



IN THE HEART OF THE BEAST PUPPET AND MASK THEATRE

COMMUNITY UPDATE

IN THE HEART OF
THE BEAST THEATRE

Prepared by the HOB T External Affairs Committee

The HOBТ Board of Directors offers this summary update to inform our community about the work we have been doing, the work that still lies ahead, and the plan to get us there.

There are four sections to this report:

- 1) Looking back to 2019
- 2) All About MayDay
- 3) All About the Organization and the Avalon Cohort
- 4) All About Building a Collaborative Budget

Please note: the sections can be read separately or together.

If read together there is some overlapping information that is repeated in the various sections.

We committed in January 2019 to truly self-examine, to pause, to step back, and commit to taking a different path. The path is shaped by our core values of equity, accountability, and transparency.

This report represents one part of that commitment.

To view this report in video form (with either English or Spanish subtitles) please visit our website at: hobt.org/about/2021-community-update

Para ver este informe en video (con subtítulos en inglés o español), visite nuestro sitio web: hobt.org/about/2021-community-update

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Acknowledgements

The Community Update was created by the Board of Directors External Affairs Committee.

Thank you to the long-time artists, staff, and community of HOBt for **understanding the need for transformation**. Thank you for **the work you have already accomplished**. **We grow from these strong roots**.

Thank you to the original Indigenous people of this land, where we live: Dakota, Lakota, and Annishinaabe. Thank you **to all authentically working to address past and present patterns of colonization, demanding reparations and justice**.

Thank you to Lisa Marie Brimmer and Claire Curran for **their co-leadership, clarity, brilliance, and courage**.

Thank you to the staff of HOBt, for **your gracious patience and perseverance during this period of furlough and pandemic**.

Thank you members of the MayDay Council for **your brave and honest work; and for sharing your discoveries with us in the form of guiding values and affirmations**. Thank you Free Black Dirt for **your inspired facilitation of this process**.

Thank you to our BIPOC community for **your emotional labor, truth-telling, and visioning-work in transforming this organization to its full potential**.

Thank you to outgoing Board Members Alex Haeker and Karen Brown for **all your years of service**. Special thanks to Karen for **capturing the last couple of years in writing, which formed the basis of this report**.

Special Thanks to Alex for **your continued stewardship of the Avalon Theater building**.

Thank you to all who **love MayDay and the Theater**, for your patience and support during this transformation.



Photo courtesy of Caitlin Abrams / Mpls.St.Paul Magazine

In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre (HOBt), originally called Powderhorn Puppet Theatre, was formed in 1973 with deep roots in a beloved community. In 2020, the global pandemic deeply affected all community arts organizations including HOBt. The social uprising for justice came to our doorstep, finding us ready with open arms. The goals of social and racial justice have long roots in the artwork and programs at HOBt. And, while we demanded change in the outer culture, there remained problematic patterns within the organization. With a shift in focus starting in 2015, HOBt has steadily deepened our resolve to be fully accountable to patterns of inequity and inaccessibility in our organizational structures and practices. From this place of greater integrity, we will continue to uproot white supremacy from our culture at the core.

As the impacts of COVID-19 and the murder of George Floyd prompt many organizations to focus on social justice and racial equity, HOBt is at the leading edge of this work. Our Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion work connects closely and inextricably with the work of the MayDay Council (MDC). The MDC is a group of community-selected leaders who agreed to play a guiding role in reimagining the MayDay celebration as an inclusive, equitable, decentralized, and sustainable event. This work will guide and inspire the shape of things to come. HOBt Board of Directors is also interested in putting our organizational resources where we can have the biggest impact. The pandemic has worsened issues of long-term survival for mid-size arts organizations such as HOBt. Within this precarious context, HOBt recognizes the opportunities for greater resilience by sharing the Avalon Theatre and the MayDay Celebration; to be collectively held by a broader community. This, together with the shifts in organizational practice and structure described below, brings us to a moment of possibility for the future.

LOOKING BACK TO 2019

In order to ground us in the work that HOB T is doing in 2021, it's important to note the moment that drastically shifted the way HOB T operates. In January 2019, HOB T announced that the 45th MayDay in 2019 was the last one we could do alone.

Following this announcement, we embarked on a reimagining process by engaging Imagine Deliver and Juxtaposition Arts to help us gather perspectives and ideas for the direction of the theater from our community, artists and staff. From this process several key insights emerged:

- *HOB T's space is a home for artists who do not have physical space.*
- *South Minneapolis needs a centralized home for Artists of Color.*
- *HOB T needs to better utilize a model of shared power.*
- *HOB T needs to break historical cycles that have not allowed for new creative voices.*
- *MayDay will only be successful if it embraces collaboration, justice, and abundance.*

These key insights have guided our work to where we are now and will continue to guide our work as we move forward into the next phase of HOB T. In this pandemic time, when so many arts organizations and spaces are at risk, the HOB T Board of Directors recognizes the community assets we hold in the Avalon Theatre and the MayDay Celebration. We are committed to responsibly and collaboratively sharing those resources with the community.



WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR?

REIMAGINING MAYDAY

In 2019 HOBT began the process of engaging community leaders and artists to lead the thought process of imagining a new, community-built MayDay celebration centering on equity, sustainability, and decentralization.

- The MayDay Council (MDC) was selected in Fall, 2019 through a community nomination and interview process, and began their work in January 2020. Facilitated by Free Black Dirt, the MDC process was authentically born from HOBT's Beloved Community. They examined past patterns of the MayDay celebration. With this deeper understanding, they made suggestions for healing relationships with those personally impacted by past harms in the MayDay process; and specific recommendations for MayDay moving forward.
- In early Fall 2020, the MDC produced a document titled *Values and Affirmations*. The principles outlined in this document guide HOBT board and staff strategies and decision making.
- HOBT launched the *Rooted in Resource* online map, intended to complement the Council's work.
- HOBT shifted to a MayDay-centered business model. As we have adopted this new model, staff screen all programming by asking "How do we celebrate MayDay year-round?"



WHERE ARE WE NOW? & WHAT WORK REMAINS TO BE DONE?



The current status of staff and MayDay

HOBt staff have been on furlough since October 2020 due to budgetary constraints worsened by the unexpected loss of a significant funding source. Currently, the board is working with Interim Executive Leadership to strategically and sustainably bring back our staff capacity and imagine what a 2021 decentralized MayDay could look like.

Reimagining MayDay

- HOBt board and staff will continue to foster relationships and develop work practices that are both inviting and sustainable for BIPOC artists.
- HOBt will support further work of the MayDay Council to launch hands-on work toward the new equitable, sustainable, and decentralized MayDay celebration.
- Reparations will be offered to a specific group of BIPOC MayDay Artists for their under-compensated emotional, creative, and physical labor (2016 to 2018)*. This is a direct response to the research and recommendations from MayDay Council and HOBt staff.
 - *This originally said 2016 to 2020 but was updated on Feb 22, 2021, to represent the correct dates.



What has been accomplished so far?

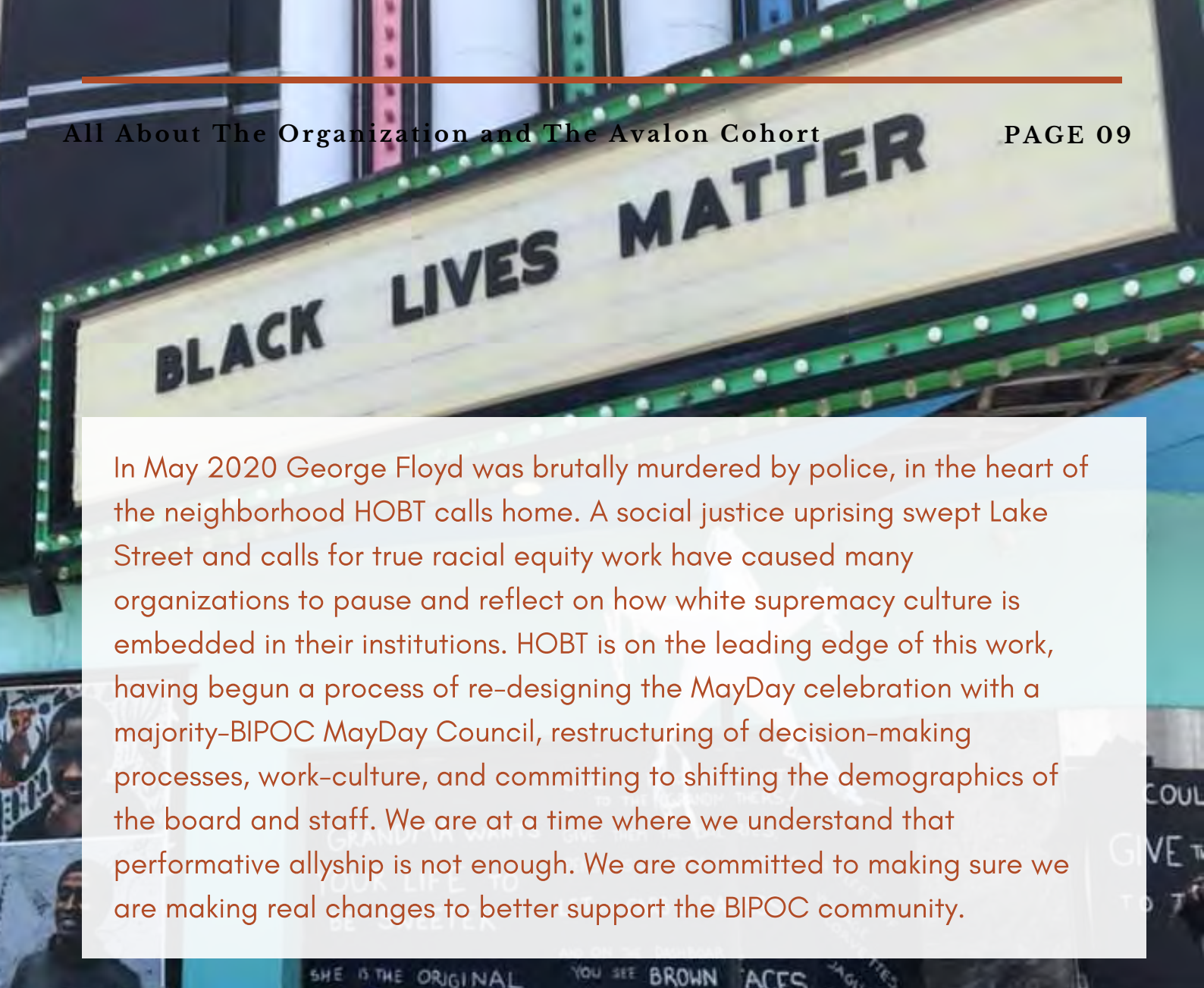
CREATING NEW ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND PRACTICES

- Following a year-long process, MayDay Council (MDC) created a list of Values and Affirmations that is now a guiding document used by HOBT staff and board to inform all strategies and decision making.
- The HOBT Board of Directors, taking a cue from the MayDay Council, is working toward a more inclusive and accessible board culture. Some steps towards this include shifting to consensus-based decision making and BIPOC Co-Chair Leadership.
- HOBT Board of Directors committed to a goal of 50% BIPOC board membership.
- With the MayDay Council triangulating the structure of HOBT (council, board, staff) the board is shifting towards horizontal power structures across the organization. The board revised the board bylaws to allow for a new power-sharing structure and voted on new board leadership in January 2021. The board has now transitioned to a Co-Chair model, including a Vice-Chair role supporting the two Co-Chairs, instead of a sole Board Chair.

MAYDAY-CENTERED BUSINESS MODEL

- In 2020, HOBT shifted to a MayDay-centered business model. By leaning into a decentralized and equity-focused MayDay, the staff adopted a new approach to screen all programming, asking “How do we celebrate MayDay year-round?”
- We began to build and support new leadership models through a partnership with Free Black Dirt in the MayDay Council collaboration and a co-Executive Director model. In Spring 2021, we will launch a search for co-Executive Directors, continuing our momentum towards horizontal, collaborative leadership.
- HOBT launched the *Rooted in Resource* online map. This is an online community map highlighting local businesses, community organizations, and artists in the Powderhorn and Philips neighborhoods. This work is intended to complement the MayDay Council’s work.





BLACK LIVES MATTER

In May 2020 George Floyd was brutally murdered by police, in the heart of the neighborhood HOBt calls home. A social justice uprising swept Lake Street and calls for true racial equity work have caused many organizations to pause and reflect on how white supremacy culture is embedded in their institutions. HOBt is on the leading edge of this work, having begun a process of re-designing the MayDay celebration with a majority-BIPOC MayDay Council, restructuring of decision-making processes, work-culture, and committing to shifting the demographics of the board and staff. We are at a time where we understand that performative allyship is not enough. We are committed to making sure we are making real changes to better support the BIPOC community.

Where are we now?

ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS AND STAFFING NEEDS

HOBt staff have been on furlough since October 2020. This was due to budgetary constraints worsened by the unexpected loss of a significant funding source. While reducing operations significantly, the remaining workload has been taken up by the Board of Directors. Together with a development team and Interim Executive Director, the board has been working to raise the funds to support staff restarting and the hiring of new Co-Executive Leadership. We will then be ready for the next steps towards transforming MayDay and the transferring of management of the Avalon Theatre as a collective resource and cultural space on the Lake Street Corridor.

IMAGINING & LAUNCHING THE AVALON THEATRE COHORT

The HOBt board has begun engaging the community around a vision of the Avalon Theatre as a community-held space for BIPOC and queer artists and interdisciplinary art forms. The HOBt Board of Directors seeks to share the Avalon Theatre as a cooperative physical space and is in a process of seeking out partnering arts organizations and artists for an Avalon Theatre Cohort.

Community art spaces are disappearing all over the Twin Cities, particularly art spaces that have been home to BIPOC artists, queer artists, and non-mainstream art forms. The current global pandemic has increased pressure on the arts sector, especially small and mid-sized arts organizations. We envision an Avalon Theatre Cohort, collectively and collaboratively, holding the physical space of the theatre on Lake Street as a shared community resource.

Ideally, we envision HOBt and the MayDay Council as stakeholders in a group of many community stakeholders acting as decision-making partners to carry the building forward as a community artspace.

The members of the cohort become the think tank for the Avalon Theatre, bringing together a group committed to seeing it meet community needs on Lake Street with our neighbors and in the greater arts community. The Cohort would commit dialogue and action toward transforming the physical space of the Avalon, filling the Avalon with programming, and reimagining the business model into sustainability.

A Call to Support this Transformation

FUNDRAISING GOALS

The board has set a series of fundraising milestones in order to strengthen organizational capacity, continue MayDay transformation-work, and turn the Avalon Cohort vision into a reality.

First Milestone - Capacity Building: Raise \$70,000 by early 2021 to bring back furloughed staff, and increase staff capacity focused on development capacity.

Second Milestone - Organizational Readiness: Raise an additional \$120,000 by mid 2021 to hire a new executive leadership team that will carry forward the vision of both the May Day Council and the convening of the Avalon Cohort. This will be under our new model of shared leadership co-creating the Executive Director role.

Third Milestone - Cohort Convening: Raising an additional \$110,000, \$40,000 to launch and facilitate the Avalon Cohort and \$70,000 for all costs associated with the building for a full 12 months while the Cohort initiates its process.

TOTAL:

\$300,000

END OF SUMMER
2021

\$110,000

MID 2021

\$120,000

EARLY 2021

\$70,000

These first three milestones represent the fundraising threshold that HOBT holds as an immediate goal, raising these funds by the end of Summer 2021. Once these first three phases are achieved, the Avalon Cohort will be convened, shifting the Avalon Theater building into a cooperatively-held future and underpinning HOBT's sustainability.

Overview of HOBT income sources

HOBT's income is sourced from three primary streams:

- Grants (government and private foundations)
- Individual giving (donations)
- Earned income (e.g. ticket sales, merchandise, etc.)

We aim to have our revenue sources split relatively evenly, in which we do not place too much reliance on any one source of income. Some of our revenue funds are restricted and fund specific programming, while other revenue is unrestricted and eligible for funding HOBT general operations.

- While some programs generate revenue (e.g. ticket sales, restricted grants), we also support our programs by using our general operations income. For example, in the Fiscal Year period 2015-2018*, the MayDay Celebration portion of the budget resulted in deficits ranging from \$52,000 to \$104,000 which we supported through our General Operations funds.
- While our income sources are well balanced, we have had several years in which we lost significant external funding sources.

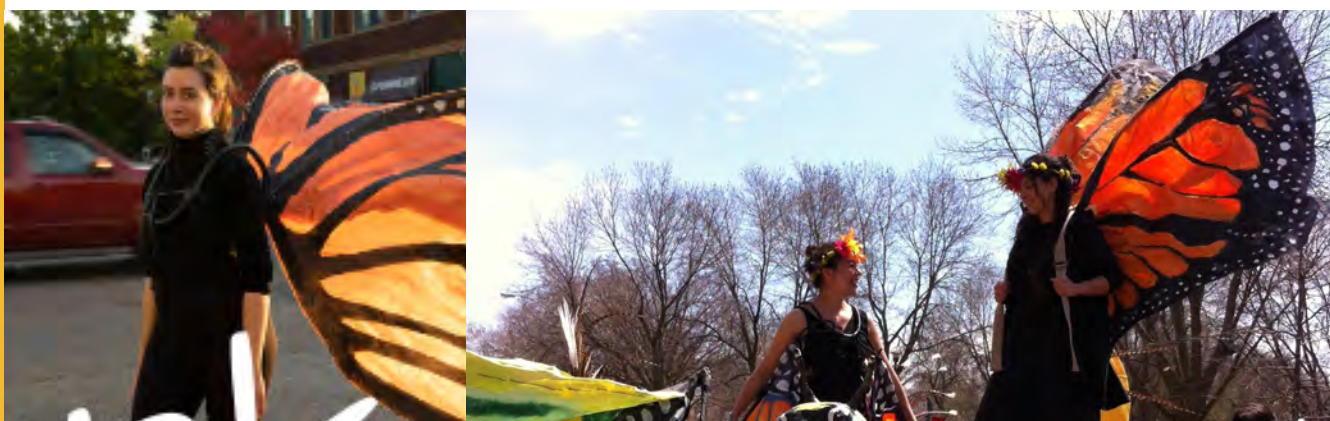
*HOBT's Fiscal Year runs from September 1st - August 31st.



Fiscal Year 2020

A YEAR IN CHRYSALIS

- In FY2019, we sought additional community and foundational support to help fund the transformative work of redesigning MayDay. You made this fundraising effort a success - thank you! All of these funds were specially designated towards the work of our Imagine MayDay Transformation.
- In FY2020, we entered into Chrysalis, our planned transition period, to reimagine MayDay, launch the MayDay Council, and develop new structures and practices for our organization.



- HOBT expended most Imagine MayDay Transformation funds during FY2020 to fairly compensate and support the work of the MayDay Council. We have \$47,000 remaining in the Imagine MayDay Transformation fund.
- The Imagine MayDay Transformation, including the work of Free Black Dirt and the MayDay Council, is discussed in greater length in the All About MayDay section of the full report.
- Total income decreased 65% between FY2019 and FY2020, as we used the funds earned in FY2019 for our Imagine MayDay Transformation; along with the effects of the pandemic.

NEW CONNECTIONS

While the pandemic disrupted FY2020 MayDay Celebration plans, it resulted in new connections with our community to respond to the racial justice uprising and negative effects of the pandemic. For a deeper look into how HOBT shifted in 2020, please go to pages 8-9 of the full report.

Photo by -Bruce Silcox

Fiscal Year 2021

As part of our deep listening to community feedback and the reflections of the MayDay Council, we heard the call for financial accountability and transparency for the organization.



BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE BUDGET MODEL

- Historically, our budgeting process involved staff creating "bottoms up" program budgets, after which Executive Leadership gathered into a consolidated budget for board discussion and approval.
- As we reflected on methods to raise financial transparency, we prioritized engaging community members into the budgeting process.
- To create the FY2021 budget, we used a team-based and collaborative budgeting model with authentic co-leadership from staff, board, Free Black Dirt, and MayDay Council members.
- Involving more voices in the deep work of a fiscal budget lengthened the timeline to create and approve our budget, however, the investment of time allowed us to build trust, ask the big questions, and scenario plan to create a FY2021 budget that energized our stakeholders and we felt proud of.
- The FY2021 budget includes continuing the Imagine MayDay Transformation work, supporting a reparations program for artists harmed by white supremacy culture within HOBT, and seeking funding to support the new MayDay model.

For a look into our 2021 fundraising goals, please refer to page 11 of the full report.



Photo by -Bruce Silcox

We believe that the work we have done and have planned ahead offers an innovative nonprofit model: With shared governance and leadership structure; a collaborative and transparent budget process; and a community-held vision of the Avalon Theatre Cohort and Cooperative. These transformations will bring a renewal of relevancy that carries forward the gifts of decades of artists into a new chapter of HOB.T.

- HOB.T BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thank you for
your ongoing
support of
HOB T!

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