A Letter from the Artistic Director

As I look back on our 2017/18 season, I am struck by the powerful vulnerability of our storytellers.

I’ve been able to sit with many of these individuals as they navigate their own paths of healing. But it wasn’t until recently that I was forced to face internal bias about my own mental health in a way that I hadn’t anticipated.

This past May, I was diagnosed with ADHD. Learning my diagnosis, deciding whether to take medication, and coming out to loved ones, all proved to be a much greater struggle than I could have imagined.

Being vulnerable isn’t easy. It raises the stakes in an immeasurable and often irreversible way. We open ourselves up to potential mistreatment and judgement from our friends, families, coworkers and community at large.

But at Erasing the Distance, I’ve seen how moments of honest sharing can create instant connections and give audiences permission to open up, take up space, and feel less isolated.

I am deeply committed to this work. Committed to sitting with the discomfort, to starting complicated and emotionally-charged conversations and seeing them through to action.

In 2018/19, we are holding more stories of mental health with respect and dignity than ever. We are inviting new voices and ideas into our creative conversations. We are tackling topics of racial injustice, reproductive trauma, and mental health within our schools.

All of these things beg a huge amount of learning. We are leaning into, and we’re learning how to learn along the way. I hope you’ll join us.

Warmest regards,
Heather Bodie
Artistic Director

A Note From Our Founder

Dear Friends,

As the founder of Erasing the Distance, I had the honor of listening to and experiencing the stories of so many wonderful people while leading the organization for over a decade. I learned more than I anticipated I would.

One thing I learned was how we needed to change from our initial, more narrow focus on mental illnesses to exploring mental health issues more broadly. The shift happened because I listened to a lot of stories from people whose experiences didn’t necessarily fall into easily identifiable categories. I spoke with people who had lost loved ones, experienced childhood trauma or had found themselves in abusive relationships. I met others who suffered from chronic pain, spiraled after losing their jobs or retiring, and others who experienced the devastating impacts of homelessness and food insecurity, without ever seeing a therapist or counselor. In many cases, they didn’t have the access, support system, or knowledge to even know about mental illness. I knew then that Erasing the Distance had to adjust, had to meet each individual where they were at.

Now, as we move ahead, Heather Bodie is guiding Erasing the Distance into the future. She understands the complex picture of mental health beyond traditional diagnosis and that it needs to be addressed holistically and creatively as the organization grows.

Heather is a deeply caring, empathetic, and passionate artist. I trust her to tackle issues such as these with rigor and passion and I’m thrilled to support her in the role of Erasing the Distance’s Artistic Director.

Come see her leadership unfold in DocFest2018 this fall and the production that is being developed out of the criminal justice project in spring, 2019. I’ll be in the audience and I hope to see you there, too.

Fondest regards,

Brighid O’Shaughnessy
Founder/Artistic Director Emeritus
What Was On Stage

Thank you for being a great audience for last year's performances!

We premiered *Breathe With Me*, *The Lies We Tell*, and *Walk A Mile* in September 2017 at SPARKfest. The shows were all a success, with positive coverage from Chicago Magazine, WTTW, and more. Many of the powerful stories from SPARKfest have become part of our Custom Performances, and lessons learned last year have helped us solidify what we need for a robust DocFest2018.

In winter 2017, *The Holidays Unwrapped* was on stage. A music-filled performance that braided together the real stories of nine people, *The Holidays Unwrapped* was a seasonal look at how to manage stress throughout the holiday season.

Music for *The Holidays Unwrapped* was performed live by Artistic Company Member Steve O’Connell and Joshua Wentz; their original scores and a handful of holiday favorites were part of the show.

*Walk A Mile*
Adapted for the stage and performed by Stacy Stoltz. Directed by Matt Hawkins.

*The Lies We Tell*
Adapted for the stage by Mariana Green, Charlotte Drover, and Adam Poss. Directed by Charlotte Drover.

*Breathe With Me*
Adapted for the stage by Millie Hurley and Maura Kidwell. Directed by Heather Bodie.

*The Holidays Unwrapped*
Adapted for the stage by Steve O’Connell, Katie Relkin, and Amy Sarno. Directed by Amy Sarno.

Residencies

Our method of gathering, transcribing, and performing true stories is unique. Outside organizations are often interested in learning how we do what we do. In response to this demand, Erasing the Distance leads a limited number of residencies each year.

In fall 2017, and into winter 2018, Artistic Director Heather Bodie led the second Erasing the Distance residency at Dominican University. Concurrently, Custom Programs Manager Jana Ross launched our first collaboration with the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC).

Three States, All In One Day!

It was an Erasing the Distance first; three separate performances, in three different states, all in one day.

On Wednesday, November 8, 2017, there were Erasing the Distance performers and facilitators in Fort Wayne, IN, Lake Forest, IL, and Sacramento, CA.

We are so grateful for every opportunity to share stories with a variety of people—young and old, at conferences, in schools, and in workplaces. As our growth continues, we anticipate many more multiple performance days.

“*This show inspired me to find help again. It really opened me up.*”

– Dominican audience member
DocFest2018 | September 6-16, 2018
1802 W Berenice Ave. | Chicago, IL

It’s a new tradition...our festival of new work! This year, we are launching a new festival format. DocFest2018 includes two feature productions, ten short developmental monologues, and three reservation-only workshops.

Learning 101, one of the newly developed pieces, focuses on whole child wellness and examines the role trauma plays in education. While the other piece, Over the Moon, explores the life cycle of the female reproductive system and its intersection with mental health.

Each performance is preceded by a monologue reading. The topics featured in the monologues include bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety, PTSD, grief, disordered eating, and more.

Uniformed Responders Showcase | November 12–14, 2018
In the line of duty, firefighters, paramedics, and law enforcement officers encounter traumatic events daily. These routine experiences, unaddressed, can lead to significant mental health challenges. Join us for this showcase of new stories from this sphere, followed by facilitated dialogue.

That Night | Spring, 2019
This world premiere, developed out of The Criminal Justice Project, follows the story of a man who was wrongfully convicted of two serious crimes. Through this production we experience his path to incarceration, his fight for exoneration, and his mental health journey transitioning back into the outside world after nearly a decade in prison.

Looking Ahead

Moving into the next year, we are excited about our initiative to have Erasing the Distance performances consistently in Chicago Public High Schools. We have a generous funder* who has made it possible for us to return to Chicago classrooms and have much needed conversations about mental health, healing, and resources for youth seeking guidance.

Development of these performances will happen this fall, with performances scheduled for spring, 2019.

*Pete and Cheri Magrini established the ‘Jdawg and TheDman Charitable Fund’ in honor of their son John and in memory of their son Dan by using the nicknames they had for each other as young boys. The fund is administered by Pete, Cheri and John Magrini and John’s fiancé Ariel Van Eynde.
Sara Sarkey’s Dedication to True Stories

We were first introduced to Sara Sarkey, Scientific Director for Neuroscience at Takeda Pharmaceuticals, after an Erasing the Distance program at her workplace. When the performance began, she noted:

“I was drawn in. It felt so real. He was full of humor and insights. It really resonated. And when he finished, I realized that he, the actor, didn’t have the issues reflective of the story. That really struck me, the intensity with which the actors of Erasing the Distance really get into the mind of the person who shared the story and translate it for the audience.”

She was intrigued, touched, and motivated to see more.

That was in 2015 and Sara has since been instrumental in helping to bring Erasing the Distance to regularly perform for Takeda employees. After that first experience, Sara quickly brought another Erasing the Distance program to her team’s retreat day.

“The work of Erasing the Distance allows us at Takeda to really feel what the patients we try to help every day are going through. What matters most to them in their lives. Being able to listen to the stories and see them acted out has given us a renewed sense of why we do what we do.”

Since then, Sara’s relationship with Erasing the Distance has grown. Sara was part of the Takeda group that sponsored My Other Full-Time Job, adapted and directed by Artistic Director Heather Bodie. The sponsorship made it possible for us to develop a new script that would be particularly relevant for Takeda employees and their corporate partners. She was extremely helpful with her committee work on this project and she was also instrumental in championing the work being shared with the public.

“I want to help expand the voice of individuals impacted by mental health issues. And part of that is supplying opportunities for the work of Erasing the Distance to reach a larger audience. It’s important others see this work, too.”

My Other Full-Time Job was performed both privately at Takeda and publicly at Stage 773 in June, 2017. The private performance at Takeda cultivated new relationships, including one that led to Erasing the Distance performing for a local major insurance company.

After so many examples of her supporting our work, it was clear Sara would be a dynamic addition to Erasing the Distance’s Board of Directors. Executive Director Diana Clegg asked Sara if she’d be interested, noting her personal commitment to the organization and her efforts to empower patients. And she accepted!

We are already so grateful that Sara has joined our family at Erasing the Distance as a board member. Sara immediately went to work surveying board members to assess the current skills and capacity within the board and recommend any areas in need of growth. These insights are extremely valuable as we move to increase the size of our board. Her attention to detail and engagement are such assets.

Sara understands our work as an audience member, a collaborator, and a board member. Her insights are a gift to the whole organization, and to our future audience members.

“We all look forward to expanding Erasing the Distance and showing the impact mental illness has on all parts of society. One of the struggles in treating mental illness, is everyone thinks it’s not them. But it’s not ‘those people’... it’s us. Together, we’re seeing the world through other’s eyes,” shares Sara.

Thank you, Sara!

We are a stronger organization thanks to your talents, time, and energy.
**Supporters**

We are so grateful for the generosity of our supporters. Your help makes it possible for us to ignite conversations about mental health issues.

THANK YOU.

**Benefactor ($25,000 and above)**
- Aspire Health Inc.
- Chicago Community Trust
- I.A. O’Shaughnessy Foundation

**Visionary ($10,000 - $24,999)**
- Arts Work Fund
- Glasser & Rosenthal Family Foundation
- Illinois Arts Council
- Jdawg & TheDman Charitable Fund
- MacArthur Fund for Arts & Culture at the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation
- Terence O’Shaughnessy & Karen Cunniff
- Takeda Pharmaceuticals Company

**Transformer ($5,000 – $9,999)**
- Barnes & Thornburg LLP
- Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events
- Laura Donaghy & Richard Pless
- Health Care Service Corporation
- Takeda Matching Gifts (Richard Pless, Kathleen Chavanu, Seema Tulsian, Sara Sarkey)

**Leader ($1,000 – 4,999)**
- Anonymous Contributions
- Jeanette Benziger in memory of Daniel Magrini
- Michael Carrillo
- Diana Clegg & Midge Stocker
- Jantina Clegg
- Dermody Properties Foundation
- Forefront
- Elizabeth Fretwell & Christine Robinson
- Daniel & Kimberly Griffin
- Bruce Himelstein & Lisa Simons
- Diana Jaffe & Juliana Reed
- Jellyvision Lab
- Loyola Capital Management, LLC
- Lutheran Social Services of Illinois
- Gail & Kevin Owens
- Sara Sarkey
- Arch W. Shaw Foundation
- Darryl Sleep
- David Strauss
- Thresholds
- Urban Balance

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**Board of Directors Update**

As Erasing the Distance grows, our Board of Directors continues to evolve. We are fortunate to have dedicated board members who consistently volunteer their time and talent. Many thanks to our current board—Dr. Kimberly Dean, President; Dr. Bruce Himelstein, Vice-President; Terence O’Shaughnessy, Treasurer; Evelyn Joy Coker, Secretary; Judith Bradford *(brand new member!)*, Sara Sarkey, and David Strauss.

We are also grateful for our new finance committee members—Cheryl Cooper, Heidi Sue Havens, and Dana Overbey—who are working with board member Terry O’Shaughnessy and Executive Director Diana Clegg on policies and procedures related to our fiscal growth.

If you would like to learn more about the board and how you can become involved, contact Diana Clegg at diana@erasingthedistance.org for more information.

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**Income Analysis**

One of our core values is sustainability. We maintain a variety of funding sources to achieve this goal.

![FY2018 Income Analysis](chart_image)

- **Program Fees & Tickets** 23%
- **Foundation Grants** 33%
- **Government Grants** 7%
- **Corporation/Business Contributions** 4%
- **Individual Donations** 11%
- **Special Events** 22%

**FY2018 Income vs. Expenses**

- **INCOME** 347,573
- **EXPENSES** 316,948

**FY2018 Income Analysis**

- **Program Fees & Tickets**
- **Foundation Grants**
- **Government Grants**
- **Corporation/Business Contributions**
- **Individual Donations**
- **Special Events**
Vivian & Myles Megdal in memory of Michael Megdal
Mimi Molden & Matthew Falk
Charity & James Shaw Moyado
Catherine & David O’Donovan
Mary O’Shaughnessy & Charles Van Gilder
Dana Overby
John Peller
Katherine & Thomas Reap
Mary & Michael Ryan
Unitarian Church of Hinsdale congregants
Cathleen M & James W Webb
Matthew Webb
Steven Willis

James J. Kane III
Roger & Sally Keding
Jennifer & Michael Kelber
Jeffrey Kroeger
Jamie & David Pekarek Krohn
Ryan & Cristina Krueger Gabriel Landazuri
Stephen Leaver & Jim Caihill
Timothy Letscher
Richard D Lewis in memory of Archie Clegg Joanna & Howard Maclay
Cheryl & Peter Magrini Patricia Mathews & David Wilson
John & Barbara Mayes
Sara McBride
Peter H McGuire
Metropolitan Family Services
Jessica Montalvo
John E Muench Patricia Murtagh
Thomas O’Connor Kenneth Peterson
Virginia & Frank Rapley
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Amy Sarno
Clasina Leslie Smith Caroline & Jeremy Steelberg
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Lois Stocker
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Lisa Turner
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Dawn Church
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Cynthia Cooper
Susan & Patrick Crevey
Robert Dettbarn
Greg Dobbs
Hazel Dobbs
Vicky Dobbs
Dana Dyksterhuis
Jerry Dyksterhuis
Jill Marks Eaton & Douglas R Eaton
Wannapa & Claude Eubanks
Sarra Aberin Fernandez Deanna & Louis Fiorentino
Corita R Forster
Oriana Fowler
Nancy Frazier
Jimmy Freund
Rebecca Fritz
Tarakesha Hammond
Meghan Harksins
Trish Harksins
Michael Harvey
A. Anne Holcomb
Kari Hosmer
Laura House
Linda Hurley-Brice
Rogelia Lily Ibarra
Julie Irving
Holly James
Edward & Margaret Jones
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Suzanne Kraus
Alan Krohn
Martha Lamb
Tessa Lenore
Susan Lloyd
Mary Love
Sara Mancini
Karen Matts
Alyssaandra McKay
Sandy McNabb
Brian Mitchell
Karen Mooney & Pam Rumanick
Debra Northey
Suzanne & Patrick O’Connell
Kristin & Patrick O’Connor
Doris Popovich
Aleda Richter-West
David & Suzanne Ritter
Tony Romas
Barbara Madej Roos
Joshua Rosenblum
Markeise Russell

Justine Serino
Silvia Skripkauskas
Anthony & Leah Suarez-Abraham
Tina Taylor-Ritzler
Nathaniel & Rebecca Tico
Zak Tracy
Rhonda Tullis
Eileen Vorbach
Mark Washburne
Joseph Wiens
Amy Wishnick
Bernadette Young

Rescuer
(In-Kind)
Anonymous
Blue Man Group Chicago
Chicago Sinfonietta
Chicago Symphony Orchestra
City Winery
Dark Matter Coffee
Davis Theater
Drew’s on Halsted
Eris Brewery & Cider House
Gift Theatre Company
Goodman Theatre
Half Acre Brewery
Handlebar Restaurant
Anthony House
House Theater of Chicago
II Porcellino Restaurant
Image Pilots
Joffrey Ballet
Maura Kidwell & Ron Rains
Kimpton Gray Hotel
Koval Distillery
Lincoln Park Zoo
Tentacle O’Shaughnessy
Peirson Meyer Wines / L’Angevin, LLC
Ramen San Restaurant
Raven Theatre
Red Frog Events
Red Orchid
Revolution Brewing
RPM Restaurant
Stephanie L. Matthews Esq., Steppenwolf Theatre Company
Strawdog Theatre Company
Timeline Theatre
Uncommon Ground
Victory Gardens
Westin Chicago
River North
Wreally Studios

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Trish Harksins
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A. Anne Holcomb
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Linda Hurley-Brice
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Alyssaandra McKay
Sandy McNabb
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Joshua Rosenblum
Markeise Russell

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Wreally Studios
Get Involved
Bring a custom performance to your workplace, learn about our conference offerings, or consider a donation today.

Every donation is tax-deductible. And be sure to ask your employer if there is a matching gift program. Double your gift at no cost!

To donate, visit erasingthedistance.org. No amount is too small. Thank you!

IGNITE
Save the Date!
Saturday,
March 9, 2019

Each year we gather to celebrate the transformative impact of our work. Join us for a fun night of cocktails, food, music and a series of powerful performances.

Erasing the Distance
Founder
Brighid O'Shaughnessy
Artistic Director Emeritus

Board of Directors
Kimberly Dean
President
Bruce Himelstein
Vice President
Terence O'Shaughnessy
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Judith Bradford
Sara Sarkey
David Strauss

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Diana Clegg
Executive Director
Heather Bodie
Artistic Director
Jana Ross
Custom Programs Manager
Scott Letscher
Operations Manager

Mali Anderson
Communications Manager

Artistic Company
Angela Alise
Brenda Barrie
C Jared Fernley
Greg Geffrard
Mariana Green
Millicent Hurley
Maura Kidwell
Jennifer Mathews

Steve O'Connell
Wannapa Pimtong-Eubanks
Katie Relkin
Stacy Stoltz
Charles Stransky
Nik Zaleski

Clinical Company
Carly Bueltel, PsyD
Mihaela Campion, MA, LCPC
Beto, Chavez, MA

Alexandra D. Fliess, LCSW
Rebecca Fritz, LCSW
David Simpson, PhD, LCSW
Jill Wolf, LCSW