

# Outside the March Strategic Plan 2018-2020



*Mr. Marmalade (2012)*

Jan 15th, 2018

**Mission: Outside the March creates unforgettable immersive encounters—redefining the experience of theatre for a new generation of audiences.**

#### **Methodology:**

Over the past two years, Outside the March's leadership initiated a series of conversations with our company's primary stakeholders including our Board of Directors, core artistic team, associate artists, donors, industry partners and our audience base. Together we evaluated the organization's strengths, weaknesses, challenges, successes, and areas of improvement, identifying important opportunities for both artistic and operational growth. We conducted an assessment of the company's current stage in the organizational lifecycle, discussed the elements that felt essential to OtM's mission and core identity, and asked our core constituents about their vision for the company's long term future.

From these conversations, there were four central themes that emerged as shared priorities for the company's future – leadership in the field of immersive theatre, the development and support of emerging artists with new perspectives on theatre, a commitment to diversity and accessibility, and increased organizational capacity building. The goals of this three-year plan reflect the central values at the core of Outside the March's mission.

The strategic plan will be made available on the Outside the March website for full public accountability. Outside the March's leadership will also provide yearly progress reports on the status of all measurable outcomes in the form of a publicly available annual report and presentation to the Board of Directors.

#### **Key Goals:**

- 1) Become Canada's leading voice in the field of immersive theatre—an instigator, an educator and a trend-setter that inspires.**
- 2) Nurture a new generation of theatre artists—empowering them to redraw the boundaries of immersive performance.**
- 3) Enrich the breadth and reach of our artistic work by deepening our commitment to accessibility, diversity and inclusivity in our practice.**
- 4) Invest in the continued health and well-being of the artists and staff who work with the organization—maintaining a respectful and safe working environment, and insuring a sustainable quality of life.**

**GOAL 1: Become Canada's leading voice in the field of immersive theatre—an instigator, an educator and a trend-setter that inspires.**



*A Community Target (2016)*

### **Underlying assumptions:**

- We recognize that immersive experiences are a fast-growing market in Toronto and beyond, and that there is a large appetite for this specific branch of entertainment. But we also recognize that the field of immersive theatre is still broadly unknown to the general public.
- We recognize that if we want to cement ourselves as a leader in the field of Canadian immersive theatre, we need to continue to actively expand our reach beyond our loyal audience base in the Greater Toronto Area.
- We recognize that Canada has never had a long running immersive theatre production in the style of productions found in other major cultural cities such as New York, San Francisco and London.

## Strategies

- Create a dedicated budget line for New Work Development—a three-year commitment of at least a \$20,000 investment per year.
- Develop long-term, mutually-beneficial partnerships with organizations outside of the theatre industry to help us reach new audiences and first-time theatre goers.
- Create a venue scouting task force that will search for new and innovative venue partnerships. This task force will secure a relationship with a venue that can support a long running immersive production.
- Build relationships with financial stakeholders who are excited by the possibility of making Toronto a major hub for immersive theatre. We have already begun these conversations with a few key individuals.

## Measurable Outcomes

- Significantly expand our commit to New Work Development. Commit to producing at least one new Canadian immersive experience a year, while simultaneously supporting the ongoing development of several other plays commissioned through our Forward March program.
- Launch an open-ended, continuous, sustainably funded Toronto run of a major immersive OtM production by 2020.
- In 2019 and 2020, tour multiple immersive Outside the March projects across Canada, in conjunction with offering immersive theatre workshops focused on promoting the form to the different cities we visit.

## GOAL 2: Nurture a new generation of theatre artists—empowering them to redraw the boundaries of immersive performance



*Dr. Silver (2016)*

### Underlying assumptions:

- We recognize that immersive, site-specific performance is an increasingly popular area of theatre for young and emerging artists.
- We recognize that there is limited formal training available for young and emerging artists to learn how to produce and create immersive theatre. As one of the leading voices in immersive theatre, we acknowledge our responsibility to support and train emerging voices in the field.
- We recognize that professional theatre training programs are often prohibitively costly to many young artists.
- We recognize the importance and value of treating young and emerging artists like professionals.
- We recognize that there are currently no major public or corporate funding programs exclusively dedicated to developing immersive theatre.

### Strategies:

- Forge key partnerships with training institutions across Ontario and beyond.
- Hire OtM artist educators and facilitators to support the growth of educational initiatives beyond the core company leadership.
- Seek out new funders and corporate sponsors specifically dedicated to supporting initiatives in education, training and mentorship.
- Develop a partnership with an existing Toronto theatre festival to find new avenues to provide mentorship with emerging artists.

### Measurable outcomes:

- Launch a second round of Forward March commissions in 2019 to help support the development of new Canadian immersive work.
- Partner with local arts organizations in each city that we tour to, to provide immersive theatre workshops to emerging artists in all of these communities across Canada.
- Arrange a teaching residency at a major post-secondary training institution, through which we will collaborate with theatre school students to develop a brand new, large-scale immersive experience.
- Develop our Artistic Accomplice program into a year-round paid training program, incrementally over the next three seasons.
- Provide formalized mentorship to a small group of selected independent immersive theatre shows produced within existing Toronto theatre festivals.

**GOAL 3: Enrich the breadth and reach of our artistic work by deepening our commitment to accessibility, diversity and inclusivity in our practice.**



*TomorrowLove™ (2016)*

**Underlying assumptions:**

- We recognize that there are many barriers to accessibility, both visible and invisible, and that these barriers may come in many different forms. We are committed to being inclusive and welcoming to peoples of all origin, gender, culture, faith, mobility, economic status, disability, sexual orientation and any other equity-seeking group, at all levels of the organization.
- We recognize the importance of educating all members of the company and Board in accessibility and equity best practices, and we commit to listening, learning and working to improve our current efforts in these areas. We recognize that this is a long-term process, not an immediate “quick fix”.
- We recognize that our audience base spans a diverse group of people of many different ages, economic backgrounds and accessibility needs. We also acknowledge that current limited resources prevent us from adequately addressing all areas of accessibility at once. We have committed to begin with focusing on physical accessibility in site-specific and immersive work.

- We recognize that in order for diversity to be represented at all levels of our organization, it begins with representation on the Board, leadership positions and core artistic roles.

## Strategies

- Work closely in partnership with Tangled Art + Disability to expand upon a core dialogue between members of Outside the March's team, Tangled's staff and members of their artistic community. This dialogue and consulting process will help inform the creation of our joint plan for increased accessibility on future OtM productions.
- Develop a Board Recruitment Committee to focus on evaluating the current strengths and challenges of the Board's makeup, and proposing and attracting new Board prospects on an ongoing basis.
- Secure a dedicated accessibility sponsorship to help subsidize accessible ticket pricing for all major productions. Seek out new sources of funding at both the public and private level to help support new accessibility initiatives.
- Develop and implement actively inclusive hiring practices that include an outreach component into diverse communities. Seek out partnerships with arts organizations focused on diversity to help expand the organization's network and reach.
- Actively solicit the submission of work by diverse artists in the next iteration of Forward March, and through our OAC Recommender Grant.

## Measurable Outcomes

- With the help of Tangled Art + Disability, ensure that our major production of Dr. Silver in 2018 prioritizes physical accessibility. Develop a comprehensive organizational assessment, and long term accessibility action plan by the end of the 2017/2018 season.
- Increase the diversity of our Board membership by 30% by the 2019/2020 season.
- Increase the percentage of diverse artists represented across all the company's artistic activities, both on stage and off.
- Commit to offering a block of accessibly priced tickets of under \$30 to all major Outside the March productions by the 2018/2019 season.



**GOAL 4: Invest in the continued health and well-being of the artists and staff who work with the organization—maintaining a respectful and safe working environment, and insuring a sustainable quality of life.**



*Passion Play (2013)*

### **Underlying assumptions:**

- We recognize that Outside the March is at a critical juncture in our development, and we require significant expansion in our operational structure in order to sustainably maintain and increase our artistic activities.
- We recognize that, as our organization has grown and our staff and production teams have expanded, it is incumbent on our organization to draft a clear, detailed, publicly accountable Code of Conduct for our company.
- We recognize that hiring permanent staff members and resident artists is crucial for the company's long-term growth and development, and will allow us to build on the successes and challenges of each year's productions and activities.
- We recognize that detailed, searchable, cross-referenced records will go a long way in helping to improve our future development strategies and campaigns.

## Strategies:

- Work with Outside the March's core advisory of advocates, ambassadors and supporters within the Toronto philanthropic community to help facilitate introductions to high-level prospects. Create new opportunities to introduce prospects to the company's work outside of attending major productions.
- Consult provincial and federal resources for workplace Code of Conduct, review the regulations from a number of organizations whose values we admire, and employ the services of a labour lawyer to review our documentation one prepared.
- Develop a sustainable multi-year plan to further diversify Outside the March's funding sources by utilizing joint human resources at both the staff and Board level. Focus on the acquisition of a few targeted funding sources every year, with the understanding that increased funding will result in the ability to increase further investment in human resources to sustain expanded operations.
- Work with an external consultant to properly assess our needs for centralized data management and internal communications.

## Measurable outcomes:

- Secure a group of transformational gifts totalling \$100,000 from key supporters over the next two years, renewable over a three-year period.
- Release to all OtM employees, contractors and collaborators, as well as publicly on our website, the company's official Code of Conduct policy, by the spring of 2018.
- Invest in key staff positions including the expansion of our Communications and Development Manager and Head of Design positions by the end of 2018.
- Commit to compensating all full-time Executive members on a full-time rather than part-time basis by the 2019/2020 season.
- Invest in a patron database system by the end of the 2017/2018 season.