

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021





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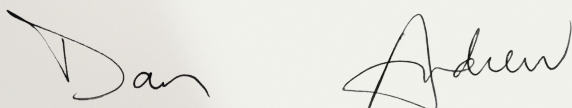
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GROWTH AGAINST THE ODDS

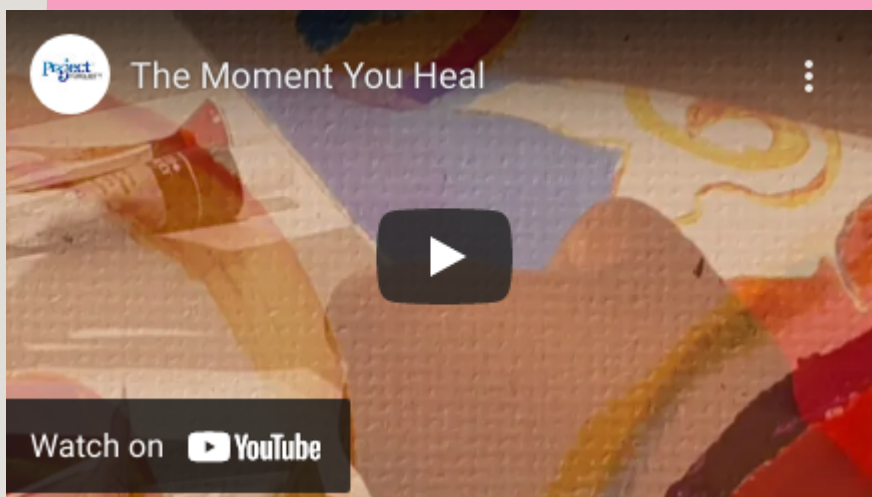
In what marks Project: Humanity's first full fiscal year in the pandemic era, the company has not only remained in motion but has expanded its operations and further honed its ways of working.

The July 2020 - June 2021 fiscal year had PH building up ways of serving our key communities within a cultural sector that continued to face considerable precarity and a community arts scene that had essentially no in-person prospects. Concurrently, we hired new staff, executed our first formal fundraising plan to great success, and launched new internal practices to improve our work culture.

In many regards – and against the odds of a global health crisis and its associated impacts – PH had its [most transformative year-to-date](#). As has been the case for many, 2020-21 will go down as a defining period for us.



Daniel Chapman-Smith and Andrew Kushnir



WATCH: *The Moment You Heal*, a stunning collaboration we commissioned from three youth mentees in our PH 1:1 program that weaves together visual arts, spoken word, and sound design

VALUES IN MOTION

In John Cane's cartoon two wheels stand side-by-side. In one is a mouse racing as fast as he can. In the other is a second mouse, this one sitting on its edge, contentedly. The caption of the cartoon: **"I had an epiphany."**

The forced stillness imposed by COVID-19 and its associated social restrictions resulted in PH delving deeper into its stated purposes, better understanding the needs of our community, and ensuring that our activities reflected our values to their utmost. This foundational work allowed us to invest in the relationships and forms of creativity that move these values into the world.

We, as a company, believe:

1

That theatre can help people listen better and become more compassionate

2

That theatre can inspire active citizenship and lead to real change.

3

That theatre is a powerful way to bring together disconnected groups.

Given the impediments to our typical theatre programming (in person, in a venue, strangers shoulder-to-shoulder in the dark) and our drama programming (forming a circle, with chairs pushed to the walls), PH discovered ways of engendering these tenets of connection, compassion-building, and activating citizenship, **across multiple art forms.**

VALUES IN MOTION

On an organizational level, we also spent time formalizing these values in our internal operations with as much intentionality and care as we do with our more outward-facing relationships/activities. Central to this endeavour has been **identifying some of the key values** we want to practice as an organization:

A

To favour process over product

B

To actively resist binaries and binary-thinking

C

To centre wonder as an antidote to reactivity and rushing to conclusions

D

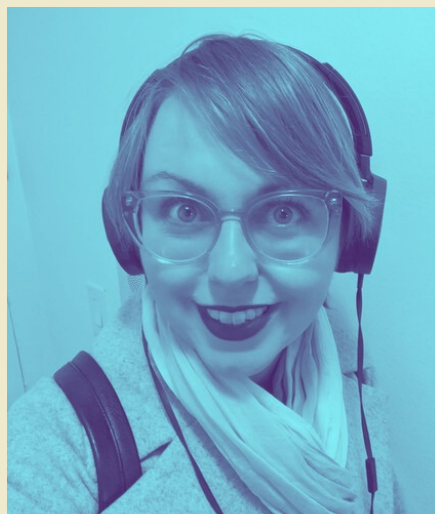
To examine power structures in our work and work culture and to actively challenge the inequities that they may perpetuate

The process of formalizing these values can be attributed to the company's internal **Anti-Oppression initiative**, which since June 2020 has taken the form of bi-weekly meetings attended by all PH team members. Alongside this, over the course of 2020 and 2021, the entire PH team took part in **b current's B Inclusive webinar series**, lead by **Rania El Mugammar**. Rania's exceptional workshops included: *Racial Solidarity for A Collective Future*, *Shut it, Uncle Bob! Talking to Racist Loved Ones*, *Anti-Blackness at the Intersections*, *Cultivating Consent Culture* and *Anti-oppression for Artists & Cultural Producers*.

In our own space, PH has discussed how our values can and should keep informing hiring practices, board building, artist engagement, youth engagement, engagement with community partners and our donors/supporters, and meaningful participation in the process of Truth and Reconciliation.

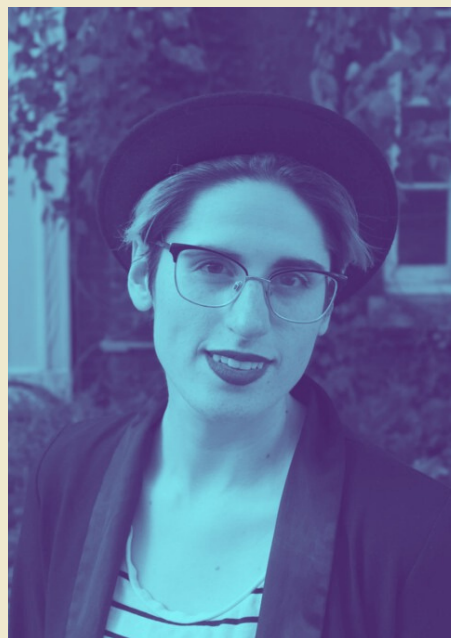
NEW TO THE TEAM

The summer of 2020 had two new team members joining PH – bringing the organization, at that time, to 5 members. Danielle Bourgon and Max Cameron Fearon joined Daniel Chapman-Smith (ED), Andrew Kushnir (AD), and Malia Rogers (Development and Communications).



DANIELLE BOURGON (SHE/HER)

Danielle (she/her) assumed the role of General Administrator at the company. Danielle is an educator, arts administrator and overall enthusiastic human. A graduate of UBC's Theatre and Elementary Education programs, she's worked everywhere from community centres to professional theatres to help connect and support the work of artists and youth. Danielle bolsters all aspects of PH's workflow with vibrant administrative abilities. She is increasingly involved in the workshops we do in high schools throughout the TDSB.



MAX CAMERON FEARON (THEY/THEM)

Max Cameron Fearon (they/them) undertook the role of Program Coordinator for CAPP (the Covid-19 Artist Partnership Program, now PH1:1). Max is a queer, non-binary, Mad, and multiply-disabled theatre artist, facilitator, and administrator. Their work explores how our identities & relationships are shaped by our communities, social locations, and mental health. Furthermore, Max seeks to platform equity-seeking artists and bridge the gap between "community-based" and "mainstream" theatre initiatives. Max holds a BA Hons. from the University of Toronto. Max has been central to the expansion and strengthening of the PH1:1 mentorship program through their exemplary engagement with community partners, mentor-artists, and youth.

PH: YOUTH

CAPP THEN PH 1:1 HEREAFTER



The 2020-21 Season marked the **first full year of CAPP** (the Covid-19 Artist Partnership Program), which moved from its pilot phase at Youth Without Shelter in July 2020 and by June 2021 had expanded to **8 shelters and/or youth service organizations**. A \$25,000 grant from the Emergency Community Support Fund, administered by the United Way, propelled this considerable growth.

**"THANK YOU FOR
BRINGING LIGHT
INTO [THE SHELTER]
DURING AN OTHERWISE
DARK TIME "**

- SHELTER STAFF, PH 1:1 ARTIST PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

CAPP (now called PH1:1) has become a flagship offering from PH and one that the company is extending for the foreseeable future. This program continues to pair youth-on-the-margins with professional artists in a discipline of the youth's choosing for 12 weeks of online mentorship. **The impacts** of this hyper-customized arts education have been myriad, not least of which a breaking down of isolation during the peak waves of this pandemic, the accruing of new skills (and the confidence that comes with that), activating joy during a difficult time, and becoming a rare "wraparound" engagement that can meet youth no matter where they are in the city (and their lives).

PH: YOUTH

CAPP BY THE NUMBERS

CAPP FROM JULY 1, 2020 TO JUNE 30, 2021:

PH came into significant amounts of **qualitative and quantitative data** for CAPP thanks to our ongoing partnership with **Quilin**. Lindsay Valve, the principal at this data consultancy, has helped PH improve CAPP and more effectively serve its stakeholders. Among the powerful discoveries that we did not specifically anticipate from the program are the very high youth interest/engagement levels and the extent to which this mentorship framework provides fertile conditions for deep relationships.

Partnership
Timeline:

2020

eva^s

TURNING
POINT
YOUTH SERVICE!

KENNEDY
HOUSE

YOUTH
WITHOUT SHELTER

FRIENDS
RUBEN

Covenant
House
TORONTO

2021

sketch

REXDALE
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

**"I COULD VISIBLY SEE
HER BECOMING MORE
PROUD OF HERSELF.
SHE SHOULD BE;
SHE IS EXCELLING."**

- ARTIST MENTOR, PH 1:1 ARTIST PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

**"[I WAS SURPRISED]
BY WHAT I'M CAPABLE
OF... I NEVER THOUGHT
I'D BE ABLE TO CURATE
MY OWN SHOW"**

- YOUTH PARTICIPANT, PH 1:1 YOUTH ARTS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

PH: YOUTH

CAPP BY THE NUMBERS

47

Partnerships (45 artists and 44 youth)

53

Spaces filled in the program

478

Session hours

791

Touch points (between youth and partners)



PATRICK DEBELEN

A key aspect of this program is its ability to adapt to the needs of its participants; mentors and mentees have **agency to co-create their mentorship model**. The way this shows up in the program has evolved over this past year and an inspired mentor, Patrick DeBelen, contributed to this in a very meaningful way. When faced with a youth who was missing occasional sessions, Patrick asked if he could engage his mentee outside of Zoom sessions through direct messages as a way to share files, ideas and writing prompts. This approach proved highly successful and has resulted in PH promoting alternative models from the outset of all mentorships. While the majority of partnerships still take place on weekly Zoom meetings, some have moved to social media platforms, meetings at different intervals, employing video tutorials and other more customized forms of engagement.

VERBATIM EDUCATION

VERBATIM THEATRE: WORKING WITH THE REALNESS

In the fall of 2020, artistic director Andrew Kushnir and PH partnered with Ghostlight to offer a 7-week masterclass entitled “**Verbatim Theatre: Working With the Realness**”. This course, offered at no cost to its 12 selected participants (and 12 auditors), introduced theatremakers to PH’s signature verbatim theatre aesthetic and ethics framework and had Andrew guiding each creator through their own short verbatim theatre process. Each participant created a verbatim étude delving into a theme of their choosing – in some cases, the beginnings of projects that artists have carried beyond the course.

SCHOOL WORKSHOPS

Project: Humanity’s **verbatim workshops** continue to find new contexts. In the 2020-21 season, these took place in both the TDSB and independent schools in the GTA, at schools in the York District Region School Board, and at Queen’s University.

This past year had PH innovating with Zoom to carry some of our methodologies and considerations into an online space. We were admittedly surprised at the effectiveness of this transfer. We attribute this, in part, to educators’ and students’ enduring appetite for ways of working that activate their voices and create theatre from recorded encounters. PH led an extended 5-session verbatim theatre unit in two schools – a first for the company.



PH: THEATRE TRANSFORMED

The company's theatre practices had to be reimagined for the 2020-21 season, and yet, we found ourselves no less active. What's more, some of the ways we have adapted **cracked open new possibilities** for the organization and our eventual return to in-person practices.

A DOCUMENTARY

Dinner & Show - Back To School Edition

In September 2020, Project: Humanity partnered with Crow's Theatre to present "*Dinner & Show - Back To School Edition*". This online event (and fundraiser) aimed to be a dose of hope in hard times, honouring and championing young people who keep braving extraordinary circumstances. It included the premiere screening of the 22-minute documentary *Finding Radical Hope*, which focuses on **Dr. Kathleen Gallagher's (UofT) remarkable study on drama classrooms** -- the inspiration behind *Towards Youth*, the celebrated Project: Humanity/Crow's Theatre co-production (2019).

The night featured a number of special guests alongside Kathleen, including a group of TDSB students and their drama club, a youth culture researcher and author Dr. Jacqueline Kennelly (Carleton University) and Maureen Johns, Director of Education at Pasqua First Nations (Saskatchewan), who was profiled by CBC The National for her innovative approach to in-person learning. Worth noting: *Finding Radical Hope* had a more public release in January 2021 in partnership with the Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators (CODE).



WATCH: "[Finding Radical Hope](#)"

PH: THEATRE

TRANSFORMED

A NATIONAL PROJECT

What Are You?

In September 2020, PH was among the first wave of micro-commissioners to participate in the national **Transformations** project. Over the course of 2020-21, the National Arts Centre received 87 submissions of short works that asked “What would it take to transform our society for the betterment of all?”. Project: Humanity commissioned **Dillan Meighan Chiblow**. An Ojibwe storyteller from Garden River First Nation, Dillan created an audio work entitled *What Are You?* which examines how one might retreat inside themselves after “someone says 3 words” that change everything. The piece has had over 250 listens and can be found here:



WATCH: ["What are you" by Dillan Meighan Chiblow](#)

PH: THEATRE

TRANSFORMED

A RESEARCH COLLABORATION

Towards Audacious Citizens (Working Title)

Towards Audacious Citizens is the latest collaboration between Project: Humanity and Dr. Kathleen Gallagher. Her current and unfolding ethnographic research project *Global Youth (Digital) Citizen-Artists and their Publics: Performing for Socio-Ecological Justice* includes Andrew Kushnir as embedded artist. With funding from the Canada Council, Andrew engaged (virtually) with the project's Toronto site as well as the international collaborators in India, Greece, Taiwan, Colombia and England. As was the case with *Towards Youth*, the aim is to create a new verbatim play that surfaces the voices and insights of young people in the drama classroom – this time, as it pertains to the climate emergency.

A VERBATIM MUSICAL

CHEW (In Development)

CHEW is a new verbatim musical co-created by **Sarah Segal-Lazar, Anika Johnson** and **Andrew Kushnir**. This new work takes a look at apathy in our times and how the unlikeliest community (competitive eaters) have something to teach us about belief, belonging, and pushing your limits. In Summer 2020, this work received a formal **co-commission from PH and Crow's Theatre**. Over the course of last season, the project had a number of short readings and script development workshops. It currently has 20 original songs, all crafted from verbatim word-for-word interviews with eaters.



PH: THEATRE

TRANSFORMED

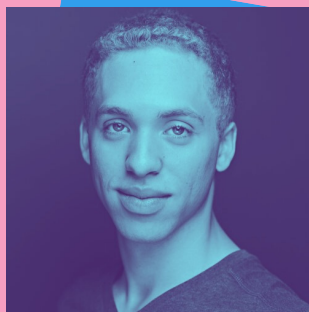
A VERBATIM INCUBATOR

Proximity Lab

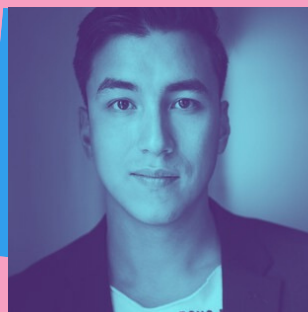
Proximity Lab was an online intensive carried out in the summer of 2021. Four equity seeking artists drawn from a pool of applicants took on the question: ***what is the future of verbatim theatre?*** These artists along with researcher Lindsay Valve, AD Andrew Kushnir and a wide range of guest artists and mentors (Camille Turner, Lisa-Marie DiLiberto, Chris Altorf, Adam Chen, Alex Bulmer and Tristan Whiston) passed documentary theatre through an anti-oppression lens and/or non-conventional presentation models. Each cohort member also undertook an étude which respectively considered cultural consultancy and audio-drama, conflict resolution and gamification of verbatim theatre, movement and dance, and how Indigenous knowledge and ways of making intersect (and conflict) with verbatim theatre practices.



Lucy Rose Coren (she/her) is a Canadian theatre-maker whose work before now has been in the UK. She is currently a member of Factory Theatre's Foundry



Alten Wilmot (he/them) is a multidisciplinary artist. He is the founder of Unwrap Theatre and in his teenage years, he founded Voices Over Time.



Richard Lam (he/him) is a Toronto-based Actor, Writer, Musician, and Sound Designer. He recently released his own home-recorded pandemic EP *Hard Rain: A Mixtape Cabaret*.



Katey Wattam (she/they) is a director and creator of mixed English, Irish, and Anishinaabe ancestry who is drawn to stories connected to her ways of knowing while allowing space to explore and experiment with theatrical forms through an Indigenous lens.

To read their full bios, click [here](#)

LOOKING AHEAD

Over the coming year, PH is looking to sustain our PH 1:1 program alongside resuming our in-person youth engagement. **Online connection has become a critical new addition** to our youth work; we also recognize how other youth thrive most in spaces with live and in-person facilitation/relationship. We can see how our online programming has created new pathways for youth-on-the-margins to find Project: Humanity's live/in-person offerings, as well as other arts communities and resources in the city.

OTHER POINTS OF FOCUS INCLUDE:

Proximity Lab was awarded a Canada Council Digital Now grant which will allow PH to commission the lab's artists and resource development (and public engagements) in the 2021-22 season.

Project: Humanity will continue to **develop new verbatim works**, with an eye to advancing *Towards Audacious Citizens*, *Chew* and the Proximity Lab works-in-progress. As it stands, the 2021-22 season will see an even further upswing in how many artists we engage.

The company plans to keep investing in **concerted growth**. Along with this comes a need for new players – such as new board members. PH continues to operate on the SKETCH Working Arts strategic platform but in this coming year intends to secure our own charitable status. We look to keep advancing our fiscal management and fundraising plans, creating a care-focused work environment for our staff, building our community of supporters, as well as further enshrining and practicing Anti-Oppressive principles in all aspects of our programming and core culture.



The ensemble of *The Middle Place* which, in 2020-21, celebrated its 10 year anniversary.

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

This pandemic era has been anything but a hold for us as a company. In his 2020 Globe and Mail article, Andrew Kushnir wrote: *Theatre artists are never really interrupted. We are community-inclined and prone to staying in motion. **Like water, we'll work our way through the cracks** until we emerge from this very cracked time. With any luck, we'll be among those facilitating the social and spiritual recovery this historic crisis will require.* This possibility has been borne out by Project: Humanity in this last year of activity. It bodes well for the seasons to come.

The 2020-21 season saw **our biggest jump in terms of individual donors contributing to our work.** We also forged brand new relationships with foundations that share our values. Our network of supporters were instrumental to our success and to the breadth of our positive social impacts over this past fiscal year.



WE THANK YOU

FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

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 Chris Fletcher
 Claudia Stampone
 Conor Copeland
 Damien Atkins
 Daniel Chapman-Smith

Danielle Bourgon
 Danielle Martin
 Darlene O'Donnell
 Dave Cameron
 David Chapman-Smith
 Diana Tremain
 Ellen Denny
 Ellen Jaffe
 Ellora Patnaik
 Elly Daniels
 Emily Atherton
 Ethan and Ariel Siller
 Eve-Lynn Stein
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WE THANK YOU

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WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

PROJECT: HUMANITY IS GRATEFUL FOR THE SUPPORT OF OUR MAJOR FUNDERS BOTH PRIVATE AND PUBLIC



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du Canada

Canada

Via the federal Emergency
Community Support Fund



The Rotary Club of Toronto

LAURA DINNER & RICHARD ROONEY



United Way
Greater Toronto

Semester 1 of PH 1:1 was partly
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Quilin
See the whole picture

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