



cleveland play house

PASSION AND PURPOSE IN EVERY PERFORMANCE



## INTRODUCTION

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*Cleveland Play House believes that theatre can and should play a catalytic role in creating a stronger, more deeply connected, and compassionate community. At its most essential, theatre gathers people together to experience stories that explore the very nature of human existence, all the while pushing artists and audiences to be more curious, more empathetic, and more thoughtful about the world in which we live. Theatre provides people of all ages with the emotional capacity and communication skills necessary to prosper in a modern world that often defies comprehension. These principles have inspired and informed CPH programs for more than a century, even as those programs evolve to meet the needs of an ever-changing society.*

**Strategic Plan 2019-22** is a roadmap toward a thriving CPH, one that is dedicated to the people and community that we serve by telling culturally relevant, thought-provoking stories that matter on our stages; providing young people and adults with critical life and workforce skills; and contributing to an exceptional quality of life in Northeast Ohio. The contents of this plan are informed by constantly posing this question: “How can we best use the craft and power of theatre to make our community stronger?” It was in response to this question that CPH made the bold decision to relocate to Playhouse Square in partnership with Cleveland State University; appointed Laura Kepley as Artistic Director; created groundbreaking new education programs such as CARE (“Compassionate Arts Remaking Education”); and it is why we explore important social issues on our stages.

The foundation of a great theatre company is collaboration, involving artists, artisans, audiences, administrators, technicians, volunteers, and philanthropists. It is natural, then, that implementation of **Strategic Plan 2019-22** be a shared responsibility among CPH Staff, Executive Leadership, and the Board of Directors. Implementation will be monitored by the Planning & Progress Committee and Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, with adjustments made in response to actual performance and market trends. It is a rolling plan with a perpetual three-year horizon and subject to rigorous evaluation. Using this information, **Strategic Plan 2019-22** will be refreshed and revised as circumstances dictate.



## ABOUT CLEVELAND PLAY HOUSE

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*Cleveland Play House (CPH) is America's first regional theatre, a not-for-profit professional company serving the people of Northeast Ohio since 1915. Recipient of the 2015 Tony Award for Excellence in Regional Theatre, CPH has been acknowledged throughout its history as a national leader and innovator in the production of contemporary and classic plays and groundbreaking education programs.*

In responding to a changing community, economic challenges, and a need for modern facilities to support innovative artistry and build new audiences, CPH made the bold decision in 2009 to move to Playhouse Square in downtown Cleveland after eighty-four years in its former location. In a landmark cultural collaboration, CPH partnered with Playhouse Square and Cleveland State University to create three sparkling new theatres for shared use by the partners. These included a reconfiguration of the historic Allen Theatre into an intimate 485-seat proscenium, and two new venues: The Outcalt Theatre, a flexible theatre seating up to 350; and The Helen, a 150-seat black box ideal for new play development and educational programming. Working under the banner of The Power of Three, the consortium conducted a \$32 million campaign and orchestrated a rapid-fire design and construction phase. In September 2011, CPH kicked off its 96th season in its new home as a proud Resident Company of Playhouse Square. To round out its new multi-campus facility, the CPH

Production Center was established a few miles away and the Administrative Offices and Education Center a short block from the Allen, Outcalt, and Helen Theatres. Each location was designed and equipped to support theatrical production and education programs at the very highest levels of quality and professional standards.

In 2015, CPH became the first regional theatre in the United States to celebrate its 100th anniversary. This remarkable longevity is a testament to the thousands of artists, artisans, technicians, administrators, board members, and volunteers who, along with millions of theatre-goers and donors, have embraced the idea that a theatre dedicated to artistic excellence and serving the public good is essential to the well-being of a vibrant, dynamic community. The CPH of today stands on the shoulders of generations of passionate, talented, and hardworking people, each contributing mightily to America's most enduring legacy of theatrical excellence: your Cleveland Play House.

## PLAN OVERVIEW

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*Cleveland Play House: Strategic Plan 2019-22 will guide the organization through the 2021-22 Season and beyond. The plan is a living document, constantly monitored and adjusted in response to actual performance and marketplace trends. Planning imperatives include: increased support for exceptional programming; authentic and reciprocal relationships throughout the community; heightened brand awareness; ensuring CPH is an effective and efficient organization; and placing the organization on firm financial footing.*

The CPH Planning & Progress Committee was charged with developing Strategic Plan 2019-22 for consideration and ratification by the Board of Directors. The Committee began its work by commissioning a market and audience research study to test the viability and growth potential of programming built around thought-provoking, emotionally engaging theatre. CPH obtained a grant from The Cleveland Foundation and retained Slover Linett Audience Research for the project.

Slover Linett delivered its findings to the Committee in September 2018. Key survey findings include:

- A clear demand and growth opportunity for thought-provoking theatre in Northeast Ohio.
- An unclear understanding of CPH and its unique value in the marketplace.
- Identification of five psychographic segments in the CPH audience, all with growth potential:

**Edgy Omnivores:** Prefer an experience that pushes boundaries and tend to participate in a wide variety of cultural activities.

**Make Me Thinks (then leave me alone):** Want to be challenged by new, thought-provoking, intimate theatre. Prefer to process experiences internally.

**Smart and Socials:** Similar desires to Make Me Thinks, but value discussing issues and experiences with others.

**Amuse and Amaze Mes:** Want escapist, diversionary theatre as part of a fun night out.

**Comfort in the Familiars:** Risk-averse patrons who prefer plays that don't ask too much of them intellectually, during which they can relax and be spectators.

The research identified overlapping themes among the segments, leading to the determination that CPH is most closely aligned with the intersection between **Make Me Thinks** and **Smart and Socials**: people who want theatre that engages them emotionally and challenges them intellectually. Therefore, these segments are key to building a loyal base of customers and donors. Further, **Edgy Omnivores** represent a long-term opportunity to build a more diverse base of support and may be attracted by similar programming. **Amuse and Amaze Mes** and **Comfort in the Familiars** are the largest of the five segments, and are strong single ticket prospects for select productions.





## STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

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### VISION

To be a premier American regional theatre that is welcoming, diverse, distinct, bold, thrilling and essential to our community.

### MISSION

To inspire, stimulate, and entertain diverse audiences across Northeast Ohio by producing plays and theatre education programs of the highest professional standards.

### CORE VALUES

**Artistry:** Cleveland Play House uses the art of theatre to create a stronger, more connected community. CPH tells stories that matter in high quality, entertaining productions. We are driven by excellence, and lead the region with a diverse repertoire of contemporary, socially relevant offerings. Artistic excellence is core to all CPH education programs and initiatives, influencing program design, curriculum, and style of instruction. Collaboration is our methodology, as we seize opportunities to work with a diverse group of top-flight artists and organizations nationally and within Northeast Ohio.

**Community:** Cleveland Play House gathers people together to experience plays and education programs that are meaningful in the context of our community, and does so in a manner that is welcoming to all who choose to participate. CPH acts as an indispensable resource for our Northeast Ohio community. We believe that a non-profit professional theatre should reflect and connect with the community that it serves, both through its programming and its people. We are outward-looking, continually seeking to create and deepen relationships with current and future audiences, collaborate with local organizations, and partner with educational institutions. Our institutional strength is rooted in embracing equity, diversity, and inclusion in our programming, staffing, governance, and among those we serve. CPH is committed to an expansive definition of diversity that encompasses race, gender, faith, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, people with disabilities, and varying points of view.

**Lifelong Learning:** Cleveland Play House believes that theatre is essential throughout one's life for developing empathy, broadening perspectives, and heightening awareness of the human condition. As such, CPH strives to produce plays and education programs that fuel intellectual curiosity, foster civic dialogue, and expand our understanding of the community. Our artistic and educational programming nurtures and catalyzes social, emotional, creative and intellectual growth among children, youth, and adults of varying backgrounds.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

*The following five strategic objectives are **interdependent**, each supporting and advancing the overall mission and vision as articulated in **Strategic Plan 2019-22**.*

**Enhance and Invest in Artistic & Educational Programming.** Serve the people of Northeast Ohio and beyond by investing in robust seasons of classic and contemporary plays and musicals that are relevant to the community; supporting playwrights through commissioning and new play development programs; nurturing artists at all stages of development; and creating innovative new ways to use theatre to improve the lives of people throughout the community.

**Embrace and Advance Equity, Diversity & Inclusion.** Ensure that CPH is an inclusive organization that is representative of Cuyahoga County in its programming, governance, administration, and base of support.

**Clarify and Strengthen the CPH Brand.** Define, communicate, and fulfill the CPH brand promise in a clear, compelling way that inspires enthusiasm among all stakeholders—board, staff, subscribers, ticket buyers, donors, volunteers, target audiences, civic leaders, the people of Greater Cleveland, and the national theatre industry.

**Broaden and Deepen the CPH Reach.** Increase participation and impact of programming by engaging deeply and authentically with audiences, students, volunteers, and the broader community, growing loyal constituencies that are passionate and committed to CPH.

**Establish and Grow CPH as a Sustainable, Thriving Organization.** Secure the future viability of America’s first regional theatre by correcting the structural imbalance between revenue and costs; ensuring appropriate levels of staffing and support; leveraging the substantial investment we make in artists and programming; and through prudent stewardship of resources.