



## **Annual Report**

Prepared for Fractured Atlas

Fiscal Sponsor of

## **Voices Festival Productions**



**2022 Producing Season**

I.

## WHO WE ARE

### **Voices Festival Productions**

Our tagline: Bringing the souls and struggles of people living alongside each other, and an echo chamber apart, to light.

**Voices Festival Productions** is an independent production company based in Washington DC that develops, presents, and produces plays (and the occasional musical) that stimulate debate and discourse, introspection and awareness, informed by revelation of our underlying humanity in all its color and complexity.

Our works find resonance between those living with conflict in the Middle East and closer to home, in our nation's capital, along the seams of our nation and its very real and perceived divides. We celebrate diverse, inter-cultural voices and encounters through inter-connected performance of both provocative and introspective new works for the stage, in dialogue with our moment.

II.

## THE NUMBERS

How many people paid to experience VFP's work this year?	1,010
How many people experienced VFP programs for free?	1,300
How many artists did VFP employ?	45
Estimated percentage of total project spending that fell into each category:	
Management and general:	13%
Programs and services:	85%
Fundraising:	2%
Roughly what percentage of VFP expenses went directly towards paying artists?	55%

## THE BUDGET

### REVENUE:

<b>Admissions and ticket sales</b>	\$15,014
Individual contributions	\$124,215
Grants and corporate contributions	\$154,191
Personal Loans from Leadership	\$50,100
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$343,520</b>

### EXPENSES:

<b>Contractors</b>	
Contract labor: artists	\$178,003
Contract labor: accounting	\$1,082
Contract labor: legal	\$5,600
Contract labor: professional services	\$1,200
Employee benefits:	\$2,335
<b>Production and Presentation</b>	
Production and exhibition	\$12,455
Recording and broadcasting	\$9,000

Research	\$5,267
Royalties, rights, and reproductions	\$5,650
Security	\$2,805
<b>Marketing</b>	
Public relations firm (Bluelight Strategies)	\$15,000
Advertising and marketing	\$8,359
<b>Occupancy and Overhead</b>	
Space rentals	\$54,185
Printing	\$2,110
Shipping, Postage & Office Supplies	\$514
Utilities	\$2,930
<b>Professional development</b>	
Professional development and course fees	\$1,169
Dues and subscriptions	\$468
Website hosting	\$228
<b>Travel</b>	
Out-of-town housing, lodging, and food	\$25,368
Transportation	\$7,045
Conference, meeting, and festival registrations	\$794
<b>Banking and Financial</b>	
USCIS Filing fees	\$2,950
Insurance	\$2,966
Bank fees	\$372
Repayment of Loan to Leadership	\$30,000
Owed to Leadership for Repayment	<b>\$20,100</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$363,132</b>
<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>\$343,520</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$363,132</b>
<b>Differential</b>	<b>-\$19,612</b>

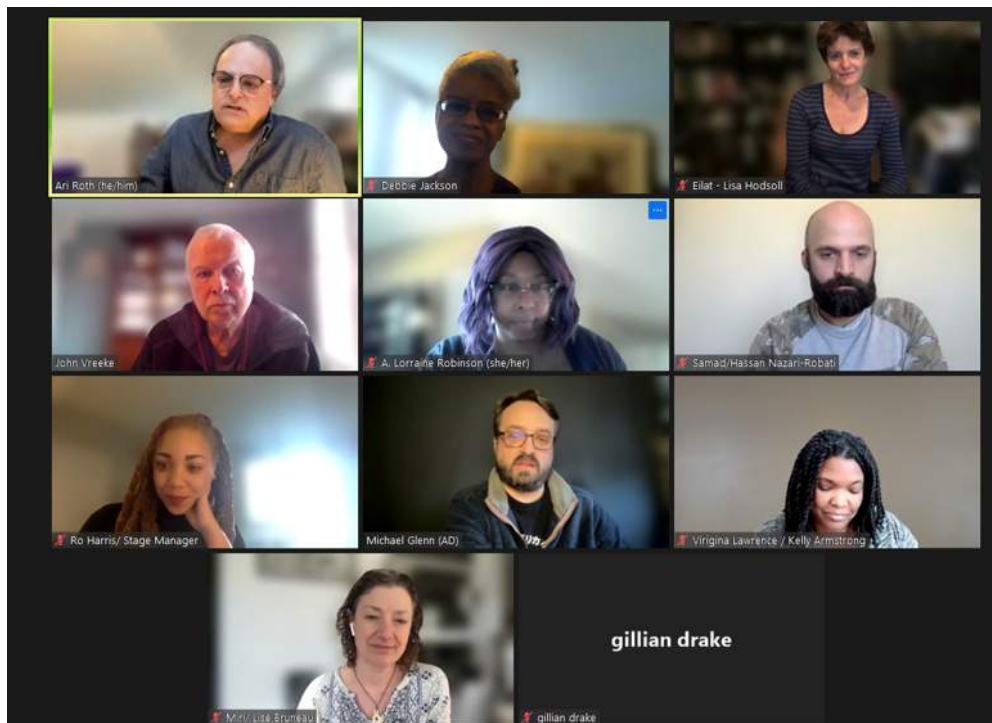
### III.

## THE PROGRAMMING

### Activities of 2022

In its first full year of producing, Voices Festival Productions enjoyed both robust new play development and presentation, along with successfully producing three fully staged American premieres. Starting up as a new theatrical production company while still in the midst of COVID, with an industry experiencing enormous turmoil, VFP navigated enormous challenges, as so many companies in so many cultural sectors did. But our small, experienced team – nimble, tenacious, and eager to create anew – forged multiple achievements of impact with programming of depth and range.

In February of 2022, we convened a 29-hour virtual workshop of **“My Brief But Calamitous Affair With The Minister of Culture...”** written by VFP Founding Producing Partner, Ari Roth, directed by John Vreeke, involving 5 Equity actors, 3 dramaturgs, and a stage manager. The workshop culminated with a Zoom reading attended by an audience of over 100, followed by a 75-minute talkback.



*(A rehearsal of My Calamitous Affair in February, 2022 with playwright Ari Roth, dramaturg Debbie M. Jackson, actors Lisa Hodsohl, Hassan Nazai-Robati, Michael Glenn, Kelly Renee Armstrong, Lise Bruneau, director John Vreeke, and stage manager Ronika Harris. )*

Six weeks later, in April, the play received its first in-person reading at Philadelphia’s InterAct Theatre, with a Philadelphia-based cast, presenting on the set of the Israel-Palestine-themed play, “Settlements.”



*(A reading of My Calamitous Affair at Philadelphia’s InterAct Theatre, April 10, 2022 with Sabrina Profitt, Rohaan Unvala, Kim Fairbanks, David Ingram, and Najla Said.)*

**In May**, VFP returned to the Arts Club of Washington to present **“Ukrainian Playwrights Under Siege: Readings of New One Acts From The War”** part of the Worldwide Readings Project to Benefit the Ukrainian People. Two different zoom broadcasts allowed for an open dress rehearsal during the day, attended by international audience members, with 75 more that evening, as we read **“A Dictionary of Emotions in War Time”** by Yelena Astasyeva; **“Our Children”** by Natasha Blok; and **“Peace & Tranquility”** by Andriy Bondarenko. The event was directed by VFP Artistic Producing Partner, A. Lorraine Robinson, and featured Ukrainian-American respondents and scholars as part of a post-presentation discussion.







(Ukrainian plays, Featuring Hanna Bondarewska, Aakhu Freeman and Lisa Hodsoll)

In July, VFP produced its first in-person production, **“The Gate,”** written and performed by British-Israeli, Robbie Gringras. It played for a week at Capital Fringe Festival, Part I of VFP’s own festival, “Voices From a Changing Middle East: Losing/Finding Home.” 180 patrons attended four performances and VFP created its first batch of hard-copy marketing materials and paid its first production design fees and purchased its first show computer. We were finally a full-fledged producing organization! “The Gate” received excellent reviews from *The Washington City Paper* (“...poses no simple solutions but humanizes three people from different worlds who may never understand one another”), *Broadway World* (“a thoughtful, engaging play”) and *DC Theatre Arts* (“captures Arab–Israeli tensions with compassion and a touch of humor”).





*(In an innovation for Capital Fringe Festival, every performance of *The Gate* included a 25 minute talk-back with performer Robbie Gringras and the audience, moderated by different VFP staff. Above, Robbie joins A. Lorraine Robinson, Kate Foster and *Via Dolorosa* performer David Bryan Jackson.)*

Summer also saw VFP conduct Equity Principal Auditions during which we collected 120 virtual audition recordings. A cast was chosen, after invited and call-back auditions, and a 5 week in-person rehearsal process for **“My Calamitous Affair”** commenced, preceded by a workshop week to continue honing the text. From late August through mid-September, VFP rehearsed at the Universalist National Memorial Church where Spooky Action Theatre is in residence.



*(Hassan Nazari Robati, Lisa Hodsoll, Anat Cogan, and Karl Kippola in rehearsal.)*



On September 19, 2022, VFP moved to The Corner at Whitman-Walker to begin an 8-week residency, presenting four projects, all to be supported by a full design team. We installed temporary risers at the store-front venue with 60 chairs, with an adjoining lobby area to greet audiences and host post-performance receptions and events.



“My Calamitous Affair” ran for 17 performances, from October 1-23, and was attended by 700 patrons. The play was reviewed by *The Washington Post* (“Important themes, humor and dynamic performances ...depicts a seismic clash between theater people who feel passionately about their artistic and political values”), *DCTA* (“Fierce... Blistering... Scaldingly Self-Inquisitional; a public forum for putting one’s own conscience on trial... an ambitious moral reckoning, vivid and edifying”), and *Broadway World* (“charismatically entrancing... tensions boil”).



**MY CALAMITOUS AFFAIR WITH THE MINISTER OF  
CULTURE AND SENSORSHIP OR  
DEATH OF THE DIALOGIC IN THE AMERICAN THEATER**

**"Fierce... Blistering... Scaldingly Self-Inquisitional"**

- John Stoltenberg, DC Theatre Arts



**NOW PLAYING  
THROUGH OCTOBER 23**



*(An ad for My Calamitous Affair: Karl Kippola, Anat Cogan, and Ilasiea Gray.  
Among the post-show discussants: Jana El-Hassan, Scott Lasensky, Iman Ayyad,  
Jonathan Kessler, Nizar Farsahk, and Debbie Minter Jackson.)*



**“Home? Or a Palestinian Woman’s Pursuit of Life, Liberty & Happiness”** enjoyed a 3 week rehearsal process, written and performed by Hend Ayoub and directed by Carey Perloff (following a short development workshop in San Francisco, co-produced by Golden Thread, SF Playhouse, Z Space, and involving VFP). In DC, “Home?” ran for 3 weeks in a 12-performance workshop production from October 30 through November 13. It played to 600 patrons and enlisted many Arab and Palestinian Americans, engaging them in powerful nightly talk-backs with the performer and Assistant Director.



“Home?” was reviewed by *The Washington Post* by Chief Critic Peter Marks (“Hend Ayoub projects a radiant presence. But this is not an ideological tract by any stretch. Effortlessly shifting from English to Hebrew to Arabic and back again, Ayoub offers herself as a living example of how letting the global air in helps us all to breathe more healthfully) and DCTA (“a remarkable ability to perform a staggering variety of characters”) and *Broadway World* (“Although still offered as a workshop performance, 'Home?' seemed to have a solid and satisfying dramatic shape already!”)

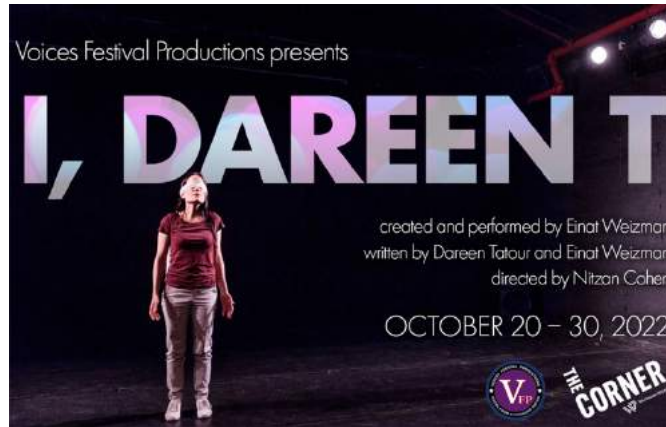




*(Post-Performance discussions with the audience and performer Hend Ayoub were facilitated by dramaturg Salma S. Zohdi and assistant director Sam Sherman.)*

Like, “My Calamitous Affair,” “Home?” was video recorded for both marketing/trailer and archival purposes. “AFFAIR” additionally streamed for two weeks in December, attracting 200 viewings along with a Live Zoom screening and talkback involving 60.





For one weekend in December, VFP also screened Israeli author/actress Einat Weizman’s **“I, Dareen T,”** a solo performance based on the life and multi-year incarceration of Palestinian poet Dareen Tatour. The weekend partially redeemed our frustration at the bureaucracy that led to Weizman being unable to secure a P-3 visa to perform as a Guest Member of Actors Equity Association, despite VFP spending \$5,000 on immigration attorney fees and \$2900 for Premium Processing with USCIS. Requests for “More Evidence of the artist’s ‘Cultural Uniqueness’” delayed the processing extensively, and the performer was unable to schedule an appointment with the American Embassy in Tel Aviv in time to secure her belatedly-approved visa.

Rebounding from the cancelation of an 8 performance run, 120 patrons were able to view the production on video and 27 attended a screening followed by a conversation with Weizman and the poet Dareen Tatour who, just that week, returned home from her two-year exile in Sweden.





In addition to Middle East Festival programming, VFP was able inaugurate a new series, “Voices From a Changing Nation,” with a 2 night reading of Rachel Lynett’s award winning play, **“Apologies to Lorraine Hansberry (You Too, August Wilson)”**, directed by VFP Artistic Producing Partner, A. Lorraine Robinson, attended by 85 patrons followed by two stirring panel discussions. The cast of 5 was well supported by design contributions and its own playbill to compliment the 24 page Middle East Festival program. The reading was advertised in *The Washington Post*, as were “Affair” and “Home?” and promoted by postcards, two major street banners, and online promotion.



*(Actors, from left to right, in the workshop of Apologies to Lorraine Hansberry...  
Nessa Amherst, Fatima Quander, Charles Franklin IV, and Erica Dilworth.)*



## **Audience (People that experienced the work)**

Hybrid programming of virtual and in-person events – for both free readings and ticketed/paid performances – allowed for a diverse array of audience members to engage with VFP work this year. In total, we presented 44 discreet performance event/offerings attended by 2,300 patrons (1,600 in-person, 700 virtually).

We attracted virtual attendees from the European Union (for our Ukrainian play readings) and a handful from Israel/Palestine (for our Middle East Festival Zoom events), while in-person, we brought a large number of Arab-American (particularly of Palestinian origin) audiences for our production of Hend Ayoub's HOME?

Our 2-night workshop of “Apologies To Lorraine Hansberry...” brought in a majority Black audience, and our 3-week run of “My Calamitous Affair...” saw a healthy, inter-generational cross-section of audience from DC, MD and VA. Similarly, our Capital Fringe Fest production of “The Gate” brought an eclectic mix of Fringe goers attending for \$15 a ticket.



#### IV.

## 2023

### What's Happening & What's Ahead

In March, 2023, VFP partnered with The Bridge Initiative of Phoenix, AZ and the Arizona Actors Academy in a 29-hour workshop of a new draft of **"A Calamitous Affair"** which culminated in a March 26 public reading. As with Hend Ayoub's **"Home?"**, VFP is actively searching for new homes for these newly-refined works for upcoming seasons.



In late April 2023, we return to the Arts Club of Washington for a 29-hour workshop of Priyanka Shetty's **"#Charlottesville,"** directed by A. Lorraine Robinson. The play is a powerful work about the 2017 Unite The Right rally-turned-riot in Charlottesville, that took place between August 11-12, 2017, in Charlottesville, Virginia.



**“#Charlottesville”** is constructed verbatim from interviews with local residents impacted by the events and highlights their real-life experiences as they dealt with the crisis and continue to find ways to move forward as individuals and as a community. The play explores deep-seated racial inequities that have existed historically in Charlottesville and how it escalated to one of the most terrible manifestations of racial and anti-Semitic violence in America. The play, which has been previously staged, is being expanded to include testimony from the 2021 trial of the neo-fascist conspirators.

In July, VFP returns to the Capital Fringe Festival to present four performances of **“#Charlottesville”** (from July 13-16), and if ready, we will present the play for a longer run in the fall, with other **“Voices From a Changing Nation”** programming currently in development.



From May 22-24, we extend our partnership with the Arts Club of Washington to present a new evening of **More Ukrainian One-Acts From The War**, in support of the Ukrainian War Relief Fund. This year the one acts will be presented in person following 3 days of rehearsal. The five works we will present on May 24 at 7 pm are: **“In the Bowels of the Earth”** by Olena Hapieieva, directed by A. Lorraine Robinson; **“Survivor’s Syndrome”** by Andrii Bondarenko, directed by Zoya Kachadurian; **“Planting an Apple Tree”** by Iryna Harets, directed by Vanessa Gilbert; **“A Topol-M Rocket Fired at a Cat Named Brooch”** by Lena Lagushonkova, directed by Vanessa Gilbert and **“TDP (Temporarily Displaced Persons)”** by Kateryna Penkova, directed by Sam Sherman.



**In Development**

## The Care Project (a.k.a. *Who Cares*)



**The Care Project** (a.k.a. *Who Cares*) is a theatrical docudrama investigation into lives touched by the experience of Caregiving (with a focus on givers of care to people living with Dementia) which may include both Care-ers and Care recipients, as well as the communities of care providers surrounding them. What may ultimately be revealed is how we are all inevitably impacted by our relationship to Care ... and that we are inextricably linked as we may switch from one role to another (from giver to receiver), without notice or warning. There's an invisibility to caregiving (which is wrapped up in mis-notions about the issues of care) until we find ourselves in that most vulnerable of situations of needing to Care or be Cared for; God, help us all.

Nothing unites – or divides – a family more than the demands of caring for someone who once cared for us. What compels the generosity of a caregiver? What makes it difficult to give? Increasingly, the arena of care is where we all will find ourselves, giving and receiving; avoiding and denying; embracing and finding grace in the intricate journey as life approaches death, and renewal intertwines with decline.

Note: The Care Project name serves as an umbrella title for a series of "Who Cares" pieces developed by VFP that explore issues related to Care. Conceived initially as part of our "Voices from A Changing Nation's Capital" series, stories will largely focus on interviewees from the DMV region.



## Meshaun Labrone's Spokane Trilogy



In 2016, Actor-Writer-Revolutionary-Metropolitan Police Department officer Meshaun Labrone brought *Power!* to Fringe. That drama about Stokely Carmichael was called by *DCTA's* John Stoltenberg "one of the best-written, best-acted, and best-directed solo theater pieces I have ever seen." In 2018, Labrone premiered *Spook*, a play about a Black cop, that Stoltenberg raved was "an indelible drama of morals that will blow you away."

One hour before his execution, ex-police officer turned active shooter, Daryl "Spook" Spokane gives a live televised interview from death row. Convicted of murdering five of his fellow officers during the Morning Roll Call massacre, Spokane will reveal why he committed such a heinous act.

"Meshaun Labrone's *Spook* is emotionally scalding, politically scathing, and ethically scorching. It is one of the most significant revolutionary acts of theater ever to come out of Fringe."

The Trilogy involves a full staging of Lebrone's play, and both a prequel leading up to the shooting, and a sequel about its consequences for the family and the police force he leaves behind.

... Coming in Fall / Winter2023 ...