NORTHLIGHT THEATRE
INTENSELY ENTERTAINING

2015—2016
ANNUAL REPORT
MISSION

Northlight Theatre aspires to promote change of perspective and encourage compassion by exploring the depth of our humanity across a bold spectrum of theatrical experiences. We seek to entertain, enlighten, and electrify our audiences through contemporary dramas, intimate musicals and refreshed classics. We are fearless in our commitment to champion new work and to provide a nurturing and creative home for our artists. We are relentless in our pursuit of excellence through our productions, our business practices, our outreach, and our education. Northlight Theatre reflects our community to the world and the world to our community.

HISTORY

Northlight Theatre has mounted more than 200 productions, including nearly 40 world premieres throughout the past 41 years. It has grown into one of the largest nonprofit theatres in the Chicago area with more than 6,000 subscribers, serving audiences totaling more than 50,000 each year. Northlight is an award-winning theatre (nine Edgerton Foundation for New American Plays awards and 194 nominations and 34 awards from Chicago’s Joseph Jefferson Committee) with an excellent local and national reputation. With dynamic leadership from Artistic Director BJ Jones and Executive Director Tim Evans, Northlight’s $3 million operating budget supports five mainstage productions each season, workshops and readings of new works, outreach to our greater community, and a comprehensive arts education program.
"I recommend Northlight every chance I get!"
NORTHLIGHT PATRON
Last season saw Northlight reach beyond its boundaries as well as play within its strengths. Producing *Charm* in the city gave us an opportunity to be in conversation with an entirely new audience. And presenting new work with our friends George Wendt and Tim Kazurinsky by Northlight favorite Bruce Graham reinforced the reasons that our subscribers return season after season.

Our work continues to examine current concerns while refracting the present through the lens of the past. And our audience continues to join us on this journey fearlessly and enthusiastically. The best of theatre pushes our perceptions while reinforcing why we attend in the first place. It expands the definition of entertainment to include intellectual rigor, emotional depth, and a connection to our sense of humanity through compassion. Our audience wants those challenges, and we’ve led them through our new play initiative, Interplay.

This is an artistically gratifying time for Northlight. We are truly grateful for your continued support.

BJ Jones  
Artistic Director

“Northlight’s longevity speaks for itself; one of the best theatres in Chicagoland.”  
NORTHLIGHT PATRON
Northlight Theatre is a hub for innovation. With more than 200 theatres in the Chicago area, Northlight stands out because of its fearless commitment to consistently cultivate and produce new work. Not only is our work timely and provocative, it also encourages compassion and sparks conversation. The fact that we cater to over 6,000 subscribers, with audiences totaling over 50,000 each season, speaks volumes about the art produced on our stage.

We opened the season with the world premiere of *Funnyman* by Bruce Graham, starring George Wendt and Tim Kazurinsky. A second world premiere followed with *Charm* at the Steppenwolf Garage. *Charm* brought a touching story of LGBTQ youth to our audience and celebrated the bonds created across shared struggles and triumphs. Throughout the season, we continued to explore family in all its forms with the chaotic but lovable Sycamores in *You Can’t Take It With You* and the modern family paradigm in *Mothers and Sons*. We also explored a variety of truly fascinating historical figures: the infamous Civil War General Benjamin Butler in *Butler* and the brilliant Thomas Jefferson, Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens in *Discord*.

Northlight is more than a successful, world-renowned theatre. We are also a center for outstanding arts education, offering a multitude of learning opportunities for youth in the Chicago area. During the 2015–2016 season, we widened our reach and partnered with 40 schools located throughout Skokie, Evanston, and Chicago, serving more than 3,500 students. Northlight teaching artists approach all aspects of our education programming with a spirit of collaboration to encourage students’ artistic growth through self-expression and unbridled creativity.

Our continued growth and success would simply not be possible without the generosity and commitment of the entire Northlight Theatre family and we are incredibly grateful for this dedication. To our loyal audiences, thank you for trusting us and taking a journey with us season after season. We know you share our belief that theatre matters, and we look forward to providing intensely entertaining theatre for future generations.

Timothy J. Evans
Executive Director
EXPLORING THE DEPTH OF OUR HUMANITY

During the 2015–2016 season, Northlight analyzed the family in all its forms, through the dysfunctional family of *Funnyman*, the chaotic but lovable Sycamores in *You Can’t Take It With You* and the new family paradigm in *Mothers and Sons*. Our audiences thoroughly enjoyed exploring the similarities and differences highlighted in each of these unique works.

ENTERTAINING OUR AUDIENCES

Northlight audiences were able to explore some truly fascinating figures this season, including the infamous Civil War General Benjamin Butler in *Butler* and three brilliant minds in *The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson*, *Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord*. Northlight prides itself on the consistently surprising nature of our work, both thematically and stylistically, while always remaining dedicated to unwavering quality.

FEARLESS IN OUR COMMITMENT TO CHAMPION NEW WORK

The season featured two world premieres, *Funnyman* and *Charm*, demonstrating Northlight’s commitment to producing new work while aspiring to promote change of perspective and encourage compassion. *Funnyman*, which featured Tim Kazurinsky and George Wendt, explored the life of a fading vaudeville comic both on and off the stage. Northlight also challenged itself to produce *Charm* at the Steppenwolf Garage, inspired by the true story of Mama Gloria Allen and her etiquette class for LGBTQ youth.
LAUNCHING NEW INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT OUR MISSION
Northlight presented a variation on its benefit concert model, which launched in 2012 as an alternative to the traditional gala model. On October 6, 2015, Northlight patrons gathered for The Northlight Spectacular: A Vaudeville Extravaganza as we stepped back to the age of vaudeville for an evening of music, magic, burlesque, and ballyhoo.

RELENTLESS IN OUR PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE THROUGH EDUCATION AND OUTREACH
This season, Northlight expanded its reach to serve more than 3,500 students in 40 schools located in Skokie, Evanston, Chicago and the surrounding areas. Our innovative education programs offered a breadth of opportunities including a student matinee series, a theatre-focused on campus residency, and our newest addition, Speak Up!, a theatre for social change program which challenges students to use their voices to engage their peers and promote positive changes in their community.

COMMITMENT TO ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITY
Northlight’s mission and artistic selections are based on creating lively and engaging conversations with our audiences. Through a mixture of live programming, supplemental materials, and online resources, we strive to make the theatre-going experience extend beyond the final curtain. The world premiere of Charm allowed Northlight to make new connections throughout the LGBTQ community and to collaborate with several partnering organizations including the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago, About Face Theatre and OUT at Chicago History Museum.

REFLECTING OUR COMMUNITY TO THE WORLD
The world premiere of Philip Dawkins’s Charm was developed through Northlight’s Interplay Program for New Plays. Charm was inspired by the true story of Miss Gloria Allen and her volunteer work at Center on Halsted in Chicago. This powerful piece brought struggles of the LGBTQ community to the stage and ultimately asked the audience to reflect on what “having charm” means.
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Amanda Dunne Acevedo Director of Education
Mara Stern Education Associate/Camp Director

Northlight’s Education Department approaches all aspects of our education programming with a spirit of collaboration to encourage students’ artistic growth through self-expression and unbridled creativity.

15|16 SEASON: BY THE NUMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9 Student Matinees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40 Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 Teaching Artists/Apprentices/Interns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131 Classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching more than 3,500* students!</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Over a 40% increase from the 2013-14 school year!

Northlight on CAMPUS

This residency program focuses on theatre skills. Students explore the fundamentals of acting through a curriculum that emphasizes collaboration and play. Students adapt a familiar narrative into a new story that they perform for peers, administrators, family, and friends. This before, during, or after school program is custom-designed to meet each school’s needs.

SPEAK UP!

This theatre for social change residency asks students to address issues impacting their community. Speak Up! is a long-term active personal, artistic, and academic investigation that brings current events into the classroom and fosters social responsibility. Through the process of creating an original performance addressing topical issues, students use their voices to engage their peers in building positive change in their community.

SEASON & ARTIST ACCESS

Students attend matinees of mainstage productions at little cost, supplemented with in-school workshops, study guides, and post-show discussions. To enhance the student matinee experience, the (optional) 9:00am pre-show Artist Engagement workshop connects students directly to the professional artists involved in the production.
Master Class is designed to integrate core curriculum with advanced theatre arts topics. A Northlight Teaching Artist goes to the classroom for a more in-depth experience with advanced theatre topics such as stage combat, playwriting, musical theatre, improv or theatre design.

Performing ARTS CAMP

Our seven weeks of camp combine professional theatre training with timeless summer camp traditions and culminate in a public end-of-session showcase performed for family and friends.

“I enjoyed learning about collaboration because I found that working in a larger group comes with disagreements and compromise. This will be valuable later on.”

7th grader, Beaubien Elementary School

“Theater is when you have fun and work together to do something fun. After Ms. Catherine and Ms. Stephanie came, I learned that plays are fun and about working together.”

4th grader, Jamieson Elementary School

“I can make positive change in my community by getting more involved, helping and sharing what I know and have learned.”

9th grader, Chicago Math & Science Academy

15|16 PROGRAMS

SEASON ACCESS SCHOOLS
Alessandro Volta Elementary School° (CPS)
Carleton W. Washburne Middle School° (Winnetka)
Chicago Math and Science Academy (Chicago)
Daniel Boone Elementary School (CPS)
Ellen H. Richard’s Career Academy High School (CPS)
Evanston Township High School (Evanston)
Glenbard South High School (Glen Ellyn)
Glenbrook South High School (Glenview)
IC Catholic Prep (Elmhurst)
Jaqueline B. Vaughn Occupational High School* (CPS)
Jean Baptiste Beaubien Elementary School (Chicago)
Lake Forest Academy (Lake Forest)
Libertyville High School* (Libertyville)
Louisa May Alcott College Prep (CPS)
Loyola Academy* (Wilmette)
Minnie Mars Jamieson Elementary School (CPS)
Near North Montessori School (Chicago)
Nichols Middle School (Evanston)
Niles West High School (Skokie)
Proviso West High School (Hillside)
Stephen T. Mather High School (CPS)
Roycemore School (Evanston)
Walt Disney Magnet School (CPS)
Wolfgang A. Mozart Elementary School° (CPS)

NORTHLIGHT ON CAMPUS SCHOOLS
Carl Schurz High School - CPS Arts Day (CPS)
Dawes Elementary School (Evanston)
Fairview South School (Skokie)
Jean Baptiste Beaubien Elementary School° (CPS)
John Middleton Elementary School (Skokie)
Minnie Mars Jamieson Elementary School° (CPS)
Oliver McCracken Middle School (Skokie)
Orrington Elementary School (Evanston)
Thomas Edison Elementary School (Morton Grove)
Walker Elementary School (Evanston)
Washington D. Smyser Elementary School (CPS)
Washington Elementary School (Evanston)
William P. Gray Elementary School° (CPS)

SPEAK UP! SCHOOLS
Alessandro Volta
Elementary School° (CPS)
The Ancona School (Chicago)
Chicago Math and Science Academy (Chicago)
Evanston Township High School (Evanston)
Hiriam H. Belding Elementary School (CPS)
Jean Baptiste Beaubien Elementary School° (CPS)
Minnie Mars Jamieson Elementary School° (CPS)
Perspectives/IIT Math & Science Academy (Chicago)
Wolfgang A. Mozart Elementary School° (CPS)

MASTER CLASS SCHOOLS
Big Brothers Big Sisters (Evanston)
Adlai E. Stevenson High School (Lincolnshire)
Apollo Elementary School (Des Plaines)

° Received pre- and post-show workshops
° Added on Artist Engagement workshops
° Recipient of Creative Schools Fund Ingenuity & CPS Arts Grant
INTERPLAY PROGRAM FOR NEW PLAYS

Through Interplay, Northlight seeks to serve the specific needs of the play and can provide playwright commissions, workshops with actors, and private or public readings. The public reading series is an instrumental part of the Interplay program, providing audiences the opportunity to participate in a part of the evolutionary process from initial idea to full theatrical production, including first-hand insight from the playwright. Also through the reading series, the playwright has the opportunity to hear audience response that is integral to shaping the play for full production.

As of spring 2016, Interplay has provided support for 32 new plays, 27 of which have gone on to full productions – some at Northlight and others around the country, including the Goodman Theatre, the Humana Festival, TheatreWorks, and off-Broadway. Four plays have continued on to acclaim at Ireland’s famed Galway International Arts Festival.

That staggering success rate has established Interplay as a valuable incubator for new work in the American theatre, and combined with the nearly 40 world premieres produced by Northlight in our 41-year history, has helped cement Northlight’s national reputation as an important contributor to the American theatrical canon.

15|16 INTERPLAY READING

MISS BENNET: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY

by Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon

April 6, 2016

In this charmingly imagined sequel to Pride and Prejudice, the ever-dependable Mary Bennet is growing tired of her role as dutiful middle sister in the face of her siblings’ romantic escapades. When the family gathers for Christmas at Pemberley, an unexpected guest sparks Mary’s hopes for independence, an intellectual match, and possibly even love.

Playwright Lauren Gunderson is the winner of the Dramatists Guild of America’s 2016 Lanford Wilson Award. She is one of American Theatre Magazine’s Top Ten most produced playwrights for the 2015-16 season with 13 shows. Her partnership with Margot Melcon yielded a unique and inspired approach to Jane Austen’s best-known work.

Following the staged reading, the playwrights continued to make revisions to the play, prior to its inclusion in Northlight Theatre’s 2016-2017 season.
Northlight’s mission and artistic selections are based on creating lively and engaging conversations with our audiences. Through a mixture of live programming, supplemental materials, and the online resources that connect audiences to our staff, artists, and other audience members, we strive to make the theatre-going experience extend beyond the final curtain.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS:

- **Interplay Program for New Plays**
  - Northlight Theatre’s reading and play development series

- **Backstage with BJ**
  - Behind-the-scenes discussions with Artistic Director BJ Jones

- **Post-show Discussions**
  - Post-play conversations with the audience, led by Northlight artists with featured guests

- **Community Events**
  - Production-related events at local libraries and partnering community organizations

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS**

*BUTLER* by Richard Strand

Early in the Civil War, three escaped slaves arrive at a Union fort to seek sanctuary from Major General Butler. Despite the conflict between the states, law requires that the slaves be returned to their rightful owner. Seeking a solution that satisfies both ethics and duty, *Butler* embarks on a battle of words and wits, calling into question what is legal versus what is right in a captivating story based on actual events.

Thematically, this play used history to illuminate some of the same issues discussed about race in America today. Northlight co-hosted events with a variety of community organizations including the Chicago History Museum, Curt’s Café (featuring the Evanston Police Department), and the Skokie Public Library. Post show discussions included featured guests from the James B. Moran Center for Youth Advocacy, Evanston Township High School, and Quarles & Brady law firm. At these events, members of the public not only learned about the historic context of the play, but engaged with the play’s central question of what is legal versus what is right. The audience discussed some of the ways racial tensions and prejudices transpire in our country today and how we as a community can work together to address these issues.
**NEW WORK DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHT:**

**CHARM** by Philip Dawkins

*Charm* depicts the colorful inner workings of an etiquette class taught by Mama Darleena Andrews, an African-American transgender woman, in an LGBTQ organization known as The Center. Despite her students’ daily battles with identity, poverty and prejudice, Mama’s powerful love and unapologetic attitude ultimately help her pupils find a new way to respect each other and to redefine what “having charm” means.

The world premiere of Philip Dawkins’s *Charm* was celebrated as the Best of Chicago 2015 in the following publications: *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Chicago Magazine*, *Time Out Chicago*, *Windy City Times*, and *Chicago Theatre Beat*. It was also nominated for seven *Time Out Chicago* Theatre Awards.

Developed through Northlight’s Interplay Series, *Charm* was inspired by the true story of Miss Gloria Allen and her work at the Center on Halsted in Chicago. Because of the play’s connection to the Center on Halsted, Northlight committed to hosting members of the LGBTQ community at each post-show discussion. The production was presented at Steppenwolf’s Garage Theatre in order to connect with the neighborhood in which the play is set. *Charm* quickly became one of the most talked about shows of the season and vastly exceeded its ticket sales goal with many sold-out performances.

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**WINNER OF 2016 JOSEPH JEFFERSON AWARDS FOR:**

Best New Work

Dexter Zollicoffer, Best Actor in a Principal Role
FINANCIAL REPORT: FISCAL YEAR 2016

TOTAL INCOME: $3,116,115

- Earned Income: $2,091,444
- Contributed Income: $1,024,671

CONTRIBUTED INCOME: $1,024,671

- Foundation Grants: $305,765
- Board Giving: $233,316
- Individual Gifts (Non-Board): $244,907
- Corporate Grants & Sponsorships: $81,500
- Special Projects: 6,115
- Artistic: 690

EXPENSES: $3,421,742

- Administrative Expenses: $785,826
- Fundraising Expenses: $190,605
- Program Expenses: $2,445,311

In Whole Numbers

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<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board Giving</td>
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<td>24%</td>
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Contributed Income 32%

Earned Income 68%

Total Income: $3,116,115

Total Expenses: $3,421,742

Net Profit / (Loss) (305,627)
Northlight Theatre is deeply grateful to the following corporate, foundation, and government contributors for their generous support during the 2015 – 2016 season.

**SEASON SPONSORS**

- BMO Harris Bank
- ComEd

**INSTITUTIONAL DONORS**

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- The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation
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- Tom Stringer Design Partners
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- Venturous Theater Fund of the Tides Foundation
Jeff Parker, Mark Montgomery and Nathan Hosner,
The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord

“Northlight Theatre is edgy, topical and thought provoking.”
NORTHLIGHT PATRON

NORTHLIGHT THEATRE
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