CREATIVE COMEBACK

Stories of transformation and innovation during the COVID-19 pandemic

Indy Arts and Culture Restart & Resilience Report
The Cabaret introduced an outdoor music series in The Alley at Library Square performance space in 2021.

Design by Andrea Haydon / Stories by Crystal Hammon
INTRODUCTION

THE ART OF RESILIENCE

Before the coronavirus pandemic, Indianapolis arts and culture was experiencing great momentum. According to 2017 research by Americans for the Arts, Indy’s nonprofit arts and culture organizations annually employed 30,000 part- and full-time workers, served 8 million residents and visitors, and generated $440 million in annual economic impact.

But the threat of COVID-19 led to temporary closures and more than 30,000 event cancellations between March and September 2020. Indy Arts Council estimated that the city’s nonprofit arts and culture sector suffered an estimated $8.6 million in financial losses per month during that time.

Yet organizations didn’t stop creating and inspiring—they live-streamed shows for people to watch from the safety of their homes, delivered art kits to students who were quarantined, and transformed alleys and parking lots into community performance spaces.

One of the greatest challenges organizations faced was how to safely reopen and adapt their operations to reflect the new realities caused by the pandemic. Arts Council research showed those operating costs to be well over $20 million, putting the survival and sustainability of many organizations at risk.

In the summer of 2020, the Arts Council announced the $10.2 million Restart & Resilience Fund, supported through the generosity of Lilly Endowment Inc. The fund was designed to support arts and cultural organizations in Indianapolis/Marion County as they reopened and served their audiences in more innovative, inclusive ways—helping to fuel the creative renaissance Indianapolis is experiencing today. We hope you enjoy their stories.

ABOUT THE INDY ARTS COUNCIL

Indy Arts Council fosters meaningful engagement in the arts by nurturing a culture where artists and arts organizations thrive. We believe “A Full Creative Life for All” is possible in our city. Learn more at IndyArts.org.
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Once upon a time, “If it’s not broke, don’t fix it” was the maxim for any non-profit arts organization operating on a shoestring, including Arts for Learning (AFL), the largest provider of arts education programming in Indiana. Since 1961, AFL has thrived with only minor tweaks to its approach.

The global pandemic of 2020 issued a challenge: embrace the unknown.

“At the time, our print catalog was our primary means of awareness within school communities,” says AFL Director of Artist Programs Clockwork Janz. “We had a website that served as a digital catalog, but it was 10 years old.”

Before the pandemic, digital tools for online and virtual programs had never been necessary because AFL is all about face-to-face interaction. Until 2020, there had never been a reason to change what worked. As AFL President Anya Aslanova notes, “You just do what you can with what you have.”
Arts for Learning works with 50 teaching artists from Indiana who partner with school communities.
Then, AFL received a grant from the Indy Arts and Culture Restart & Resilience Fund, made possible by Lilly Endowment Inc. “This capital allowed us to finally break out of the ’90s,” Aslanova says. “Our team didn’t have to think twice about how to use this money.”

Part of the funds went to update the website with relevant content. With new equipment and technology, AFL offered livestreamed and recorded programs to classrooms statewide.

“Even as life returns to a more ideal situation, we still have that option to supplement student learning and ensure that the teaching artists we work with are getting a working wage,” Aslanova says.

The AFL team quickly realized that their departure from an in-person model of teaching required an infusion of intellectual capital. For that, they turned to Arts Consulting Group and ArtRageous with Nate. Arts Consulting Group got AFL up to speed with how arts organizations can use online and virtual programs to educate. Nate Heck at ArtRageous with Nate is an Emmy-nominated content creator. “He helped us create a personal development series to make sure our teaching artists are able to make the best digital programs they can,” Janz says.

Janz says that early on, the AFL was “acutely aware of the widening wealth gap and access to technology in education, specifically within Black and Brown communities that have historically been kept from power and systematically under-resourced. We wanted to make sure that we were not pivoting to digital entirely, and turning our backs, and further disenfranchising these communities.”

Their commitment to redistribute power and decision-making resulted in a pilot fellowship program that has been transformational. Using money from the grant, AFL paid four Artists Building Community Fellows (ABC Fellows) to build trust and relationships in communities where the artists are already embedded.

The ABC fellows met monthly to discuss Adrienne Maree Brown’s Emergent Strategy, a book that serves as a guidepost for how to adapt to the needs of “the now.” They also received a budget to work with new and existing partners and create school programming through 2021, applying two key principles from Brown’s book: 1) Trust the people, and 2) Build resilience through relationships, moving at the speed of trust.

“It was not a marketing thing,” Aslanova says. “It was an authentic relationship-building process and the communities responded to that because they saw the sincerity and honesty.”

Through the fellows, AFL replaced an old “charity model” with a collaborative process that engages community stakeholders in ongoing dialogues, draws upon their resources and shapes what AFL delivers.

“Charity is not sustainable,” Janz says. “Charity is not rooted in maintaining the dignity of people. It’s not rooted in interdependence. (Charity) is hierarchical and transactional, so it changes conversations.”
Guests enjoyed outdoor performances during Fridays at the Fort, hosted by Arts for Lawrence.
“There’s just a lot of joy in being able to bring the arts back to the community”

Judy Byron
Executive Director

If you lived on Indianapolis’ northeast side before 2008, seeing a play or taking an art class meant leaving the neighborhood. That didn’t sit well with Judy Byron. “As a resident here, I really, really wanted that in my community,” says Byron, who retired in September 2022 as executive director of Arts for Lawrence (AFL).

Byron founded Arts for Lawrence to give racially and economically diverse residents of the City of Lawrence access to performing, literary and visual arts. The nonprofit organization got its start through a small team of volunteers who planned bi-monthly art exhibitions in homes and restaurants. Eventually, AFL worked its way up to an annual art fair and opened a small art center on Franklin Road.

Behind the scenes, AFL cast an eye on a bigger, better home: the historic Theater at the Fort on the former Fort Benjamin Harrison military base, owned by the City of Lawrence. The theater had been closed for over 30 years when the City of Lawrence agreed to lease the property to AFL, offering subsidized rent and utilities.
The historic Theater at the Fort, built in 1929, was renovated and expanded.
“It was just sitting idle and in disrepair,” Byron says. “We sort of needed those years to prove ourselves before we could get a lease that we could afford.”

The city/nonprofit partnership gained momentum in 2018 when the City of Lawrence was awarded a $5.8 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.’s Strengthening Indianapolis Through Arts and Cultural Innovation initiative. Part of those funds were used to move the Fort Harrison Communications Building to the Fort Ben Cultural Campus and convert the space for an art gallery, classrooms and resident artist studio space, now known as the Visual Arts Center.

The grant also funded the renovation and expansion of the historic Theater at the Fort. Built in 1929, the theater now serves as AFL’s home.

How could they know that the date set for the remodeled theater’s reopening, March of 2020, would collide with one of the biggest disruptions in modern history? “We were pretty panicked,” Byron says of the worldwide pandemic shutdown.

That timing had an unexpected upside: it bought time to finish the remodeled space with proper indoor ventilation for new public safety standards. “Here we were with this beautiful theater closed to the public, trying to figure out virtual programming,” Byron says.

Several arts organizations and performing arts partners were in the same mode, which meant they needed space to film virtual programs or rehearse. AFL was poised to offer the updated theater to groups like the Asante Arts Institute of Indianapolis, an African American arts and cultural organization, and Grupo Folclórico Macehuani, a dance troupe that brings traditional Mexican folk dance to Indiana audiences.

In the summer of 2021, AFL planned a limited reopening around outdoor celebrations such as the inaugural Juneteenth Jubilee. They brought back Fridays at the Fort, a popular summer concert series, and added Classical Sundays at the Fort, concerts played by local musicians from the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

Meanwhile, a $60,000 grant from the Indy Arts and Culture Restart & Resilience Fund, made possible by Lilly Endowment Inc., made way for Arts for Lawrence to hire a facilities and maintenance associate and a box office manager—two roles that allowed the Theater at the Fort to fully reopen as a lively arts and cultural hub in the fall of 2021.

Little by little, audiences and volunteers came back. “There’s just a lot of joy in being able to bring the arts back to the community,” says Byron. “It was definitely something that has been missed.”
The new Native American Galleries at the Eiteljorg allow visitors to experience Native art in compelling new ways.
March of 2020 was an auspicious month at the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art. They were launching a series of women’s history projects. They were taking the first strides toward rethinking the museum’s Native American Galleries, where the focus is making space for Native Americans to tell their own stories.

As home to one of the world’s finest collections of Native American art, the museum had some adjustments to make when the COVID-19 pandemic forced them to shut their doors—and keep them closed for three months.

Thanks to a $500,000 grant from the Indy Arts and Culture Restart & Resilience Fund, made possible by Lilly Endowment Inc., the Eiteljorg acquired what they needed to make a strong comeback.

“There’s still a need to be in person—collaborating and having a cup of coffee together—but we won’t go back to the way things used to be.”

John Vanausdall
President & CEO
The Día de Muertos Celebration is a partnership between the Eiteljorg, Arte Mexicano en Indiana, and other community organizations.
With funds from the grant, the museum bought lighting, upgraded equipment and software, and purchased mobile devices staff could use for webcasting and studio experiences. They also made critical website investments that were necessary for delivering and storing a growing collection of digital content.

Vanausdall says the grant generated several unexpected perks. “One of them was the expanded reach of our programs,” he says. “Our virtual Indian Market & Festival, Juneteenth, and Day of the Dead celebrations all had much bigger audiences.”

At the 2020 Quest for the West, one the nation’s top Western art shows, sales were nearly the same despite the online-only format. With a robust set of tools and an expert team of staff, scholars and artists who were revved about creating and sharing content, the Eiteljorg stepped up behind-the-scenes experiences and art-making activities people could do at home—a practice that will likely continue.

Vanausdall says the museum loves the fact that people who might never make it to one of the museum’s major exhibitions can now interact with artists and see things they might otherwise miss.

“It doesn’t work for everything we do,” he says. “There’s still a need to be in person—collaborating and having a cup of coffee together—but we won’t go back to the way things used to be. We’ll be hybrid with in-person and remote opportunities.”

In addition to sharing the diverse history and culture of Native Americans and the West with a bigger audience, the updated tools strengthened the Eiteljorg’s collaborative nature and deepened relationships with local and national partners such as the Indiana State Museum, Ivy Tech, Freetown Village, the Latino Cultural Arts Center of Colorado, and the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago.

One of the most tangible signs of enhanced collaboration made its debut in the summer of 2022.

“We have a Native American Advisory Council, and they advised us on the renovation of our new Native American Galleries,” Vanausdall says. “Typically—because it’s so expensive to bring them here—we would have one major meeting a year, but during COVID-19, we met monthly, simply because everybody was using Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

“Theyir contribution to the final exhibit is extraordinary, and I don’t think it would have been the same if the Restart & Resilience grant hadn’t given us the capability and the mindset to make it work.”
Film lovers camped out at the Tibbs Drive-In Theatre to enjoy the Indy Shorts International Film Festival in 2020.
Filmmaking has the power to make a better world, to become art, to transform the human heart and mind.

That’s the founding premise of Heartland Film, Inc., and with that purpose, a spirit of innovation, and a $195,000 grant from the Indy Arts and Culture Restart & Resilience Fund, supported by Lilly Endowment Inc., the organization not only survived the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic; it came out on the other side like a champ.

The 11-day Heartland International Film Festival (HIFF) in October and the Indy Shorts International Festival in July have always happened “in-person.” In 2020, the obvious alternative was to stream films online, but that was complicated by two factors: 1) a lack of adequate technology and 2) a desire to preserve the unique, communal experience.

“We don’t have a mentality of doing things as we have for the last 30 years. We’re inclined to re-evaluate everything.”

Jessica Chapman
Director of Marketing & Communications

Popular festival dazzled with a socially distanced showcase.
Guests pose for the drive through red carpet experience at the Heartland International Film Festival in 2020.
In some cases, the pandemic provided an opportunity for changes the organization had been itching to make. “We had tried for years to get our audiences more comfortable with buying tickets online, but the majority would go to the box office,” says Julie Sommers Neuman, Heartland Film’s grant writer. “One of the pivots we made was to go completely online for ticketing.”

Sommers Neuman says the grant helped the organization upgrade technology to live-stream events, sell tickets, and equip staff for working at home during the shutdown. Heartland Film also added three employees, including a box office manager to handle ticketing.

A new community engagement manager strengthens educational outreach, builds community partnerships, and shepherds the organization’s High School Film Competition. Through that position, Heartland Film was “able to establish many new partnerships and reach schools with high diversity—students who might not otherwise be exposed to independent filmmaking or realize that it could be a career,” says Sommers Neuman.

Amid the chaos of learning new technologies and revising plans on the fly, the Heartland Film team wanted the virtual/online version of the festival to be as engaging as an in-person event. They struck a clever deal with the Tibbs Drive-in Theatre to screen films for the 2020 Heartland International Film Festival and the Indy Shorts International Film Festival, showing several films that dealt with race relations.

Simulating the experience of being at a film festival, the staff created a drive-thru red carpet experience, taking photos as each car stopped in front of signage at the Tibbs.

“People were thrilled to get out of the house and safely celebrate film together,” says Jessica Chapman, director of marketing and communications.

One of the annual favorites is a Q&A program that allows viewers to interact with each film’s creator. For the first time, the 2020 Q&As were presented as live virtual events that were recorded for easy access afterwards.

“Our filmmakers were very grateful for these sessions,” Chapman says. “They were across the world, calling in at 3:30 a.m. For many it was their first opportunity to receive audience reactions after putting their work out in the world.”

Naturally, the challenges of 2020 were huge for the Heartland Film staff, but their work has paid off in the form of a larger, more diverse audience and a nimble work culture. The 2021 festival had its highest attendance in 31 years.

“We are very open and excited to try new things,” Chapman says. “We’re asking ourselves, ‘How is this serving us? Is there a way we can do it better?’ We don’t have a mentality of doing things as we have for the last 30 years. We’re inclined to re-evaluate everything.”
Iibada Dance Co., which teaches dance to youth ages 3 to 18, presented "The Brave" in 2021. Photo by Poureyez Photography.
IIBADA DANCE COMPANY

In the virtual and online universe, Iibada quickly found its footing.

“Our workshops were engaging students from all over the country and teachers all the way from Sweden.”

Roland Smith
President & CEO

The Iibada Dance Company (IDC) has never been strictly about dance. Yes, it’s an academy that teaches dance to youth ages 3 to 18, but the deeper goal has always been about empowering youth, making art more accessible to low-income families and improving quality of life.

In 2022, for example, they began a new program for adults and families, using dance to improve health and fitness in underserved communities. Their mission shows up in things like their annual IDC summer dance program, which, in 2022, will emphasize mental health needs exacerbated by the pandemic.

“We’ve learned that, because kids have been so reliant on social media for the last couple of years, it has played a part in some things we’ve been noticing, especially in our young girls’ identity and their self-esteem,” says IDC President Roland Smith. “This past summer we provided circle time within their Summer Camp Pods to give dancers the opportunity to express themselves and how they are feeling throughout the day.”
In “The Brave”, Ilibada Dance Co. celebrated the brave men and women who answered the call of duty. Photo by Poureyez Photography.
Even after a global pandemic, the vital signs of this 33-year-old nonprofit are so healthy that the IDC is has rebranded itself with a new website designed to reflect their scope and to make their platforms perform flawlessly in the world of virtual programming.

In 2020, the IDC had to make the equivalent of a grande jeté by morphing into a virtual academy—a transformation that required the organization to overcome common barriers within underserved communities.

"Teaching dance from a computer screen is not conducive to everyone's home," says Smith. "A lot of the academy's students are from families without internet access."

With a grant from the Indy Arts and Culture Restart & Resilience Fund, supported by Lilly Endowment Inc., the IDC acquired laptops and hot spots to facilitate online learning. By May 2021, the academy had mastered a popular hybrid program that alternated between live, in-person dance instruction and virtual learning.

The grant also paid for consultants to improve the organization's social media and marketing efforts. Their success led to new support from people who were willing to invest in IDC programs such as Dare to Dance, an afterschool program that partners with local schools.

"Because of those partnerships, students can enroll in our academy for 70 percent off throughout the school year," Smith says. "Students who train with us during the year can continue to train with us during the summer, as well."

Transitioning to online and virtual programming had challenges, but those were offset by unexpected results. By the fall of 2021, the IDC academy had tripled its enrollment. It later barreled past that record via local and national engagement.

"Our workshops were engaging students from all over the country and teachers all the way from Sweden, so it just opened up opportunities for us," Smith says.

Live-streamed shows drew record attendance, increasing visibility with families who had never heard of IDC. "When I started back in 2019 as chief program officer, we had 32 students enrolled. We're now at 106," he says.

Together, these strategies created buzz and put "boots on the ground" in communities where IDC is needed most.

"That's the part that I love," Smith says. "I love making sure that we have a presence within our surrounding communities, especially the Near Eastside and Near Westside. We can tell that our organization is growing, and that the funding is helping us meet the future."
Through a partnership with WFYI, the 2020 Indy Jazz Fest was recorded and aired on TV.
Heading into 2020, the Indy Jazz Fest (IJF) was on track to do what it has done every year since 1999. Invite a slate of notable jazz musicians to perform at a series of live concerts in Indianapolis. Create memorable jazz experiences. Make it obvious that jazz isn’t just part of the city’s past; it’s baked into our DNA—part of who we are.

You come the first time for the recognizable stars. You return to discover local jazz artists and meet a community of jazz fans.

When it became clear that performing for live audiences wasn’t viable in 2020, a question swirled around the IJF’s signature event: “Why don’t we create something the audience can see in the comfort of their homes?” Through a partnership with local public television station WFYI, the 2020 Indianapolis Jazz Fest was recorded and aired on television.
Indy Jazz Fest commissioned local artists to produce new jazz. Native Sun composed “Legalize Being Black,” music that deals with social justice, racial inequality and police brutality.
For the first time, the concerts were free, reaching people who couldn’t afford tickets or simply hadn’t made the festival part of their routines. Then came a surprising silver lining. New donors chipped in. Existing donors gave more. And the expense side of the balance sheet improved without the cost of a live 2020 festival.

Suddenly, the use of audio and video content to connect with new audiences, donors and grantmakers wasn’t just a survival tactic; it was a gateway to self-sufficiency beyond the pandemic era.

“One of the things that came out of re-imagining the way we do things for the festival—of not just producing really superior concert experiences—was to ask, ‘How can we do something that is more long-lasting and more representative of Indianapolis?’” says Rob Dixon, artistic and education director at the Indianapolis Jazz Foundation (IJF).

After securing an $85,000 grant from the Indy Arts and Culture Restart & Resilience Fund, made possible by the Lilly Endowment Inc., the IJF invested in resources to chase both aspirations.

Part of the grant purchased the audio-visual technology needed to produce, share and index evergreen content on social channels such as YouTube, where it can be seen 24/7.

Since acquiring the new equipment, Dixon says donations are up by roughly 30 percent. “We make sure that we have a videographer at every performance brought by Indy Jazz Fest, and we catalog and tag it,” he says. “We not only verbally describe what we do—we show donors and grantmakers through professional videography, ‘Hey, look, this is what we do.’”

With the remaining grant funds, the IJF commissioned local artists Jared Thompson, Charlie Ballentine and hip-hop/jazz trio Native Son to compose, record and produce new jazz. Jared Thompson’s 38th and Post Modernism reflects his experience growing up as a Black artist in Indianapolis. Charlie Ballentine wrote Vonnegut, inspired by the work of American novelist and Indianapolis native son, Kurt Vonnegut. And Native Sun composed Legalize Being Black, a suite of music that deals with social justice, racial inequality and police brutality.

All three compositions aired in 2020 on WFYI in a documentary format. They also sit on the IJF’s YouTube channel, where they continue to draw national attention and spawn new projects that promote Indianapolis as a music destination.

On the face of things, forfeiting an event that provides up to 60 percent of the organization’s annual budget sounds like a recipe for financial disaster. Instead, Dixon says the 23-year-old Indy Jazz Festival is stronger than ever and better equipped for its goals after finding a wider audience for the city’s jazz scene.

“We’ve had such great success with these projects, and we would not have been able to do them without the grant,” he says.
The Indianapolis Opera transformed 6,000 square feet of Reilly Hall at the Basile Opera Center into a TV studio to create live broadcasts. Pictured: Opera singer Angela Brown.
If you took notice of the Indianapolis Opera (IO) in recent years, you saw an arts organization behaving with the sly wit of an operatic heroine. Rather than acquiesce to a villain—in this case the COVID-19 pandemic—the 47-year-old company took charge of its destiny with as much determination as the alluring Carmen. Like the femme fatale in Bizet’s opera, the IO proved itself an irrepressible outlier as one of the few opera companies nationwide that didn’t interrupt programming in 2020.

“We have incredibly talented resident artists, and we put them to work creating digital content,” says Lyndsay Moy, who joined the IO as education and community engagement director in July 2020.

A grant from Indy Arts and Culture Restart & Resilience Fund, supported by Lilly Endowment Inc., allowed the IO to invest in technology, supplies and services that were essential for continuing their mission.
The Indianapolis Opera live-streamed “Madame Butterfly” in November 2020, with socially distanced staging to protect the artists.
The idea of creating digital content that can be shared virtually or accessed online wasn’t new to the IO. It had been a point in discussions long before the pandemic. When the 2020 shutdown came, Indiana’s only professional opera company had the interest and the impetus to move forward.

At the time, the IO cast was rehearsing for Don Giovanni and preparing to premiere Brundibar & Vedem with the Indianapolis Children’s Choir and the Jewish community as partners. The live performance of Brundibar & Vedem was delayed until 2022, but the final dress rehearsal of Don Giovanni was filmed and shared online in 2020, and repeated in live performances with most of the original cast in November 2021.

Building on their first digital success, the IO live streamed Madame Butterfly in November 2020, with socially distanced staging to protect the artists. With little time to adjust, Moy says, “We transformed 6,000 square feet of Reilly Hall (at the Basile Opera Center) into a television studio with the lighting, backdrops and the space to facilitate the live broadcasts we had talked about.”

On the educational front, the IO expanded its outreach menu with five new programs to support music education. “(The pandemic) was obviously a big hurdle for music teachers and the music community in general,” says Moy.

“Offering curriculum guides and having an opportunity to share a children’s opera, or a digital recital program, or a musical theater review—not just with students, but also with senior living facilities—was a way to stay engaged.”

While observing restrictions on public gatherings, the IO managed to stick to its goal of bringing high quality opera to diverse audiences in central Indiana. At outdoor venues like Garfield Park and the grounds of the Basile Opera Center, the IO slaked a common thirst for art and culture. Moy recalls the vibe as she scanned a sea of lawn chairs and blankets at Gallantry, a one-act parody. “It was infectious, hearing this audience laugh. You could just tell they needed to laugh.”

The IO also found inspiration in other arts organizations and community partners like the Indianapolis Zoo, where they presented Madame Butterfly last spring.

“Partnerships happened so much more,” Moy says. “Arts organizations realized that we can’t do this alone. We’re constantly learning from each other to figure out how to keep creating.”

Sales of season tickets resumed in 2022 for the first time in two years, signaling a possible return to normal. Meanwhile, the IO is reflecting on what’s next.

“If anything, ‘adapt’ was the word of the day,” Moy says. “If another surge comes, we have been there, and we know what to do. We know what we’re capable of.”
“Courage,” written by Theresa Rebeck and directed by Lindsay D. Mitchell, was shown at a virtual film festival hosted by the New Harmony Project in December 2020.
No one is surprised when an artist exhibits “out-of-the-box” thinking. In 2020, the creative minds at The New Harmony Project (NHP) went further: they destroyed the box and started over again.

Based in Indianapolis, the national arts organization nurtures playwrights who create the majority of art Americans consume: content for television, movies and theatre. These behind-the-scenes artists are often the last people we think of when we see a film or play, despite their influence on us as individuals and on American culture as a whole.

At the NHP, writers are center stage. Founded in 1986, The NHP is dedicated to empowering playwrights who write stories that represent hope, courage and the resilience of the human spirit—stories that were especially important to tell in 2020.

In a normal year, the NHP offers workshops, developmental support, residencies, commissions and programs, mostly in intimate communities where artists share their work. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed the NHP to re-imagine its support for playwrights as its mission.
To keep people connected during the pandemic, the New Harmony Project hosted 30-minute “dinners” that eight guests could attend at a virtual table.
Both efforts were underwritten by a grant from the Indy Arts and Culture Restart & Resilience Fund, supported by Lilly Endowment Inc.

“Thanks to the grant, we were able to commission 17 writers to create short, 200- to 300-word scripts,” David Hudson, executive director, says. “We teamed up seven of those writers with filmmakers to create short films based on the ideals of the New Harmony Project. We had a terrific virtual premiere in December 2020.”

When the pandemic hit, the NHP was beginning to formulate a new, five-year strategic plan. Hudson says the timing of the shutdown proved to be “incredibly timely for us as an organization because it was quickly followed by the outcry for justice from the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many others.

“We were able to take that moment as an opportunity to become introspective about what we were doing and how we were honoring the pledges of diversity, equity, inclusion and access, and we found that we weren’t really living up to those obligations.”

Consultants led a process that brought dramatic changes at the NHP. “In January 2022, we affirmed a five-year strategic plan focused on becoming a more just, equitable, anti-racist and impactful organization,” Hudson says. From that effort, they identified ways to weave new perspectives, perceptions, and experiences into the cultural fabric.

“We allocated $15,000 to pay application and script reviewers who, because of COVID-19, were not able to provide their services as volunteers the way they had before,” he says. “That allowed us to gather a diverse mix of reviewers that we would not have been able to get before, and it made the outcome better because you had equitable representation.”

At the end of the process, 60% of the selected writers self-identified as BIPOC, 78% self-identified as female, transgender, or gender-nonconforming, and nearly 20% identified as a person with a disability.

The revised NHP strategic plan also honed in on areas that have lasting implications for all arts organizations: development and fundraising. Pre-pandemic, the NHP’s annual operating budget was approximately $320,000. In 2023, Hudson expected the budget to be closer to $500,000.

“Looking forward, we’re able to say that this is how we’re going to become a more impactful organization, not only in central Indiana and Indianapolis,” says Hudson. “We’re improving our national profile to no longer be a best-kept secret. We are striving to be an organization that reflects the thoughts of artists and writers who make up our alumni and the people we serve, but also the people who form the cultural fabric of central Indiana.”
The Phoenix Theatre Cultural Centre transformed a parking lot into an outdoor venue-The Park at the Phoenix-with great views of the Indianapolis skyline.
When the Phoenix Theatre moved into a new, 20,000-square-foot building in 2018, the 38-year-old arts organization didn’t just change its address; it acquired a new brand and purpose.

Notable for its edgy, contemporary productions, the neighborhood theater rebranded as the Phoenix Theatre Cultural Centre and claimed a prime spot on the Indianapolis Cultural Trail by inviting a wider creative community to use its space.

Moving into a larger home and expanding the mission was a little like building an airplane and flying it at the same time, according to Managing Director Delia Robertson.

“When limited seat inventory and a larger facility to maintain, our costs increased when we moved into the new space,” Robertson says. “Pre-pandemic, we were already figuring out how to alter the business model to address that.”
The Park at the Phoenix has expanded the Phoenix Theatre’s ability to partner with performing arts organizations that don’t have permanent homes.
A few months before the pandemic of 2020, the organization started working on a strategic plan that emphasized an increase in earned revenue. They floated numerous ideas, including increased ticket prices, but Robertson and her colleagues didn’t want to shift the burden to patrons.

Instead, she scoured the property for alternative sources of revenue until her gaze came to rest on an asset that, at first, seemed mundane: the Centre’s 18,000-square-foot parking lot.

Two months into the pandemic, the parking lot became more than just a swath of asphalt. “We crafted the idea of using shipping containers to create an (outdoor) stage, bar and a box office that would be permanent additions to the parking lot so we could have a summer season yet make sure it was done in such a way that the lot is still usable when we have indoor productions,” Robertson says.

With a grant from the Indy Arts and Culture Restart & Resilience Fund, supported by Lilly Endowment Inc., the Phoenix Theatre Cultural Centre transformed the parking lot into an outdoor venue—The Park at The Phoenix, a shift that wasn’t just a pandemic response, but a linchpin for long-term financial stability.

At the Phoenix Theatre Cultural Centre, the Phoenix Theatre stages fewer productions of its own, but invests more in each one.

“We now produce between four to six shows inside on our two stages, using union actors, and then we flip to an outdoor season, focusing on devised work, which means there is a script somewhere in its development lifespan, but it hasn’t been completed yet,” Robertson says.

The Park at the Phoenix accommodates 999 people—standing room only. “It’s just exploded our ability to invite patrons in,” Robertson says. “And with the huge increase in the number of attendees per show, we can lower ticket prices to make (live productions) more accessible to the community.”

The outdoor venue has expanded the Phoenix Theatre Cultural Centre’s ability to partner with other performing arts organizations that lack permanent homes of their own. In 2021, for example, they partnered with Eclipse, an emerging artist program of Summer Stock Stage, which performed a handful of musicals in the outdoor space.

Other partners include Summit Performance Indianapolis, Q Artistry, Phoenix Rising Dance Company, Sabadà, a Brazilian band that celebrated Brazilian Independence Day, and Grupo Folclórico Macehuani, an Indianapolis dance group whose mission is to preserve Mexican culture and traditions through dance and music.

“The Park would not exist if not for the grant,” says Robertson, who hired a community engagement manager to build more community partnerships. “A lot of organizations don’t know that this is a space for them, that we’re excited to host them and have them make this their space, too.”
Daniel Martin helps build a 3D basketball mural that was installed downtown during Swish, an outdoor festival that welcomed men’s college basketball tournament fans to Indy in March 2021.
SAPPHIRE THEATRE COMPANY

With new technology, the non-traditional theater magnifies good works.

“I don’t know how much longer we could have gone with the technology we had. We kind of jumped into with whatever we had on hand.”

Bonnie Mill
Artistic Director

What do you call a theater company that doesn’t sell tickets to a season of plays, but instead uses theatrical talent and accoutrements to serve a community? In the parlance of theater arts, such a company is known as an applied theater, and in central Indiana, there is only one such species: The Sapphire Theatre Company.

Rather than staging plays, the Sapphire Theatre collaborates with nonprofit and corporate clients to achieve strategic communication goals through programs, performances and production services. They deliver, as their tagline says, “Performing Arts with Purpose.”

“These are often very customized learning situations that are dramatized to have both an educational and an entertainment/performance/art element,” says Bonnie Mill, artistic director of The Sapphire Theatre, which she co-founded in 2008 with her husband, David Orr.
Sapphire Theatre's expertise in creating virtual content was in demand in 2020, and they helped many clients develop virtual programs.

Everyone actually said what they were thinking at your staff meetings?
Before the pandemic, Sapphire Theatre had attempted to steer some clients away from recorded video content in favor of virtual programs. When Mill and her colleagues talked to clients about the benefits of live, virtual programs, “people sometimes didn’t understand what we were saying, which was that employees will ignore recorded content,” she says. “What they really need is a live performance experience that engages people and allows them to ask questions. That’s what makes learning happen.”

Along came Zoom. Suddenly the virtual concept needed no endorsement and no explanation. The Sapphire Theatre’s expertise was in demand, and they plowed forward, helping clients segue to virtual programs despite their clunky, outdated technology.

These constraints evaporated with a grant by the Indy Arts and Culture Restart & Resilience Fund, made possible by Lilly Endowment Inc. The Sapphire Theatre Company acquired new laptops, monitors and personal protective equipment. The funds also added better indoor ventilation and a dust collection system to a studio where artisans build sets for The Sapphire as well as other theater companies.

Their investments rippled throughout the community, nourishing The Sapphire as a change agent in social justice projects such as PreEnact Indy, where they are a major collaborator.

After the murder of George Floyd, Mill says the company felt called to step up its efforts to make theater arts more equitable for people of color. That led to discussions with Ophelia Wellington, executive director of Freetown Village.

The two arts organizations united local theaters in an informal coalition that maintains a database of BIPOC artists and actors, and promotes theater opportunities. Eventually, they hope to offer low-or no-cost theater training to help people of color learn the ropes.

“A lot of times, people of color aren’t looped into the theater community, and they don’t have the opportunity to learn by doing show after show,” Mill says.

With updated technology, The Sapphire also fortified key stakeholders such as the Indiana Afterschool Network. “We helped them take their Indiana Summit on Out-of-School Learning virtual for the first time,” Mill says.

At IUPUI, the company created a safe, virtual environment for Tunnel of Oppression, an immersive, interactive production, researched and created by the university’s social justice scholars and performed by professional actors from Sapphire Theatre Company.

“I don’t know how much longer we could have gone with the technology we had,” Mill says. “We kind of jumped into with whatever we had on hand. Without support for additional technology, I’m not sure we would still be able to offer the things our clients need to keep their organizations going.”
HARNESSING CREATIVITY FOR CHANGE

Restart & Resilience Fund Guidelines

Between July 2020 and December 2021, the Indy Arts Council administered grants to 58 organizations through the Indy Arts and Culture Restart & Resilience Fund, supported by Lilly Endowment Inc. Indianapolis/Marion County-based arts and cultural organizations were invited to apply for grants ranging from $5,000 to $500,000.

Eligibility requirements included:
— Being dedicated principally to the performance, exhibition and/or presentation of arts or cultural programming.
— Being aligned and compliant with public health guidelines and best practices.
— Being committed to diversity, equity, inclusion and access as core priorities.

Grants were used to offset capital and operating expenses associated with meeting public health guidelines such as physical distancing and reduced capacities. Organizations spent the funding on new equipment, additional professional services, altered physical environments, modified programs, and staffing.
**Organization Summaries**

**American Pianists Association**
The APA revived Concerto Curriculum, a beloved school outreach program that brought four APA finalists to Indianapolis for three-day residencies at four public schools. The grant covered a portion of increased support for the artists. Newly-acquired audio and visual equipment allows APA to produce high-quality livestreams and video recordings of performances.

**ArtMix**
ArtMix used over 50% of grant funds to restructure and prepare for new programming and operating priorities, such as the difficult task of working with higher-risk and vulnerable populations during the pandemic. With an increased need for students to have their own individual supplies, ArtMix’s typical supply budget doubled, and grant funds helped replace and replenish consumable art studio supplies.

**Asante Art Institute of Indianapolis**
Pivoting to virtual and online content, Asante Art Institute acquired new technology to offer programs and make registration more seamless, increasing its reach to new audiences.

In January 2021, the organization showcased their first-ever online film festival, featuring an eclectic blend of previously recorded performances and testimonials from Asante alum. The academy created Prep UPPER CLASS for youth ages 12-18, a virtual program that teaches media literacy, communication skills and video production skills.
Athenaeum Foundation
To aid its production of high-quality videos, the Athenaeum purchased new front lights, added software and completed training to produce and broadcast virtual programming. They also implemented a new ticketing system and added staff, including a new safety coordinator, virtual experience manager and AV technicians.

Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site
New software, new computers, a new server and photography helped the Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site support elementary schools with virtual content. A revitalized Historic Delaware Street Walking Tour gave visitors a safe, outdoor activity. As virtual programs became more popular, grant funds supported expanded hours for educational staff and a volunteer coordinator. To promote online giving, the site also hired a Presidential Fellow for Advancement.

Big Car Collaborative
Big Car reached new audiences, upgraded technology and developed partnerships with grant funds. The organization expanded a part-time, WQRT (99.1 FM) station manager position to full-time status and hired a consultant to support sponsorship planning, partnerships, outreach, social media and promotion. Together, those efforts increased underwriting and improved sustainability for WQRT, an on-air home for contemporary art, music and community.
Brick Street Poetry
New equipment, supplies and materials helped Brick Street Poetry restart with modifications to its programming, including more performances, expanded hours and new locations that improve access for underrepresented audiences. The organization also tapped professional services for cleaning, safety planning and video production. Physical changes include the addition of touchless fixtures and flexible seating.

The Cabaret
After an 85 percent loss in ticket revenue in 2020, The Cabaret used part of its grant to rekindle indoor performances during the second half of 2021. They also introduced a new outdoor performance series in The Alley at Library Square.

Cat Head Press: Printshop and Artist Cooperative
The purchase of a Risograph printer allowed Cat Head Press to work with local artists, illustrators and organizers to create supportive publishing projects during the pandemic and beyond. Cat Head Press expanded its presence as a resource for creative work by producing and distributing art kits to organizations in the community.
Children’s Museum of Indianapolis
Through the Museum at Home platform, The Children’s Museum gave families an opportunity to experience the museum without leaving home. In 2020, the museum’s virtual content reached more than 12 million people and generated nearly 285,000 engagements with families. A new streaming studio facilitates live virtual programs for classrooms across the nation.

Classical Music Indy
CMI used grant funds to strengthen relationships with local musicians, film directors, composers, senior citizens, K-12 students and the general public. Unable to perform safely for live audiences, CMI created video content in the style of a “take away show,” an impromptu concert performed while walking in public spaces. Four composers were commissioned to create new music and sound for four local sites.

Claude McNeal’s Musical Theatre Training Program
Two film projects continue Claude McNeal’s Musical Theatre mission of providing quality educational programming and inspiring transformed lives through theater. Leveraging relationships with community partners such as WFYI, the Phoenix Theatre and District Theatre, the organization made the films accessible in a virtual format. They also made three bullying/cyberbullying videos adapted for elementary and middle-school grade levels and another on dating violence for seventh and eighth graders.
**Conner Prairie Museum**
During the most uncertain periods of the pandemic, Conner Prairie continued its immersive educational tradition with Conner Prairie at Home, a unique, historical program shared on the web and via social media channels. Staff stayed connected with the community through daily performances, tours, demonstrations and the like, with the bonus of reaching new members and visitors beyond central Indiana. A significant portion of grant funds upgraded the museum's physical space with improved fresh-air intakes.

**District Theatre**
The IndyFringe Basile Theatre created a safer, more welcoming environment for artists and patrons with a new HVAC system for its 100-year-old building. Those improvements allowed IndyFringe to welcome the Indianapolis community back inside for the annual IndyFringe Festival in August 2021.

**Dance Kaleidoscope**
DK purchased laptops, iPads, webcams and Zoom subscriptions for virtual educational programs and mini-performances shared via DK's YouTube channel. This equipment allowed DK to safely resume public dance classes and bring its 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 seasons to audiences. With physical and operational upgrades to its existing studios, DK maintained programming and performances and made space for dancers to rehearse in safe conditions.
Drum Corps International
Drum Corps International restarted in 2021 with a modified version of its annual World Championship. The renamed celebration event brought performing groups to Indianapolis for three nights of performances at Lucas Oil Stadium. Unable to follow their normal mode of sleeping groups on school gymnasium floors, the organization used part of its grant to cover the cost of hotels and alternate rehearsal sites.

Ensemble Music Society of Indianapolis
Founded in 1944, the Ensemble Music Society created recordings, videos and live streams of concerts. One video now supports the organization’s school outreach. They also formed partnerships with Chamber Music of Detroit and the Harlem String Quartet. To promote online giving, the site also hired a Presidential Fellow for Advancement.

Fonseca Theatre
Outdoor productions increased the visibility of the theater beyond its surrounding neighborhood, where a beautiful space opens into Haughville Park. Upgrades to the outdoor stage and PPE created a safe environment for artists, staff, volunteers and audiences. The arts community mourned when producing director Bryan Fonseca died in September 2020 of complications related to COVID-19.
**Footlite Musicals**

Footlite Musicals installed a new HVAC system to meet air exchange standards meant to improve public safety. A new video camera allows Footlite to livestream and record events. Through a new, long-term partnership with the Herron-Morton Neighborhood Association, the organization is collaborating on an outdoor space for Footlite performances during the summer months.

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**Harrison Center**

The Harrison Center hired professionals to market a new, online gallery that supports artists. A new pergola added fresh-air, covered seating outside the City Gallery. The Harrison Center also promoted COVID vaccinations, helped residents heal from COVID-related trauma, reduced social isolation and hired a Black artist to lead creative placemaking work in the Martindale-Brightwood neighborhood.

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**Indiana Black Expo**

Indiana Black Expo kicked off 2020 with excitement for its 50th anniversary celebration. Operations were significantly diminished by the pandemic, but IBE responded to the downtime by consulting with an architect and repurposing existing garage space as a mini-theater for classes, rehearsals and performances.

Other improvements included a new HVAC system in a multi-purpose gym, new theater-style risers and seating, rewired electrical fixtures and lighting, and paint for a new state-of-the-art theater, now known as the IBE Black Box Theater, a year-round space for cultural arts partners.
Indiana Fashion Foundation
The Indiana Fashion Foundation canceled its 2020 Indiana Fashion Week and the Making It in Fashion Conference. In lieu of those events, they held a free, virtual Making It in Fashion Conference over four months to provide development and educational opportunities for Indiana artists and creators. They reopened both events in 2021 with an in-person format, using best-practices training for volunteers and contractors. Part of the grant paid for supplies, equipment and video production, and editing services.

Indiana Historical Society
The Indiana Historical Society improved air quality in the Indiana History Center and added infrastructure to support virtual work and programs. They protected digital collections related to the pandemic and social justice efforts with enhancements such as increased file storage and offsite server back-up. They also purchased equipment, software and training for a small, in-house video studio where digital educational programs are produced.

Indiana Music Education Association & Foundation
IMEA hired personnel and paid for contractors and equipment to convert its biggest program to a 100% virtual format. The January 2021 event offered 130 sessions, which were viewed by 700 educators, just shy of the mark they normally hit for an in-person conference. When surveyed, members agreed that the value of their IMEA membership has increased since the pandemic began.
Indiana Performing Arts Centre
Indiana Performing Arts Centre offers professionally produced musicals and plays that celebrate African-American experiences. Grant money helped IPAC offset the cost of extra space for socially distanced rehearsals and programs, kept operations running and paid key staff during the pandemic. IPAC established partnerships to increase diversity in the arts throughout the tri-state area.

Indiana Repertory Theatre
The IRT transitioned to livestreamed productions in the 2020-2021 season. Forging partnerships with WFYI for filming and Broadway on Demand for streaming, IRT secured services and equipment to support its digital presence and continue educational programming during lockdown. Students from across the state engaged in a playwriting competition that offers guidance and instruction from IRT artists, including Playwright-in-Residence James Still. New laptops, iPads, and printers allowed staff members to work remotely.

Indiana State Museum
ISM invested in a robust set of digital assets to create educational content, including virtual tours of historic sites, behind-the-scenes tours, increased outdoor programming, and a “Camp in a Box” program.
Indiana Wind Symphony
The IWS live streamed concert experiences in September 2021, December 2021 and February 2022. The grant covered 50% of the cost for printed concert programs—a crucial part of their educational mission because they provide historical context. A portion of the grant paid for advertising with Current Publications, WICR (radio) and Facebook to keep audiences updated on concert/livestream offerings. In addition, the IWS purchased COVID-19 testing kits for the well-being of musicians.

Indianapolis Art Center
The Indianapolis Art Center purchased equipment to give virtual tours of exhibitions. In support of working artists, the Art Center created an online marketplace (ArtCenterMarket.com) where artists connect with buyers and sell their work. Paired with the Art Center’s annual Winter Sale and the Indy Arts Council’s annual TINY show, artists gained access to a large and interested buying audience that continues today. The Art Center adapted engaging classrooms for students and trained instructors to build their online teaching skills.

Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra
Throughout the pandemic, the ICO continued to make music, deliver online content and stay connected with audiences through an education and engagement series. The grant offset multiple expenses, including the cost of a larger performance hall and plexiglass barriers for the protection and safety of the audience and musicians. Other covered expenses included hiring a video production team and paying broadcast fees to musicians as required by a collective bargaining agreement with the American Federation of Musicians.
Indianapolis Children’s Choir
Early in 2020, the ICC began offering remote and virtual programs funded by investments in technology, materials, supplies and staffing. Singers contributed individual vocal files, which were combined for a virtual concert in June of 2020. The ICC also reimagined a July summer camp, featuring 100 instructional videos. By March of 2022, the ICC in-person concerts resumed with face masks optional for performers and audience members.

Indianapolis Cultural Trail: A Legacy of Gene & Marilyn Glick
While the Indianapolis Cultural Trail is an outdoor space that never closed during the pandemic, it still needed technology to expand its virtual presence. New handheld devices allow staff to record better outdoor videos. Additional computers make work spaces safer for staff and facilitate a hybrid work environment. With outdoor spaces in high demand, the Cultural Trail added staff and hired contractors to accommodate extra use.

Indianapolis Men’s Chorus
Despite higher rental costs, the IMC began rehearsing at the Basile Opera Center in 2020. Their new sound equipment facilitates concerts at outdoor and non-traditional venues. Grant funds also paid for extra staffing to make the transition to virtual programs. The added support has expanded the organization’s capacity, freeing board members to focus on donors and collaborative decision-making.
Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum
The 2020 pandemic closed the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum for several months, resulting in a substantial decrease in revenue. A new ticketing system allowed the museum to reduce several points of contact between visitors and staff through online purchasing and scanning of virtual tickets. Physical improvements at the venue accommodated social distancing for visitors waiting in the lobby.

Indianapolis Movement Arts Collective
In October of 2020, the Indianapolis Movement Arts Collective launched the Micro Fellowship, a digital residency that selected one artist per month to create videos for IMAC audiences on Instagram and Facebook. The grant supported increased staffing, technology and personal protective equipment.

Indianapolis Suzuki Academy
In March 2020, an estimated 40% of enrolled families at the Indianapolis Suzuki Academy chose a virtual option. A portion of their grant purchased technology to improve sound quality for virtual lessons. Investments in equipment and subscriptions allowed them to livestream concerts. Prior to the pandemic, teachers shared space and taught in their home studios, sharing pianos and harps for lessons. COVID-19 safety protocols made it necessary to acquire two additional pianos and a pedal harp.
Indianapolis Symphonic Choir
The Indianapolis Symphonic Choir reimagined the 2020-2021 season with grant funds that paid for technology to produce virtual performances. Among the performances was a September 2020 outdoor Community Sing and an annual Festival of Carols, produced by WISH-TV and aired on MyINDY-TV.

Indianapolis Women’s Chorus
Grant-funded technology enhanced the visibility of the Indianapolis Women’s Choir during the pandemic. Using new recording/video production software, artistic staff produced and shared five video performances that merged individual recordings made by members of the choir. In a related venture, the grant paid for professional video creation services as part of a collaboration with seven other local choruses known as the Indy Choral Collaborative, resulting in a 2020 joint holiday video.

Indianapolis Youth Orchestra
The Indianapolis Youth Orchestra covered extra expenses linked to conducting and coaching fees, technology and extra space that divided students into smaller rehearsal groups. They also improved the safety of their physical spaces. As a result of the grant and extra commitment by staff, every student had musical experiences throughout the pandemic.
**Indianapolis Zoo**

The Indianapolis Zoo invested in a subscription service that allowed staff to create up-to-date videos of animals and exhibits at the Zoo. New subscription software and additional equipment allowed the Zoo’s education team to present video workshops for schools that can’t make field trips. A new health monitoring system tracked hundreds of employees with possible illness, exposure risks and vaccination statuses to maintain the highest level of safety for employees and guests.

**IndyBaroque Music**

Video recording and live-streamed concerts helped IndyBaroque expand its audience beyond Indianapolis and engage with existing audiences during an otherwise lonely time. The organization focused on digital communication, increasing its social media presence, revamping its website, and unveiling a new logo and monogram. Those changes resulted in higher-than-expected attendance at in-person concerts and a steady influx of new concert-goers who experienced early music or the Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra for the first time.

**Indy Convergence**

The home of Indy Convergence received a first-floor renovation that installed two new ADA bathrooms, increased outdoor lighting, and added a ticket window and separate space for dancers/performers or caterers. With new features that expand accessibility and minimize contact, the space retains its historical charm while safely welcoming people of all abilities.
Indy Shakes
Indy Shakes used a portion of the grant to cover extra time for artistic, technical and marketing personnel. The theater company also acquired technology to livestream productions and strengthened its finances through two additional grant applications.

International Violin Competition of Indianapolis
The IVCI chose the Madam Walker Legacy Center as a larger performance venue to make space for social distancing at its Laureate Series. That doubled its usual budget for performance and rehearsal space, one of the many expenses offset by the grant. Social distancing dictated the hiring of two additional part-time staff per concert for safety and assistance.

Kids Dance Outreach
With help from WFYI’s production team, KDO created, developed, recorded and produced a film featuring performances by the children of KDO. This project attracted new audiences, allowed dancers to perform in a different medium and kept KDO’s artistic team engaged. KDO also added a new coordinator to support community engagement strategies.
Kurt Vonnegut Museum & Library
The KVML’s national and international status was strengthened with investments that enhanced digital programming, social distancing and accessibility in the building. The Vonnegut Museum expanded its audience, deepened conversations and gained new partnerships that are changing the way visitors interact with Kurt Vonnegut’s legacy.

Madam Walker Legacy Center
With upgrades to its four-story building and new technology that supports virtual programs, the Madam Walker Legacy Center continued its mission in a hybrid mode. Since 2020, the MWLC strengthened its digital presence, adding 11,000 people to its newsletter database and social media following. Their engagement efforts resulted in nearly 100,000 virtual and in-person events such as “Sip & See” tours before its 2021 Grand Reopening, and Laughing on the Ave, a show that live streamed local- and nationally known comedians from the Walker Theatre.

Newfields: A Place for Nature & the Arts
Among the investments at Newfields were security cameras to monitor areas not regularly patrolled by staff during the Museum’s temporary closure in 2020. The cameras proved useful once the Museum reopened and security fluctuated because of infection or potential exposure to COVID-19. Newfields also purchased 125 mobile workstations to support staff who worked remotely.
PATTERN
PATTERN continues to provide safe, high-quality events that connect members of the Indianapolis art community—many of whom had fewer opportunities to perform or display their work during the pandemic. With investments that compensated artists and paid for new equipment and cleaning expenses, PATTERN hosted events like the Thematik Drag Shows and exhibitions where local photographers could show and sell their work.

Percussive Arts Society
The Percussive Arts Society held its first live-streamed Martin Luther King Jr. Day event, made possible by new AV equipment, technology upgrades and local musicians who were paid for their work. Also powered by technology investments was the organization’s signature event, Percussive Arts Society International Convention 2021 (PASIC), a hybrid convention that drew increased participation from international members, students and musicians who appreciated a cost-effective virtual option.

Philharmonic Orchestra of Indianapolis
Upgraded point-of-sale ticketing technology allowed the Philharmonic Orchestra of Indianapolis to take touchless credit card purchases. The new system resulted in higher online ticket sales for annual events like their annual Gospel Concert.
REACT (formerly Young Actors Theatre)
With an eye for safety in its youth theater programs, REACT moved into a new home at the historic Central State complex, rehearsed and performed outdoors and hired teaching artists to spread students across smaller classes. They also purchased three tents, one of which was large enough to protect actors and audiences during outdoor rehearsals and performances.

Storefront Theatre
After a 14-month hiatus during the pandemic, Storefront Theatre reopened with a donation-only model of ticketing aimed at improving access and equity. For safety reasons, the theater deliberately reduced seating, gained a new audience and made a safer performance space through investments in contactless point-of-sale registers and software, HVAC improvements and PPE.

Storytelling Arts of Indiana
Storytelling Arts introduced virtual Indy Story Slams in May of 2020. Livestreamed on Facebook and YouTube, the slams grew in size, drawing attendees from several states. Powered by subscriptions and technology, the organization intends to keep a hybrid format for popular events at the Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center.
**Summer Stock Stage**
Summer Stock Stage stayed operational in 2021 by renting performance, rehearsal, camp and meeting space, including studios at Dance Kaleidoscope and the Phoenix Theater’s outdoor stage, Park at the Phoenix. Those investments resulted in new audiences, drawn from downtown residents and people looking for outdoor activities.

**Watercolor Society of Indiana**
New equipment, technology and software helped the Watercolor Society of Indiana engage new and prospective members through events, exhibits, scholarships and programs. Popular content included artist interviews and a year in review video.

**WFYI Public Media**
WFYI shifted to a hybrid work model with new laptops for all staff members; upgrades to servers, network and disaster recovery system; and new equipment that allows meeting rooms to accommodate gatherings that combine remote and in-person attendance. The station now has a more mobile workforce, a secure, high-capacity network, and a meeting room set-up that supports WFYI staff and tenants, and anyone who chooses to hold a meeting or event in the building.