistakes and bumps in the road over the last four seasons. For those involved where I tripped up, messed up, and missed the mark, please forgive me. For those who came alongside me as I moved through the growing pains, know that the growth Flatwater has experienced and surviving 2020 would not have been possible without you.

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