

THROWN STONE THEATRE COMPANY

BUSINESS PLAN

(2025-2029)

THROWN
STONE

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Thrown Stone is a 501(c)(3) organization.

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2017-2023 IRS Form 990, bylaws, and policies available upon request.

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Mission

To make new theatre. Through commissions, development, and production, we empower artists and audiences to engage with the important questions of our time.

Vision

A recognized center for new plays, highly desired by audiences and artists as a place to gather and grow.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thrown Stone Theatre Company is the only professional theatre in Connecticut exclusively dedicated to new work from commission to development to production. We have initiated a strategic expansion with a year-round residency at the Crystal Theatre in South Norwalk, marking a new chapter in our growth and further solidifying our role in Connecticut's cultural landscape. This move allows us to offer two mainstage productions annually, host a new play festival, commission new works, and conduct developmental workshops, all while deepening our commitment to the region's residents and visitors.

The residency at the Crystal Theatre provides a fully equipped venue in a strategic location, allowing us to engage with Norwalk's diverse community while maintaining ties to our Ridgefield base. Thrown Stone's unique offering supports Norwalk's growth as a full-fledged cultural destination, complementing the existing children's and community programming at the Crystal Theatre.

Our marketing strategy includes collaboration with the Norwalk Economic Development Office, targeted digital campaigns, and partnerships with media outlets such as WSHU Public Radio and local publications. We also aim to expand our audience with outreach through partnerships with local organizations, talkbacks, and community engagement events.

Financially, we have set ambitious but achievable goals, including a year-over-year 10% increase in ticket sales, bolstered by the Crystal Theatre's 240-seat capacity and Norwalk's 91,000 residents. This expansion offers mutual benefits: it allows Thrown Stone to scale its audience while contributing to the economic vitality of the region. According to Americans for the Arts' *Arts and Economic Prosperity 6* (FY22), nonprofit arts and culture audiences in Fairfield County spend an average of **\$35.83 per person, per event — excluding the cost of admission** — contributing significantly to the local economy. Our expanded audience will stimulate local businesses, further enhancing Norwalk's position as both a cultural and economic destination.

Thrown Stone's expanded programming and strategic partnerships will position the company as a leading force in the region's professional theatre scene, driving cultural enrichment and fostering meaningful dialogue with today's audiences.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

1. **Expand Programming.**

Consistent with our mission to make new theatre, we will expand our programming to include two annual mainstage productions, a Short Play Festival, a commission, and one workshop per year 2025-2026 (two per year, 2027-2029).

2. **Strengthen the Brand.**

We will deepen our connection with the local community and broaden our audience base by collaborating with the Norwalk, CT Office of Economic Development on city-wide campaigns, utilizing streetlight banners, and developing targeted paid media campaigns and marketing collateral. Dedicated roles, including an Audience Development Manager and Social Media Manager, will focus on driving engagement and fostering relationships that reflect the diversity and vitality of our region.

3. **Ensure Financial Sustainability.**

Launch an endowment campaign in 2025 with the goal of raising \$1 million over five years to secure a sustainable financial foundation. The campaign will be led by the Executive Director (ED), with support from a part-time Development Director starting in 2027, focused on securing high-yield grants and cultivating major donors. These efforts will diversify revenue streams and ensure the company's long-term sustainability.

4. **Enhance Organizational Capacity.**

In addition to production and project-based staff, we will strengthen our organizational capacity by investing in key roles, including an Audience Development Manager (\$3,500 per production), Social Media Manager (\$1,500 per production), and Development Director, to bolster our marketing, audience engagement, and fundraising efforts. This approach will ensure we have the expertise needed to achieve our strategic goals.

5. **Elevate our Impact.**

By fostering partnerships and being part of broader cultural and economic initiatives, we aim to position Thrown Stone as a vital cultural resource and a recognized leader in new play development both regionally and nationally.

PROGRAM AND STAFFING PLAN

Thrown Stone's expansion to Norwalk allows for a year-round schedule of programming, including two mainstage productions, a new play festival, and multiple workshops. The residency at the Crystal Theatre provides access to a fully outfitted venue in a strategic location, supporting the company's goal to offer continuous programming while maintaining its focus on new play development and professional theatre.

PROGRAMMING

- **Two Mainstage Productions:** Thrown Stone will produce two mainstage productions each year—one in the Spring and one in the Fall. Each production will have a 2-week rehearsal period followed by a 3-week performance run, featuring new and provocative plays that align with the company's mission of presenting intimate and vital theatre.
- **Short Play Festival:** An annual event held during the first week of August that showcases new 10-minute plays or scenes curated by Artistic Directors and adjudicated by industry professionals. The festival is open to both emerging and established playwrights, promoting community engagement and fresh voices in theatre.
- **Workshops:** In 2025 to 2026, Thrown Stone will hold one new play workshop per year. Starting in 2027, the company will expand this program to two workshops annually.
- **Commissions:** Each year, Thrown Stone will commission one new play through an RFP process, culminating in a first draft, which Thrown Stone will have the first right of refusal to develop further and produce.
- **2026 Off-Broadway Co-production:** Thrown Stone has been invited by The WP Theatre to co-produce the world premiere of Phanésia Pharel's *The Waterfall* Off-Broadway in 2023. This extraordinary opportunity has received a pledge of full funding by a private donor, and is reflected in the budget projections on page 5.

STAFFING

Thrown Stone Theatre Company's organizational structure is designed to ensure clear roles, effective decision-making, and alignment with the company's mission and strategic goals. This structure provides stable leadership while allowing for flexible, project-based staffing to support both administrative functions and artistic excellence.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- **Executive Director (ED) and Co-Artistic Director:** The ED holds a dual role as one of the Co-Artistic Directors, combining strategic leadership with artistic oversight. The ED is responsible for overall strategy, fundraising, financial management, staff oversight, and leading key initiatives like the endowment campaign. In their capacity as Co-Artistic Director, the ED collaborates on programming decisions, commissions, and new work development. The ED reports directly to the Board of Directors (BOD).
- **Co-Artistic Directors (Co-ADs):** The two Co-Artistic Directors (including the ED) jointly oversee artistic programming and creative direction. They are responsible for curating the season's productions, developing new works, and ensuring that artistic choices align with Thrown Stone's mission. Both Co-ADs report to the BOD. Their compensation is nominal, initially set at \$2,000 per year, contingent upon meeting the organization's financial targets. They are additionally compensated for "above-the-line" roles they take on for specific productions, such as directing or dramaturgy.
- **Development Director (Part-Time Contractor):** Starting in 2027, the Development Director will focus on high-yield grants, donor cultivation, and expanding fundraising capacity. This role is critical to diversifying revenue streams and supporting the company's financial sustainability. The Development Director reports directly to the ED.
- **Audience Development Coordinator:** In addition to contract production staff (see below), an Audience Development Coordinator will be hired. This individual will serve as an ombudsman for audiences who are not regular theatregoers, ensuring that these patrons feel welcomed and engaged with the theatre experience. This role is crucial for expanding Thrown Stone's reach to diverse and underserved communities.
- **Production and Project-Based Staff:** All production staff, including the Production Manager, Technical Director, Social Media Coordinator, Audience Development Manager, and "above-the-line" artists (such as directors, designers, and playwrights), are hired on a contract basis. This flexible staffing approach ensures each production is supported by specialized talent suited to its specific needs. All project-based staff report to the ED.

This structure ensures clear lines of reporting and accountability, with the ED and Co-ADs providing overall leadership and vision under the guidance of the Board of Directors. All other staff report to the ED, ensuring cohesive management and alignment with Thrown Stone Theatre Company's strategic objectives.

FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS

INCOME

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Ticket Income					
Ticket Sales	\$ 68,621	\$ 100,483	\$ 83,032	\$ 91,335	\$ 100,469
Festival Income	16,700	17,535	18,412	19,332	20,299
Total Ticket Income	85,321	118,018	101,444	110,668	120,768
Concessions & Merchandise	2,000	2,200	2,420	2,662	2,928
Handling Fees	1,052	1,158	1,273	1,401	1,541
Interest & Endowment Income	2,500	17,421	28,410	38,984	50,248
Total Earned Income	90,873	138,797	133,547	153,714	175,485
Contributed Income					
Cash Donations	85,000	242,500	85,000	90,000	95,000
Cash Sponsorships	3,000	3,500	4,000	4,500	5,000
In-Kind Sponsorships	21,900	21,900	21,900	21,900	21,900
Grants & Foundations	185,000	195,000	220,000	240,000	265,000
Total Contributed Income	294,900	462,900	330,900	356,400	386,900
Total Revenue	385,773	601,697	464,447	510,114	562,385

EXPENDITURES

Employee Payroll	82,460	84,933	107,481	115,106	142,809
Outsourced Actor Payroll	41,915	44,173	45,498	46,863	48,269
1099 Payroll	101,262	108,600	112,858	117,243	121,761
Royalties	5,099	5,609	6,170	6,787	7,465
New Play Festival	12,300	12,915	13,561	14,239	14,951
New Play Commission	7,490	7,865	8,258	8,671	9,104
New Play Workshop	7,055	9,000	9,450	9,923	10,419
Production/Technical	59,950	62,475	65,599	68,879	72,323
Marketing	42,160	44,268	46,481	48,805	51,246
Occupancy	13,000	13,650	14,333	15,049	15,802
Administrative	7,375	7,744	8,131	8,537	8,964
Endowment Fundraising Costs	5,000	5,000	7,500	7,875	8,269
Co-Production		162,500			
Total Expenditures	385,065	568,731	445,319	467,977	511,380

NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$ 708	\$ 32,966	\$ 19,128	\$ 42,138	\$ 51,004
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OPERATIONAL PLAN

Thrown Stone Theatre Company's operational plan ensures cohesive management of day-to-day activities to achieve strategic goals:

KEY OPERATIONAL ELEMENTS

- **Program Scheduling and Production Management:** Develop an annual calendar for productions, festivals, and workshops. The Production Manager and Technical Director will coordinate all technical and logistical aspects on a project-by-project basis.
- **Marketing and Audience Development:** The ED will work with the marketing team, including the Social Media Coordinator and Audience Development Manager, to plan campaigns that align with production timelines and community events.
- **Fundraising and Financial Management:** Weekly development meetings will be held to monitor progress towards fundraising goals. Monthly financial reviews will be conducted to ensure budget alignment.

Staff and Volunteer Management: Regular check-ins with all staff and volunteers to provide feedback, identify professional development opportunities, and address operational challenges.

PERFORMANCE METRICS AND EVALUATION

To ensure accountability and measure progress towards strategic objectives, Thrown Stone Theatre Company will implement clear performance metrics:

KEY PERFORMANCE METRICS

- **Artistic Output:** Track the number of new works commissioned, workshops held, and productions mounted each year, aiming to maintain a steady pipeline of new work and innovation.
- **Ticket Sales and Audience Growth:** Track annual ticket sales growth by production and festival. Target a 10% increase in total audience numbers each year.
- **Fundraising Goals:** Measure progress toward the \$1 million endowment campaign, with specific targets for each year (e.g., \$200,000 by the end of 2025). Track grant applications, awards, and individual donor contributions.
- **Community Engagement:** Monitor the number of partnerships with local organizations, outreach events, and community feedback. Aim for at least three significant partnerships or collaborative events annually.
- **Financial Health:** Regularly assess financial ratios (e.g., operating margin, cash reserves) to ensure financial sustainability. Aim for an operating reserve equal to at least three months of expenses.

MARKETING AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Thrown Stone's focus on new works makes it an irreplaceable cultural asset in Connecticut. Where other theatre companies may prioritize more familiar or safe programming, we take risks on new voices and stories that reflect today's most urgent questions. Our productions offer a unique experience that cannot be replicated or consumed at home—making us essential for audiences who seek thought-provoking experiences.

Our outreach efforts—especially through partnerships with local organizations—will ensure that diverse communities, first-time theatre-goers, and those typically underrepresented in the arts can access these transformative experiences. This commitment not only broadens our audience base but also makes Thrown Stone a vital part of Norwalk's evolving cultural ecosystem.

1. **Move to Norwalk and Year-Round Programming:** Thrown Stone's expansion to Norwalk, CT, marks a pivotal moment in our growth, offering a year-round season that will broaden our audience and solidify our position in the regional theatre landscape. Norwalk provides an ideal location for this expansion, with its vibrant, diverse population and proximity to major metropolitan areas.
2. **A New Venue:** Our residency at the Crystal Theatre in South Norwalk enables a year-round season and fills an important niche in Norwalk's cultural ecosystem. As the only professional theatre in the state exclusively dedicated to new work, Thrown Stone helps fulfill Norwalk's aspiration to be a full-fledged cultural destination and complements the Crystal Theatre's existing children's and community theatre offerings.
3. **Diverse Audience Outreach:** Norwalk is rated as the 30th most diverse city in America, according to WalletHub, with nearly 40% of its residents identifying as Hispanic, Black, Asian, or from other minority groups. This diversity is central to our audience development strategy. By engaging in partnerships with local community organizations, cultural groups, and educational institutions, we aim to attract audiences who are often underrepresented in traditional theatre demographics.

A dedicated **Audience Development Coordinator** will serve as a crucial ambassador to audiences unfamiliar with professional theatre, working directly with community organizations, schools, and local cultural organizations to facilitate accessibility, engage new attendees, and foster lasting relationships with diverse audiences. This role will not only ensure personalized outreach to these communities but will also be instrumental in breaking down barriers for first-time theatergoers, ensuring they feel welcome, engaged, and supported throughout their experience.

Specific initiatives include hosting talkbacks, community engagement events, and offering ticketing programs for underserved groups. These efforts not only aim to make theatre more accessible to Norwalk's diverse population but also nurture long-term relationships, encouraging repeat attendance and sustained community involvement over time.

4. **Collaboration with Norwalk Economic Development Office:** Thrown Stone is partnering with the Norwalk Economic Development Office to participate in their \$500,000 annual paid media campaigns promoting the city's cultural assets. This collaboration includes 15-20 streetlight banners strategically placed in Norwalk during our productions to increase visibility. The banners serve as a visual invitation to residents and visitors, reinforcing our presence in the city and reaching a diverse audience. We will also explore integration with cultural itineraries marketed by the Office of Business Development and Tourism to attract visitors who seek arts and entertainment experiences as part of their time in the city
5. **Digital and Media Partnerships:** Our marketing strategy includes targeted digital campaigns across social media platforms and partnerships with public radio (WSHU) and publications such as The Hour, HamletHub, 068 Magazine. We will work to expand these partnerships to help us reach a wider audience in the region and provide multiple touchpoints for potential patrons to discover Thrown Stone.
6. **Data Collection and Audience Feedback:** Understanding how audiences find us and what resonates with them is key to refining our marketing efforts. We ask all ticket buyers how they heard about us, with options like outdoor signage, digital campaigns, public radio, and print partnerships. Additionally, we conduct audience surveys at every performance and workshop. While these surveys primarily aid in new play development, we have the flexibility to include specific marketing or demographic questions to better understand audience preferences and behaviors. This feedback loop allows us to measure the effectiveness of our marketing strategies and make data-driven adjustments as needed.
7. **Measurement and Evaluation:** We have set an ambitious goal to increase ticket sales by 10% year over year for the next five years. This is achievable with the increased capacity of the 240-seat Crystal Theatre, alongside our expanded marketing efforts and outreach. By continuously assessing key metrics such as response rates to marketing channels, audience demographics, and geographic reach, we can fine-tune our strategy to ensure we are effectively engaging our target audiences.

Thrown Stone's marketing strategy is more than just a means to fill seats — we aim to build a diverse, empowered community of citizens who use the shared experience of theatre to engage more fully with the important questions of our time. By leveraging partnerships, targeted outreach, and data-driven insights, we are well-positioned to expand our audience base in Ridgefield, Norwalk, and the region.

INTEGRATED OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Thrown Stone Theatre Company is deeply committed to engaging diverse communities, fostering new talent, and making theatre accessible to all. Our outreach and education efforts are thoughtfully integrated into our core programming, ensuring these initiatives are sustainable and aligned with our mission.

KEY COMPONENTS

1. **Teen and Young Adult Engagement through the Short Play Festival:** The Short Play Festival provides a unique platform for emerging playwrights to present their work. The festival includes a dedicated teen and young adult session, encouraging local high school students and young adults to submit original 10-minute plays. The winner of this session advances to compete in the adult session alongside nationally recognized playwrights. This format nurtures new voices and engages a younger audience in serious theatre, offering them a meaningful introduction to the professional theatre world. By fostering a pipeline of young talent, we are not only supporting the development of new artists but also attracting younger, diverse audiences who are likely to become long-term patrons and advocates for Thrown Stone's mission. Increased participation from teens and young adults will help cultivate a loyal audience base, contributing to our future financial sustainability and community goodwill.
2. ***An Invitation to the Conversation*:** Launched in 2023 with funds from an NEA "Challenge America" grant, *An Invitation to the Conversation* is an audience development initiative designed to bring underserved communities into the theatre experience. The program provides free tickets and, where needed, transportation to performances for lower-income families and community groups who might not otherwise have access to professional theatre. The initial round of the program was met with enthusiastic participation and positive feedback, showcasing the need for such initiatives in the community. Looking ahead, we aim to expand *An Invitation to the Conversation* in Norwalk, focusing on engaging diverse communities across the city. A dedicated **Audience Development Coordinator** will work closely with local partners to identify participants and ensure the initiative reaches diverse communities across Norwalk. This role will also be key in tracking engagement metrics and ensuring measurable outcomes, helping us turn first-time attendees into regular theatre-goers and supporters. By expanding this initiative, we aim to build long-term relationships with these communities, grow our audience base, and attract future donors.
3. **Workforce Development:** Thrown Stone is committed to providing pathways to professional theatre careers, especially for youth and underserved community members. Our productions often serve as a gateway for local individuals to gain their first professional experience in theatre. We offer a range of opportunities, including:

- **Internships:** Providing hands-on learning experiences in areas such as marketing, technical theatre, and production support.
- **Crew Positions:** Offering paid and volunteer positions for community members interested in backstage roles, technical support, and other essential production functions.
- **Casting Opportunities:** Including local talent in our casting process, allowing emerging actors to perform alongside seasoned professionals, enriching the local theatre scene and offering career development pathways.

By providing these opportunities, we not only strengthen the local talent pool but also cultivate long-term supporters who feel personally connected to Thrown Stone's mission. Many of those involved in our workforce development programs will continue their engagement with the company as patrons, volunteers, or advocates, helping to grow our community presence and increase future support.

4. **Workshops and Talkbacks:** Integrated into our productions and workshops, these events provide additional educational and engagement opportunities for a general audience:
 - **Workshops:** Conducted by directors, playwrights, and actors involved in our productions, these sessions focus on playwriting, acting, and directing techniques, open to community members and festival participants.
 - **Talkbacks:** Post-performance discussions encourage dialogue between artists and audiences, fostering a deeper understanding of the work and its development process.

These engagement efforts build community goodwill by offering valuable educational content and fostering relationships between the company and its audiences. This increased connection to the work strengthens our position as a key cultural institution, encouraging continued patronage, donations, and partnerships.

Integration with Financial and Community Engagement Goals

These outreach and education programs are not only aligned with Thrown Stone's mission but are also essential to ensuring our financial sustainability. By expanding participation in these initiatives, we build long-term relationships with audiences, nurturing a loyal and engaged patron base. As a result, we anticipate increased ticket sales, higher retention of patrons, and greater success in securing donations and grants. Additionally, by providing valuable opportunities for professional development and community engagement, we position Thrown Stone as a vital resource in the region, attracting future support from individuals, organizations, and philanthropic partners.

FUNDING SOURCES

Government Grants

The Connecticut Arts Endowment Fund (CAEF) distributes funds based on the state's investment earnings. In recent years, the fund has distributed around \$861,472 annually among approximately 171 recipients. Given this, a mid-sized organization like Thrown Stone could realistically expect annual grants in the range of \$5,000 to \$25,000 depending on our budget. Additionally, Connecticut's Supporting Arts grant program provides flexible general operating support, which could add another \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year.

Foundations

Foundations such as the Lucile Lortel Foundation, Shubert Foundation, and others typically offer grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000. Given Thrown Stone's profile and past funding history, it is reasonable to aim for \$20,000 to \$40,000 annually from these sources. A campaign to win more foundational support is underway, targeting eligible funding of between \$1.8 and \$27.8 million. With a modest projected 5% win rate, we expect to raise an incremental \$90,000 to \$300,000 in 2025.

Individual Donations

Individual donations are crucial and can form a substantial portion of the funding. Historically, many arts organizations receive about 30-40% of their total contributions from individual donors. For Thrown Stone, this could translate to \$100,000 to \$150,000 annually by year five, assuming successful donor cultivation and engagement strategies.

Gala Events

Gala events, while valuable, have a realistic cap on the funds they can raise. For Thrown Stone, setting a goal of \$100,000 by year five is appropriate. This amount considers typical returns for mid-sized arts organizations and balances ambition with realistic expectations.

Corporate Sponsorships

Corporate sponsorships can range between \$5,000 to \$50,000 per sponsor annually. For a company of Thrown Stone's size, targeting \$25,000 to \$50,000 annually from corporate sponsorships is a reasonable expectation.

Planned Giving and Legacy Contributions

To ensure long-term financial sustainability, Thrown Stone Theatre Company will also introduce a planned giving program. This initiative will encourage bequests, endowments, and other legacy contributions from committed patrons, providing a lasting impact on the company's ability to develop and produce new works for years to come.

Endowment Campaign

In addition to annual fundraising, we are launching a five-year endowment campaign to raise \$1 million. This endowment will provide a financial foundation that secures our year-round programming and long-term mission. The campaign will be led by the Executive Director and supported through targeted donor outreach, grant applications, and special campaign events.

ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

To ensure the long-term sustainability of Thrown Stone Theatre Company and our commitment to creating bold, original works, we are launching a five-year, \$1 million endowment campaign. This campaign is essential to building a financial foundation that will safeguard the organization's ability to produce new works, expand our year-round programming, and engage diverse audiences. The endowment is not just an investment in Thrown Stone's future, but a safeguard for its mission. By ensuring a steady stream of income, the endowment will enable us to continue creating new works, growing our outreach programs, and making theatre accessible regardless of short-term economic fluctuations.

Immediate Launch in 2025

- Campaign Goal: Raise \$1 million over five years to build a sustainable financial foundation.
- Managed by ED: The Executive Director will lead the campaign, including outreach to potential donors, organizing campaign events, and leveraging existing relationships to minimize costs.

Campaign Tactics

- Conduct targeted meetings and small events with major donors and foundations.
- Utilize existing resources for marketing and communications to maximize outreach and minimize expenses.

Projected Endowment Growth and Income

- 2025-2026: Focus on building the initial capital through targeted major gifts and pledges.
- 2027-2029: Continue to build capital and start realizing more meaningful returns on the investments.

The endowment offers an opportunity for donors to make a lasting impact on the American theatre. Their contributions will serve as a permanent foundation, ensuring that Thrown Stone can continue to commission and produce new works, while reaching communities that have traditionally been excluded from professional theatre.

REVENUE AND EXPENSE JUSTIFICATIONS

REVENUE

- **Ticket Sales Growth:** While post-pandemic audience behavior has been unpredictable, we see the value of offering bold, new works that aren't easily accessible elsewhere. As a result, we project a 10% year-over-year ticket sales increase. Norwalk's growing population and its increasing investment in cultural programming offer a strong foundation for audience expansion. The expanded 240-seat Crystal Theatre enables us to scale our work, positioning Thrown Stone as an essential and distinctive player in the region's cultural landscape.
- **Grant Revenue Increase:** The projected increase in year-over-year grant revenue from 5% to 10% in years 3-5 is supported the addition of a Development Director to secure additional funds and cultivate relationships with foundations aligned with our mission.
- **A Diversified Fundraising Approach:** Engaging major donors, smaller recurring donors, and corporate sponsorships, will reduce dependency on any single funding source, making our efforts more resilient in times of economic uncertainty. This comprehensive donor segmentation will ensure that our funding model remains adaptable and sustainable.

EXPENSE

- **Staff Salaries and Fees:** Competitive salaries and fees are necessary to attract the experienced professionals who will drive Thrown Stone's growth. This includes key roles such as the Executive Director and Development Director, as well as production-based staff like the Audience Development Coordinator, who will play an integral role in expanding our audience reach.
- **Marketing Budgets:** Our marketing budgets align with the anticipated needs for audience development, particularly in our new Norwalk location. We will leverage both internal campaigns and collaborative efforts with external partners such as the Norwalk Economic Development Office. Our digital campaigns, partnerships with local media, and streetlight banners in Norwalk are designed to target diverse audiences and expand our regional reach, supporting the expected growth in ticket sales and community engagement.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Strong reputation for new work development.
- Engaged and experienced leadership team.
- Solid community partnerships and support.

WEAKNESSES

- Heavy reliance on grants, donations, and endowment.
- Limited full-time staff capacity.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Growing regional interest in new theatre work — an experience audiences can't have at home.
- Potential to expand geographic reach.
- Increasing digital engagement and audience development strategies.

THREATS

- Economic uncertainty affecting funding and ticket sales.
- Residual effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on audiences.
- Potential turnover in key staff roles.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Thrown Stone Theatre Company recognizes several risks that could impact its strategic expansion and operations from 2025 to 2029. Identifying these risks and preparing mitigation strategies ensures resilience and adaptability.

KEY RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

- **Fundraising Shortfalls:** The endowment campaign or annual fundraising efforts may not meet targets.
 - *Mitigation Strategies:*
 - **Tiered Fundraising Strategy:** Segment donors into major, mid-level, small, and recurring categories, tailoring engagement to diversify revenue streams and minimize reliance on any single source.
 - **Modular Programming Approach:** Structure programming to be scalable and flexible, adjusting the number and scope of productions, workshops, and festivals based on available funding.
 - **Endowment.** The endowment campaign will provide a sustainable, long-term financial foundation, ensuring that Thrown Stone can weather economic fluctuations. By securing the endowment over five years, we create a stable income stream that will support our artistic goals and operational costs regardless of annual economic fluctuations, helping to stabilize operations and mitigate future financial risks.
- **Moving to a New Venue:** While Thrown Stone has always been itinerant, moving to a new venue can still pose challenges, including potential audience attrition and the need to build strong ties with a new community.
 - *Mitigation Strategies:*
 - **Maintain Ridgefield Audience Engagement:** Continue outreach to Ridgefield audiences, reassuring them of the short distance to Norwalk and highlighting Norwalk's attractions and amenities.
 - **Leverage Norwalk Partnerships:** Collaborate with the Norwalk Office of Business Development and Tourism to embed our productions into Norwalk's cultural calendar, ensuring strong promotional support and visibility for new audiences.
 - **Unified Marketing Approach:** Scale our marketing to appeal to a regional audience, reinforcing the continuity and accessibility of our productions to both Ridgefield and Norwalk communities. With Ridgefield only 15 miles away, we aim to unify our audience base, ensuring that this transition feels like a seamless regional expansion rather than a relocation.

- **Audience Behavior Changes:** Since COVID, audience attendance has drastically declined for many organizations, with some experiencing a 40-50% decrease from pre-pandemic levels. Changes in audience preferences and increased competition from other entertainment options remain significant risks.
 - *Mitigation Strategies:*
 - **Unique Offering and Mission as a Differentiator:** Our unique focus on involving audiences in new work sets it apart in Connecticut. Emphasizing this unique positioning will be central to attracting and retaining a dedicated audience base.
 - **Audience Development Efforts:** Invest in comprehensive audience development strategies that highlight Thrown Stone's unique mission and programming. Engage new and existing patrons through targeted marketing campaigns, partnerships with the Norwalk Office of Economic Development, and digital outreach efforts to increase visibility and draw in theatre-goers looking for something different from the usual regional offerings.
- **Production Risks:** Challenges such as artist unavailability, technical issues, or increased production costs could impact programming.
 - *Mitigation Strategy:* Develop a network of backup artists and technical professionals. Create contingency plans for each production to manage unforeseen circumstances and control costs. Strong relationships with local artists and technical staff will allow for quick adaptability, while collaboration with regional networks will further strengthen our ability to deliver quality productions even under constraints.
- **Organizational Capacity and Turnover:** Reliance on key staff could pose risks if there is turnover or burnout.
 - *Mitigation Strategy:* Invest in staff development and retention programs, cross-training, and clear succession planning to ensure continuity of operations and leadership.
- **Economic Downturn:** An economic recession could reduce individual donations, ticket sales, and grants.
 - *Mitigation Strategy:* Diversify funding sources by increasing corporate sponsorships, launching targeted campaigns to retain loyal donors, and building a reserve fund to cover operating costs during lean periods. While recessions often impact the arts, past data suggests that strategic engagement with patrons, targeted donor appeals, and diversified revenue streams can help sustain organizations during lean periods.

LONG-TERM VISION FOR GROWTH BEYOND 2029

Looking beyond 2029, Thrown Stone Theatre Company aims to solidify its reputation as a leading hub for new work in American theatre.

LONG-TERM VISION

- **Expand Geographic Reach:** Explore opportunities to tour successful productions to regional theaters and festivals, enhancing Thrown Stone's reputation and expanding its audience base.
- **Develop New Partnerships:** Build partnerships with other leading arts organizations, educational institutions, and cultural centers to expand programming, co-productions, and cross-disciplinary collaborations.
- **Facility Development:** Work toward establishing a permanent performance venue or an arts campus that includes rehearsal spaces, a black box theater, and a studio for new play development.
- **Educational and Community Programs:** Expand educational outreach by creating a formal program for emerging playwrights, actors, and directors, providing mentorship, workshops, and performance opportunities.

ACT NOW

THE FUTURE OF THEATRE IS IN YOUR HANDS

Thrown Stone Theatre Company stands at the forefront of a new era in American theatre—one where bold, original stories are an indispensable part of the fabric of our society. We are the only theatre in Connecticut dedicated to developing and producing new works from commission through development to production. Your support is crucial in retaining this fundamental cultural resource in Connecticut and on the world stage.

WHY THROWN STONE?

It's All New. Your contribution enables the commissioning and development of new plays that seed the American theatre with stories that address the important questions of our time.

It's Alive. Your support gives audiences the chance to reflect, connect, and engage with new perspectives from living playwrights.

Immediate. Immersive. Immutable: We are creating theatre that cannot be replicated on a screen or consumed at home. Your support helps us craft live experiences that enable genuine human connection.

Shape the Future: Help build a theatre that sparks dialogue and drives change by amplifying diverse voices and stories that matter today and tomorrow.

Act Now: Your support today lays the groundwork for future generations of theatre-makers and audiences, ensuring a vibrant and inclusive artistic landscape.

WAYS TO SUPPORT

- **Sustaining Support:** Become a sustaining donor to provide ongoing support for our productions, educational programs, and community initiatives.
- **Board Leadership:** Join our board of directors and lend your expertise to guide our strategic direction and organizational growth.
- **In-Kind Partnership and Barter:** Together, we can build something great. By sharing resources our organizations and constituents prosper.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Partner with us on collaborative initiatives that amplify our impact and advance shared goals for the arts and culture sector.
- **Inaugurate our Endowment:** Help ensure that the work we do will continue to seed the American Theatre for years to come.

WHO WE ARE

BOARD

- Kate Schardt, President
- Emily Wilson, Vice President
- Dean Miller, Treasurer
- Jonathan Winn, Secretary
- Jennifer Dineen
- Kolton Harris
- Steve King
- Kevin Mambo
- Jason Peck
- Daniela Sikora
- Bob Trainer
- Rich Vazzana

PERSONNEL

- Jason Peck and Jonathan Winn, Co-Artistic Directors
- Shannon Helene Barnes, Artistic Associate
- Emma Factor, Artistic Associate
- Richard Harrison, Artistic Associate
- Will Jeffries, Artistic Associate
- Maria McConville, Artistic Associate
- Aidan Meachem, Artistic Associate
- Jordan Moore, Artistic Associate
- Phanésia Pharel, Artistic Associate
- Brenda Phelps, Artistic Associate
- Bridget Ann White, Artistic Associate
- Corrinne Woods, Artistic Associate

Board and Staff biographies available at throwstone.org/about