

An aerialist is suspended upside down, holding a thick brown rope with their right hand. They are wearing a yellow and gold beaded bodysuit with a yellow ruffled waistband and tan fishnet stockings. Their face is decorated with silver glitter, and they have a yellow flower lei around their neck. The background is a solid purple wall with a white geometric pattern. In the foreground, there is a dark blue railing with a gold star pattern. The overall scene is vibrant and artistic.

BorderLight

2023 Impact Report



"Marie Curie Horror Story" | Bob Perkoski
CSU Department of Theatre and Dance

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WELCOME

Welcome to the 2023 BorderLight Theatre Festival Impact Report. This year we experienced a 39% increase in attendance per day, and strong majorities of participants once again rated their experience as “Excellent.” Our efforts to engage a more representative group of artists and diversify our audience have also yielded measurable results (see pages 9,13).

In 2023, BorderLight adopted an annual cadence as part of a 3-year Strategic Plan conducted after the 2022 festival. BorderLight’s fourth iteration was its first annual festival and first all-Fringe Festival. Biennially, BorderLight will continue to present a curated selection of award-winning international touring companies alongside the Fringe Festival.

Performing arts organizations continue to navigate a changed landscape post-pandemic; an estimated 25-30% of theatre audiences have not returned since the shutdown. At a time when many theatre companies have closed their doors or reduced staff or programming, BorderLight has demonstrated that a theatre festival can survive and grow.

Nationwide just over 4% of American adults attended a play in 2022, down from 9.4% in 2017*. And yet, over 50% of BorderLight’s audience attend theatre infrequently the rest of the year, and nearly a quarter came to watch five or more shows in 2023. According to American Theatre magazine, when audiences do consider going to the theatre instead of watching Netflix at home, what they are craving is fun, diversion, celebration, and spectacle. With BorderLight’s focus on new, interactive, and immersive work and free outdoor community events, we believe we are well positioned for these times.

We are thankful for the support of our generous donors and sponsors, without whom the festival wouldn’t be possible. The George Gund Foundation, the Cleveland Foundation, the Char and Chuck Fowler Family Foundation, and Cuyahoga Arts and Culture have nurtured this nonprofit venture from its inception. We also received important support this year from Dealer Tire, the Paul M. Angell Foundation, the John P. Murphy and Kulas Foundations, and the Ohio Arts Council, for which we are grateful.

Sincere thanks goes to our board, led by Jon Bloomberg. We are fortunate to have a growing group of talented Directors to light our way. Finally, my heartfelt appreciation goes out to our year-round and seasonal staff (many of whom have been with us since our first festival!), volunteers, and the essential production partners who help us execute this ambitious event. I hope you enjoy reading about our impacts and future goals, and then make plans to join us at the next BorderLight Festival, which will take place July 24-27, 2024, in the Playhouse Square District.

Dale A. Heinen
Executive and Artistic Director

*National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and US Census Bureau surveys.

BORDERLIGHT FRINGE FESTIVAL

2023 FESTIVAL SCOPE



AUGUST 3-5, 2023

PLAYHOUSE SQUARE DISTRICT

9 VENUES **36** PERFORMANCES **15** STAGES

186 ARTISTS **4,401** ATTENDEES

OUR MISSION

BorderLight's mission is to present innovative theatre that inspires, builds cross-cultural understanding and celebrates the diversity of the human experience.

OUR VISION

To serve as a catalyst for Cleveland's cultural and economic growth.

To expand Cleveland's reputation as a theatre destination.

To develop the next generation of artists, producers, and theatre workers.



"Dreamscape" | Steve Wagner

HOW WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH BORDERLIGHT?



Every show I saw was high quality, a very moving concept, or something I had never seen before. The schedule made it very easy to stay engaged with wanting to see more work.

-2023 BorderLight Fringe Attendee

LIFE ON THE FRINGE

Attendance Data

3 Days 36 Unique Performances

4,401

Festival Wide Attendance

1,844

Attended
Ticketed Shows

1,922

Attended
Free Shows

200

Attended
Silent Disco

435

Attended
Festival Events



39%

Increase in Daily
Attendance Compared to 2022

64.3%

First Time Attending
BorderLight Festival

23.4%

Attended 5 or
More Shows

91%

Specifically Visited
Downtown to Attend
the Festival

89.3%

Would Attend a
BorderLight Event
in the Future

70%

Rated their Experience
at BorderLight as
Excellent

*Data extracted from two surveys. One survey was sent to all ticket purchasers. The other was conducted in the footprint during festival days, with respondents chosen at random.

LIFE ON THE FRINGE

Festival at a Glance

\$25,215

Gross Revenue from Ticket Sales

\$15,965

Artists' Cut



\$2,000

Cash Prizes Awarded to Artists



34.5%

Increase in Dollars to Artists



\$430,020

Direct Economic Impact

10

Community Partnerships

\$13.67

Average Ticket Price



12

Events Free to the Public



4

Community Development Corporation Partners

\$18,031

Money Directed to Non-Fringe Artists

(Examples Include: Videographer, Photographers, Graphic Designer)

*This number does not include casual contacts with public performances that may have impacted hundreds or thousands of commuters, visitors and downtown residents who encountered BorderLight unintentionally. Although unspecified, this number of contacts is important to the Festival's growth.

WHAT WAS THE HIGH POINT OF YOUR BORDERLIGHT EXPERIENCE?



[I] Loved seeing the other performances. Loved getting to interact with the others; it was so helpful for the future development of the work. The audiences are so very adventurous and generous. All staff were kind and helpful.

-2023 BorderLight Artist



"Three Countries, One Mother" | Steve Wagner

ARTIST DATA

BorderLight featured the work of 186 artists representing 36 shows from around the country including individual artists and companies from the local Cleveland theatre community.

186

Artists



36

Shows

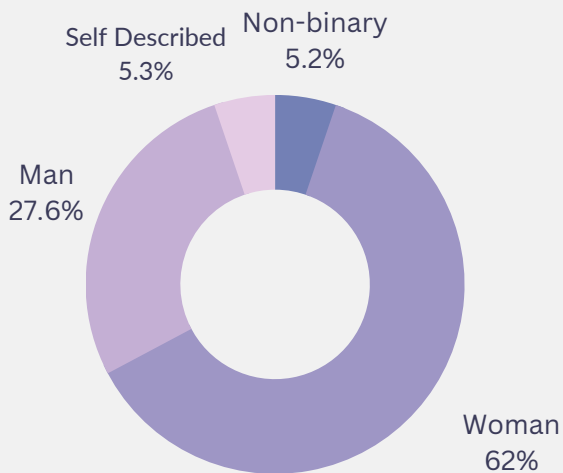
8

States
Represented

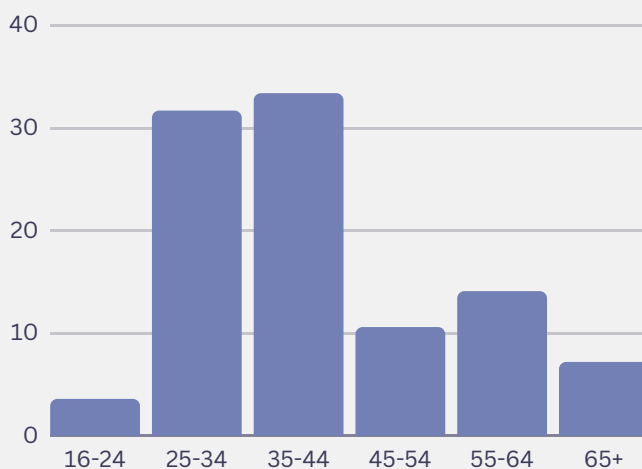


Illinois
Kentucky
Massachusetts
Maryland
New York
Ohio
Pennsylvania
Virginia

Artist Gender Identification



Age of Participating Artists



44%

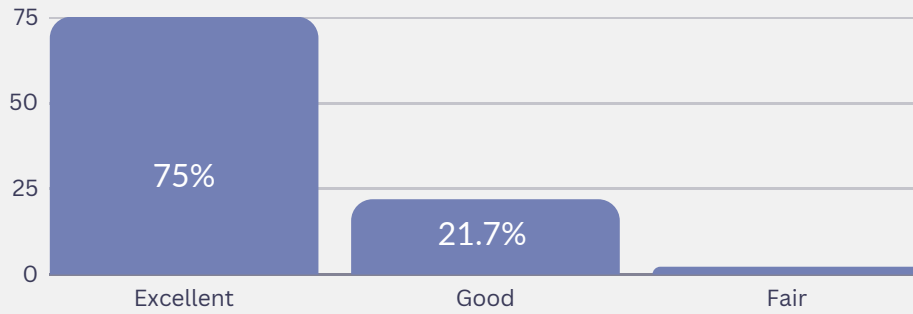
Of Artists
Hail from Cleveland



11

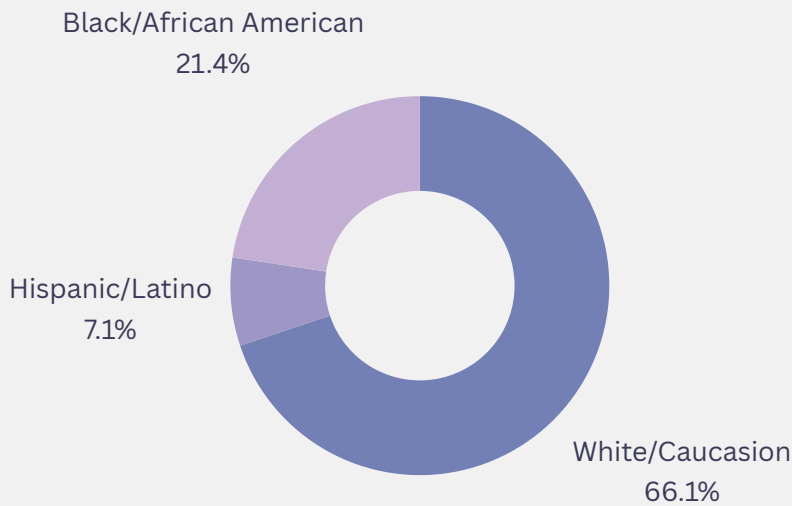
Additional Cities
Represented
in Ohio

Artist Satisfaction Overall



19%
Increase in
Excellent Rating

Artist Race/Ethnicity



16%
Increase in Diverse
Representation

Investments in the Artist Community

Housing

Free housing for Out-of-State Artists

70%

Of Box Office Returned to Artists

Travel Stipend

Offered to Artists in Need to Travel to the Festival

Artist Pass

Participating Artists can See All Fringe Shows for Free



Great festival. Lots of support. Loved our venue. The help assigned us was incredible.

-2023 BorderLight Artist



"WIZBANG!" | Bob Perkoski



Omg this weekend has been a fast paced fever dream and I've loved every second! Thank you to BorderLight for the amazing opportunity to connect and share with so many artists! Thank you especially to the artists who came on this journey with me. My heart is beyond full and I'm so proud of myself and everyone I had the chance to create with for the work that we did. This piece is so special and I'm glad it got to get out in the world!

-Jailyn Sherell Harris, performer | "I am but a Whisper"

ATTENDEE DATA

Of our reported 4,401 attendees we received 231 responses. While it's a subset of the total attendees, this dataset offers critical insights into the festival's performance and audience dynamics.

27%

Self-Identify as Black, Hispanic, Non-White, or Prefer Not to Answer

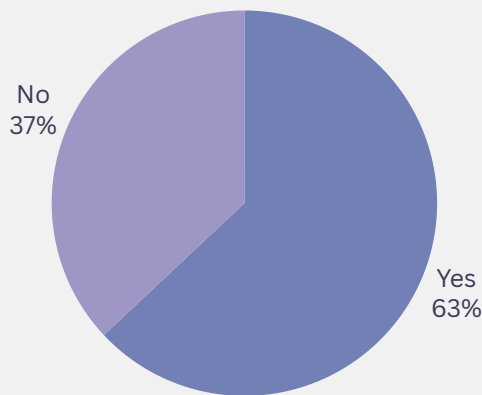
91%

Of Attendees Visited Downtown Specifically to Attend Fringe

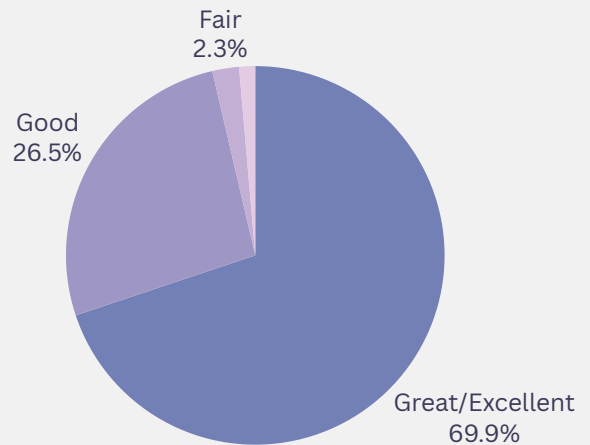
76%

Of Attendees Saw 1-5 Shows

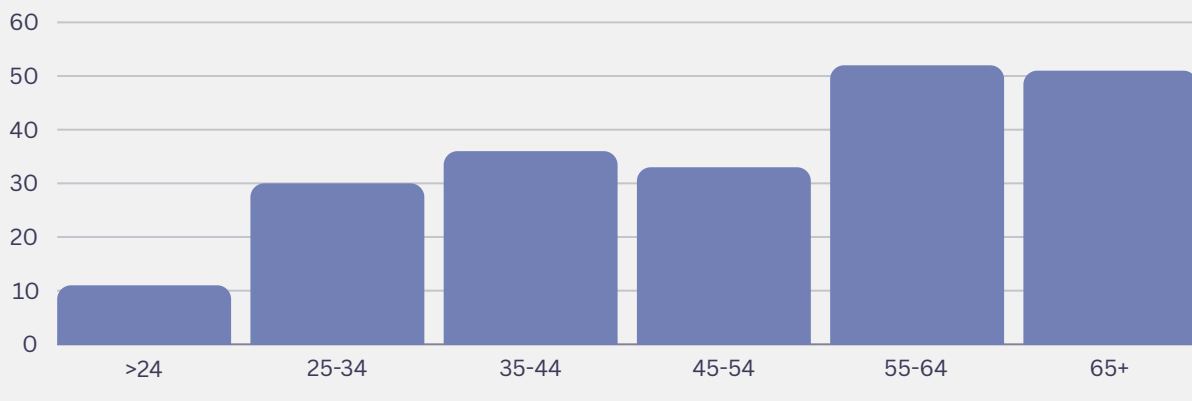
**Attendee Response to:
Was This Your First
BorderLight Experience?**



**Attendee Response to:
How Would You Rate Your
2023 BorderLight Experience?**



Age of Attendees



“The Shadow of the Clock “ | Emanuel Wallace
Radio on the Lake Theatre



City Club Forum: Theatre for the People:
BorderLight and the Future of Theatre | PSQ



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Community Partnerships are essential for building a sense of unity and shared purpose within the local community.

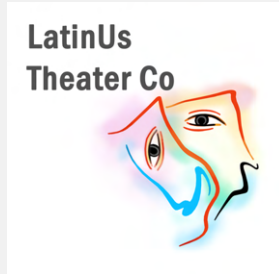


"The Midnight Mist"
Cleveland Public Theatre's STEP



"Public Fransit"
The Cleveland Public Library & RTA

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



"A Secret in Plain Sight"
The HeARD & The Adoption Network



"Snowflakes on the Patio"
Snowflake Comedy Club

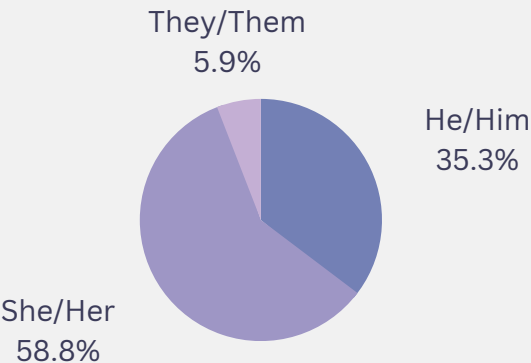


SEASONAL STAFF

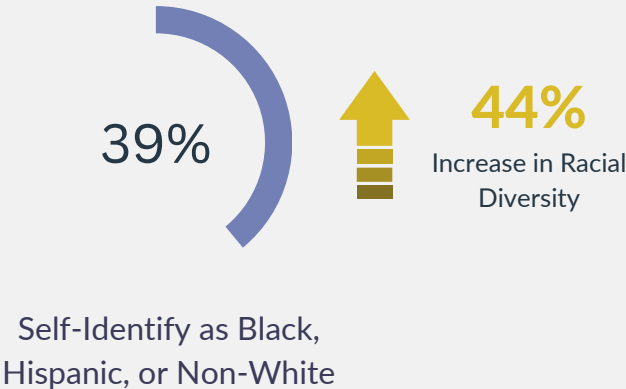
Hiring experienced and engaged seasonal staff is critical to BorderLight’s success.



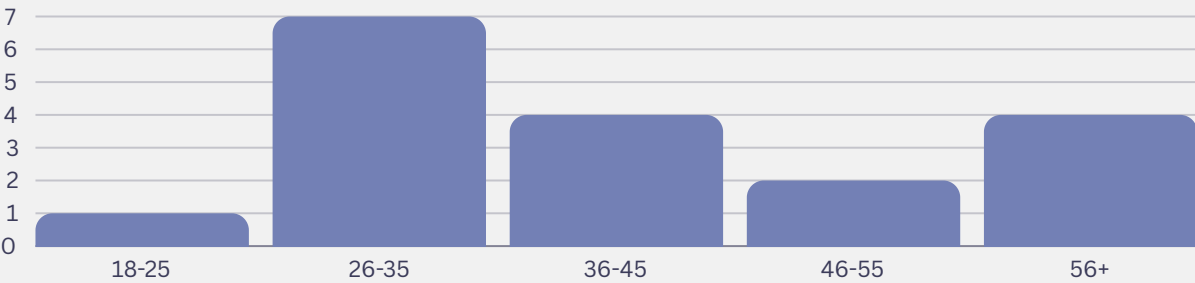
Seasonal Staff Pronouns



Seasonal Staff Racial Identification



Seasonal Staff Ages



*Survey responses represent the opinions of those who participated in the survey and may not reflect the sentiments of our entire staff.

VOLUNTEERS

Our crew of 34 volunteers worked 63 individual shifts and donated a total of more than 191 hours of their time.

34

Volunteers

95.7%

of Volunteers
"Had a Blast!"*



8.2%

Increase in
Volunteer
Satisfaction Rate

191

Number of
Volunteer Hours

87%

of Volunteers
are Very Likely to
Volunteer Again*

Volunteer Organization and Snapshot of Roles

Greeters

Stationed at building entrances to answer questions, provide wayfinding assistance

Ushers

Worked at theatre entrances to answer questions and assist with voting

Surveyors

Gathered demographic information and details on the festival's economic impact on the city

Investments in our Staff & Volunteers

Volunteer Show Pass

Volunteers were invited to watch Fringe shows with open seats for free

T-Shirts

Each volunteer received a BorderLight volunteer t-shirt, lanyard and snacks

Raffle Entry

Volunteers received one entry into a raffle for each shift worked

*Survey responses represent the opinions of those who participated in the survey and may not fully reflect the sentiments of our entire group of volunteers.



www.BORDERLIGHTS.ORG
BORDERLIGHTS
FRINGE
Festival
AUG 2-4 | 2014
ARTIST

MARKETING DATA

Our marketing strategy included efforts to reach new and diverse audience members. In the period from August 2022 to August 2023, BorderLight experienced consistent growth in website visitors, social media followers, and newsletter subscriptions.

Email

3,025

*Total
Subscribers

Facebook

1,608

Total
Likes

Instagram

1,158

Total
Followers

Google

31,847

Total
Page Views

Tik Tok

520

Total
Likes

YouTube

552

Total
Video Views

BorderLight Merchandise

2023 marked BorderLight's first year for merchandise sales. A variety of branded items were sold on our website, with samples available for viewing in our Box Offices.



*Data represents total amounts as of August 2023.

PRINT AND PRESS

BorderLight gained coverage in newspapers, magazines, and online articles. Our presence in print and press not only built anticipation but also generated a buzz, effectively broadcasting information to a broad and diverse audience.

10

Media Partners

107.3 Alternative Cleveland
Canvas
Cleveland Jewish News
Cleveland Scene
Freshwater
iHeartRadio
La Mega Cleveland
La Mega Nota
The Land
WKYC

3

TV Appearances

FOX 8-Kickin' it with Kenny
WKYC- Good Company
Cleveland 19- Cribbs in the Cle

4

Neighborhood
Outreach Partners

Beachwood Buzz
Burton Bell Carr
Northwest Neighborhood CDC
Ohio City, Inc

4

Social Media
Influencers

Creams World
Sarah Williams/SKW Paint
Urbanetics
Wanderlust in Ohio

62

TV Ad Plays

257

Radio Ad Plays

GROWTH PLAN

BorderLight solicits feedback from our stakeholders after every festival by asking audience members, artists, staff, volunteers, and supporters how we can improve. Below, we show how we implemented changes based on feedback from 2022 at our 2023 festival. We also share growth areas that emerged from stakeholder feedback in 2023, and how we plan to address these in 2024.

2022 Areas for Improvement

How We Addressed These Concerns in 2023

Marketing	Greatly increased media partners, ads, and social media presence
Food Trucks	Engaged 6 food trucks
Festival Footprint	Condensed festival footprint to Playhouse Square District
Ticket Process	Conducted a detailed overhaul of ticketing process
Wayfinding	Added venue flags and additional key signage

2023 Areas for Improvement

How We Plan to Address These Concerns in 2024

Parking	Identify a parking partner and better communicate parking availability
Gathering Place	Create a social hub for the festival
More Free Performances	Create a free community stage
Cluster all ages activities	Program family day activities for 4 hours on Saturday of the festival
Wayfinding	Add a large map at 13th & Euclid and investigate additional wayfinding methods such as volunteer help and sidewalk graphics

OUR COMMITMENTS

BorderLight is committed to building a better future for everyone. We're excited to share the work we're doing as we strive to better serve our community

Access and Inclusion

Inclusion is a core value that drives our work. We aspire to reflect the diversity of our community at every level of the organization, and to serve as a platform for sharing different perspectives on the human experience. Our goals include:

- Diversifying programming and audiences
- Leveraging the festival to create opportunities for local artists, especially artists of color
- Amplifying voices that have been underrepresented due to systemic inequities and exclusion on the basis of race, nation of origin, gender, gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, education, ethnicity, or economic circumstances

Initiatives to promote these goals include:

- Locating the festival downtown, where it is easy to access via public transport
- Free programming on outdoor stages
- Outreach to diverse media to expand audience demographic
- Outreach to diverse artists, locally and nationally
- Low-cost Fringe Application
- Waived production fees for artists with financial need
- Highlighting voices from diverse communities, e.g. LGBTQ+, Hispanic, refugee, etc.
- Appointing a diverse panel to select work for the Fringe (Most fringes use a lottery system, which often results in more homogeneous programming.)
- Featuring new work by local writers of color
- Identifying ADA-accessible venues in marketing communications
- Working with an accessibility designer to implement short and long term goals for improving accessibility

Environmental Sustainability

A large arts event can be a channel for bringing attention to climate change, and a conduit for social change. The very nature of a performing arts festival prioritizes experiences over the acquisition of goods. We have identified ways in which BorderLight can use attitudinal and behavioral cues to convey the value we place on green practices. We have taken the following steps towards sustainability:

- Maintain a largely paperless operation by using cloud networks, email, and digital scanning of tickets
- Buy second-hand office products
- Meet virtually unless meeting in person is essential
- Encourage visitors to take RTA in newsletters, on the website, and in Festival Guide
- Promote information about bike sharing to patrons
- Market the walkability of the event footprint
- Prefer suppliers who have green policies
- Offer water stations at the event that encourage refilling bottles (rather than selling plastic); encourage visitors to bring refillable water bottles
- Encourage those who do drive to rideshare or carpool
- Reduce printing by using digital QR codes wherever possible
- Use more evergreen signage each year
- Use upcycled awards
- Source local supply chains

Artist Support

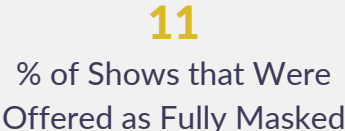
BorderLight seeks to be a festival that is welcoming to artists, who are the foundation and lifeblood of this work. We serve artists in the following ways:

- Provide free housing for out-of-town artists
- Provide travel stipends for out-of-town artists in financial need
- Provide participating artists with Artist Passes giving free access to Fringe shows
- Redirect 70% of Fringe ticket revenue back to artists. The average payout in 2023 was \$694.
- Pay \$2,000 directly to artists through four Fringe Awards
- Maintain a balance of 50% local artists in the Fringe Festival
- Host free festival parties and events where artists can build community and network
- Provide marketing training and resources to Fringe artists
- Hire an Artist Liaison to help international artists execute their work, navigate an unknown city, and make the most out of their visit to Cleveland
- Waive production fees when Fringe artists otherwise can't participate



COVID-19 Safety

BorderLight is committed to creating a safe experience for artists, vendors, and guests. In order to create opportunities for patrons who had health vulnerabilities to participate in the Festival, certain performances required masks to be worn by audience members, staff and volunteers.





The BorderLight Festival was a feast for the eyes, ears, and palate -- a veritable smorgasbord of artistic flavors, mirroring influences from Cleveland and beyond.

-Jeremy Johnson, Assembly for the Arts



SURVEY METHODOLOGY

BorderLight Survey Sizes

The reported figures for ticketed attendance comprise patrons who purchased tickets through BorderLight’s Box Office and Playhouse Square’s Box Office. Attendance at free performances was gathered using clickers and reported by House Managers. This number excludes casual contacts with commuters, visitors, and downtown residents.

60
of Responses
to Artist Survey



20%
Increase in Artist
Response

18
of Responses
to Staff Survey

23
of Responses
to Volunteer
Survey



24%
Increase in
Volunteer Responses

108
of Responses
to On-Site
Attendee Survey



95%
Increase in
On-Site Attendee
Responses

123
of Responses
to Emailed
Attendee Survey



53%
Increase in
Emailed Attendee
Responses

Survey Goals

BorderLight seeks to conduct comprehensive surveys of our audience, artist, staff, volunteer and attendee base.

Our goals are to evaluate economic impact and measure the extent to which we are meeting our objectives.

The data collected is invaluable for refining strategies.

FESTIVAL LEADERSHIP

BorderLight Staff

Dale A. Heinen
Executive and Artistic Director

Yazmin Maldonado
Operations and Communications Manager

Josy Jones
Associate Producer and Director of Community Building

Board of Directors

Jon Bloomberg
President

Dr. Felicia Phillips
Secretary

Luis Cartagena
Treasurer

Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley (ex-officio)

Joe Cimperman

Rachel Costanzo

Patrick Espinosa

Charlotte Fowler

Audra T. Jones

Dan Moulthrop

Megan O'Bryan

Jenny Pykett

Rab Razzak

Terry Stewart

Felton Thomas, Jr.

THANK YOU!

BorderLight Festival is made possible through the generous support of our festival sponsors.

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GUND
FOUNDATION**

CLEVELAND
Foundation

PAUL M. ANGELL
FAMILY FOUNDATION

DealerTire



THE CHAR AND CHUCK
FOWLER FAMILY FOUNDATION



Ohio Arts
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CDC Partners



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Special Thanks to:

Cleveland State University • The BorderLight Board of Directors • Holly Holsinger • Andy Kersten • Carole O. Heyward • Lee Heinen • Andrea C. Turner • Rachel Costanzo • John C. Williams • Palmer Event Solutions Team • Colin Anderson • Erin Dolan • The Beck Center • Cindy Einhouse • Scott Spence • The HeArd • Plexus LGBT and Allied Chamber of Commerce • Debby Samples • Snowflake Comedy • Cleveland Public Theatre • LatinUs Theater Company • Dobama Theatre • Cleveland Public Library • Felton Thomas, Jr. • Suzi Perez • Regional Transit Authority • Rock the House • Eva Udris • Arlene Watson • Megan Bush Granson • Nichole Collins • Shawna Whitlock • Kate Newsome • My Vu • The BorderLight Seasonal Staff and Volunteers • Cleveland International Film Festival • Marcie Goodman • Jeramey Parker • Fusion Filmworks • Type Twenty Seven • ABM Parking • Calicchia Studios



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Website: BorderLightCLE.org

Closing Night Party | Emanuel Wallace