

KARAMU
NEXT GENERATION

REBUILD.RENOVATE.

REBIRTH

2021-2022
Annual Report

KARAMU



Mission Vision & Values

Mission: To produce professional theatre, provide arts education and present community programs for all people while honoring the Black experience.

Vision: To be a premiere professional theatre producing socially relevant entertainment, while delivering innovative, culturally responsive arts education programs and experiences for life-long learners.

Values:

Inclusion: Valuing diversity within and outside Karamu House.

Collaboration: Partnering to achieve winning outcomes.

Integrity: Demonstrating high moral principles.

Joy: Expressing delight and happiness for our work with community, partners, and each other.

Excellence: Achieving the highest quality in all we do.

Impact: Making positive contributions in lives and community.

From The **CHAIR OF THE BOARD** Michael Jeans



As the new Chair of the Board of Karamu House, I am humbled by the history of this organization and proud of the present and future impact it has and will have on our community. The Board is honored to be a part of this beautiful mosaic, investing our time and talents in the continuity and sustainability of this local and national treasure.

Being conscious of honoring our past and building upon it to define our future, Karamu's leadership, staff, and volunteers put their hearts and souls into delivering exceptional theatre and programming. They are sensitive and always conscious of their responsibility of supporting our youth in their overall development, providing education and training for adults to drive employment readiness, and creating opportunities for seniors to share their talents and engage in new experiences. This is Karamu. This is the joyful gathering place.

As a Board, we are responsible for ensuring the organization has what it needs to continue to grow **Karamu: Next Generation**. The arts have a direct impact on the health of all communities. It enhances creativity, encourages discipline and tolerance of diversity, and contributes to the local economic growth. The arts are the connector among people and cultures, promoting a healthy well-being for us all.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, and the entire Karamu Family, thank you for your continued support. Our CEO, Tony and I invite you to come and experience the rich history, the bright future, and the community of Karamu House.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Jeans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Jeans
Chair Of The Board

From The **PRESIDENT & CEO** Tony F. Sias

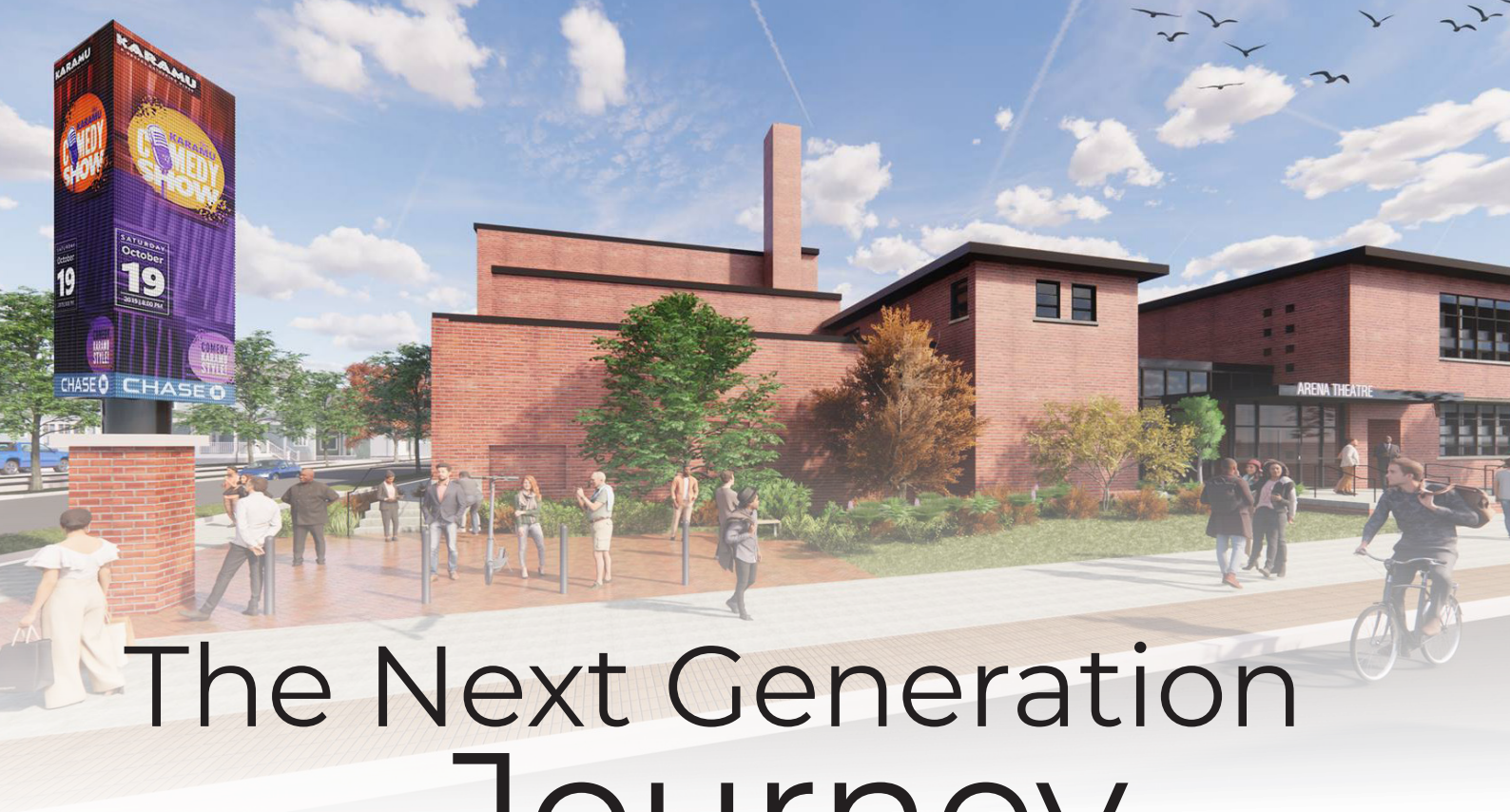


Our former first lady, Michelle Obama stated, “We’ve got a responsibility to live up to the legacy of those who came before us by doing all that we can to help those who come after us.” Karamu, A Joyful Gathering Place (Swahili), is building a legacy for those who will come after us by standing on the shoulders of our past but also charging towards the future, creating an environment where dreams are made and can come true! This past fiscal year, we helped our audiences dream by continuing our tradition of seasonal plays to include Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom, Black Nativity, The Mountaintop, and American Moor, continued our arts programming and community outreach, and began to build new traditions, expanding our campus, while addressing socially relevant issues of both today and tomorrow.

Over the past year we relaunched ourselves into the great unknown as the community and the world slowly returned to public places. Audiences waxed and waned with upticks in the spread of COVID-19’s Omicron variant. We provided a mix of virtual and in-person, free and ticketed offerings. Now we are poised for an explosion of content for all ages and stages. A recommitment to our social justice roots, stimulating new partnerships, and fresh spaces in our theatre wing will help us launch a range of 21st century experiences to celebrate, educate, and activate our audiences.

As the oldest Black producing theatre in the nation, we feel a responsibility to expose our communities to our collective concerns, while celebrating and honoring our differences through the arts. Allow Karamu to help you imagine again, exploring and discovering new ways of thinking, while educating and entertaining you all at the same time. This is what a joyful gathering place does... creates a space where everyone’s experience is different but memorable, fresh, but familiar. If you have never been to Karamu, or been away for a while, I invite you to come and be a part of the family that was created in 1915, connecting to the emotions that drive us all, and joining our journey by being a part of building the legacy for the next generation!

Tony F. Sias
President and CEO



The Next Generation Journey...

Jelliffe Theatre Completed
2018



Pause in Construction
2020



2017
Groundbreaking for Phase I of Construction



2019
Lobby, Galley, Lounge Complete for Phase II of Construction



2023
Grand Opening!
Phase III Completion of Construction



July 2021

Karamu joyfully welcomed audiences back to the house with a free jazz concert in partnership with Tri-C JazzFest Cleveland. Powerhouse contemporary jazz ensemble Horns and Things presented a spectacular evening of live jazz for an eager audience.

Karamu donated a large portion of its archives, consisting additionally of photographs, drawings, programs, institutional records, and collected letters of Karamu alumnus and playwright Langston Hughes, to Case Western Reserve University's Kelvin Smith Library.

August 2021

Youth from Karamu's Arts Academy presented a filmed performance of their first original script, *"Rhythmic Roots"*. The powerful story, told in dialogue, dance, and song, portrays the tremendous joy and heartbreaking pain in the life of an African American family, discovering spiritual influences through the ancestral line. The production also included the students' original music.

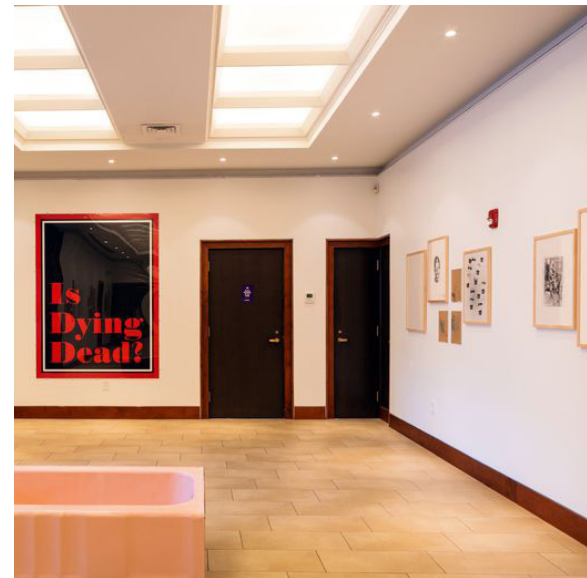


Greenwood: An American Dream Destroyed

Karamu's previously filmed production of *"Greenwood: An American Dream Destroyed"* about the 1921 Tulsa race massacre continued its extended life as a dramatic, social justice teaching tool with tens of thousands of viewings on home screens through Ideastream Public Media and Karamu's streaming platform. A special screening in partnership with Cleveland Public Library and sponsored by Citizens Bank kicked off Karamu's Prosperity Series, examining the play's content related to the generation of Black wealth and lessons for today.

September 2021

In September and October, Karamu presented the first solo exhibition of influential Cleveland artist, activist, and advocate for social justice Amanda D. King in its renovated George L. Forbes Gallery. The exhibition, entitled “God is Anti-racist (GiA-r), composition no. 1,” featured 19 screen prints, textile, photography, text art, and ready-made sculpture objects that evoked anti-Black racism, faith, and family history. Steven Litt’s review (cleveland.com) said, “(The Exhibition) reveals King as an artist who communicates outrage, passion, and hope with a restrained minimal approach. She could shout, but she chooses to whisper, which makes you lean in and listen more closely.”



October 2021

Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom

In October, Karamu kicked off its return-to-theatre season with August Wilson’s play “**Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom**,” a searing portrayal of the exploitation of African American musicians in 1920s Chicago. Karamu delivered spectacular performances that propelled the racial equity-themed story of one of the first woman artists of color who took agency over her career. Broadway World Cleveland’s review labeled the cast as “excellent,” and the play “well-performed, that grabs and holds the attention ... a production well worth seeing!”

The Oberlin Review

Will Lindsey
The Oberlin Review

“After COVID-19 derailed the theater world, this play marks a prodigious return to in-person acting for director and actors alike - a moment of epic proportions compounded by the legacy of Karamu House and the relevance August Wilson’s work holds in our current day and age.”

November 2021



Residencies

Residencies fill a gap for school districts and schools that are unable to support full-time, year-round arts classes for students. Residencies also provide additional expertise to round out skills of schools' arts faculty and to provide more intensive instruction to students.

Mayfair Elementary School (East Cleveland School District): Karamu Arts Academy continued its relationship with the East Cleveland School District and Mayfair Elementary School by providing an arts residency during the fall. Although the last few days of classes were cancelled due to COVID-19 and the culminating production of "The Wiz" was rescheduled to the spring, 18 students performed enthusiastically for 220 peers.

Cleveland School of the Arts (Cleveland Metropolitan School District): Three Karamu teaching artists served 42 9-12th grade students in fall residencies as directors and stage managers for Cleveland School of the Arts New Play Festival. Students performed original works for 300 audience members.

Arts Education Expansion Pilot

In the spirit of Karamu's social justice content for arts learning, the Karamu Arts team worked to create a new workshop entitled, "**Passing the Torch – Reigniting Hope**". The content of the workshop was based on the voice of youth effecting change. Young people explored Karamu's history of advocacy, equity, and inclusion. Literary works of Langston Hughes, Harlem Renaissance poet and ARTivist, were used to demonstrate pride and expression. The goals of the program include youth and community empowerment and understanding how one can use their agency toward the enactment of positive change in the face of insurmountable social injustices.

December 2021



Black Nativity

In December, thousands of patrons returned to the Jelliffe Theatre to help celebrate the holidays in traditional Karamu style with Langston Hughes' glorious "**Black Nativity.**" A brush with the Omicron variant, Karamu's first COVID-19 exposure since the start of the pandemic, canceled the final few performances while affirming Karamu's health and safety protocols that included daily testing for performers, crew, and staff.

January 2022

Advocacy Workshops

Trained artists created an emotionally safe space for youth to learn and create through drama, music, and movement in these pilot sessions:

University Circle Scholars (in partnership with University Circle, Inc.) Two-day workshop focused on feelings of safety in the community, creating a choreopoem as the final product.

Bolton School (in partnership with Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Ohio) – Afterschool program over multiple weeks, with the final product being a shared song.

Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage – January 2022: A workshop in conjunction with a virtual MLK Day celebration of diversity for youth and adults, creating a shared song as the final product.

Fairfax Renaissance Development Corp – A workshop celebrating the meaning and legacy of Juneteenth for youth and adults. Creating a community performance as the final product.

Shaw High School (East Cleveland School District) – This five-day workshop culminated in the creation of a song and dance as the final product.



February 2022

The Mountaintop

Karamu's theatre season continued with a stirring production of Katori Hall's **"The Mountaintop,"** a fictional depiction of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s last night on earth set entirely in the Lorraine Motel on the eve of his assassination in 1968. The play reimagines Dr. King's chance encounter between him and a motel maid prompting him to confront his life, his legacy, and his future. One reviewer commented about the show's direction, "Time is used wisely to tell the story. It is a lesson in history as well as the human condition and well worth viewing." Nina Domingue, a regionally-acclaimed Black female actor, playwright and director, directed this production.

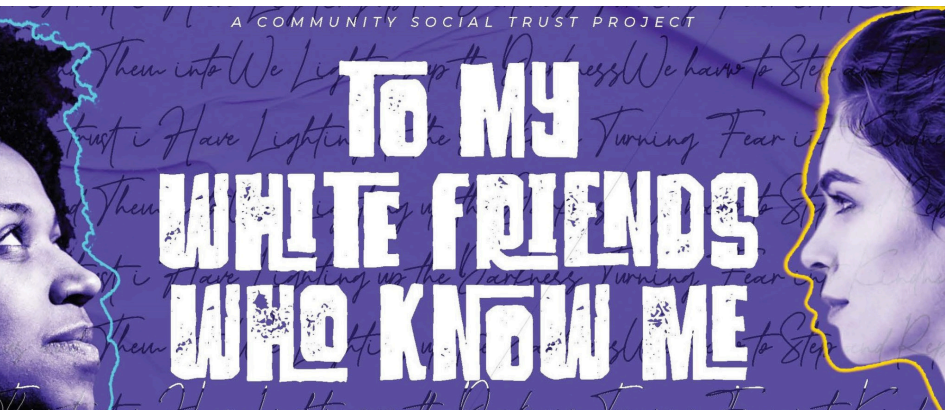
Rooted in Change

To help celebrate Black History Month, Karamu premiered **"Rooted in Change,"** a documentary about Karamu's inspiring social justice history throughout a century of service to the community, sponsored by Erie Bank.

Nike Xhibition

Karamu also participated in NBA All-Star Weekend in Cleveland by hosting 150 people to view the premiere of Nike and Xhibition's video, "Cleveland is Never Done," which celebrated stories of five individuals and their allegiance to Cleveland's creative scene.

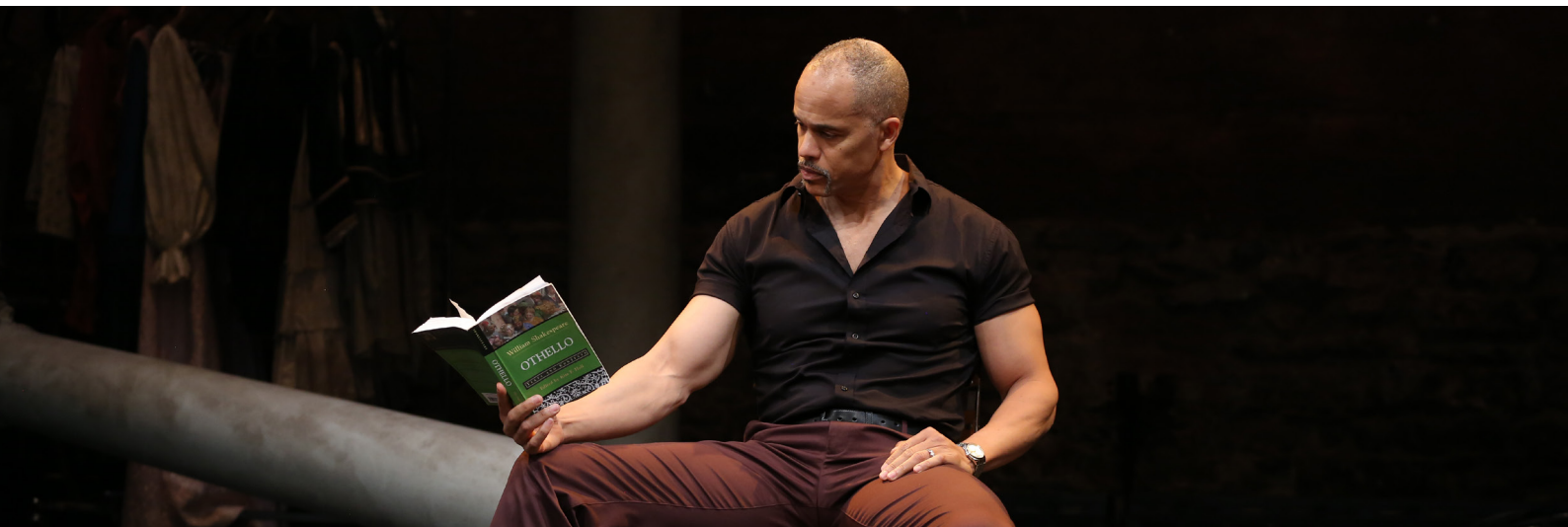




April 2022

Written by Dr. Deborah L. Plummer, Psychologist and DEIB specialist, Karamu became a producing partner with an excerpt of a theatrically based play, illustrating real life DEIB experiences to the Cleveland community. The excerpt was presented to a special audience, which then became a full production in the fall.

Dr. Plummer stated, ***“This community event, designed as diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) edutainment, brings home an engaging, instructive message without sacrificing substance. To My White Friends Who Know Me takes apart theories of human differences in practical terms leaving audiences with information and inspiration...achieving racial equity one friend at a time.”***



May 2022

Karamu House was awarded the Best Touring Production by the Cleveland Critics Circle (CCC) for Keith Hamilton Cobb's ***American Moor***. This poetic exploration of Shakespeare, race, and America was directed by Kim Weild and written and performed by national television and theatre actor, Keith Hamilton Cobb. The action of the play takes place in an audition for the role of Shakespeare's character, Othello. A middle-aged African American man is auditioning for the role opposite a male director who is considerably younger and white. During the audition, the director, from his place of authority and oblivious privilege, attempts to guide the actor's performance towards a rendition of the black character that he (the director) insists is most authentic.

June 2022

Juneteenth

Karamu, through a partnership with Downtown Cleveland Alliance, Ingenuity Cleveland, and Tri-C JazzFest Cleveland, participated in MetroHealth's **Cleveland Juneteenth Freedom Fest**, one of the institution's annual destination events held in the heart of Downtown Cleveland. The institution stated this festival "is poised to position the community as a national leader in celebrating Juneteenth." This fun, free, family event celebrating Black culture and history welcomed more than 10,000 people. It featured a full day of performances, including Karamu performers, family-friendly activities, vendor booths supporting Black entrepreneurs, educational booths, and an exciting fireworks finale. The event featured a headline performance by Grammy Award winner, Keyon Harrold, with special guest and Grammy Award winner Bilal. 22 community partners and 34 sponsors supported the event, along with more than 120 visual artists and performers.



The Karamu Arts Academy

Karamu celebrated the joyous return of in-person summer, fall, and spring Sankofa-centered classes in drama and movement for youth and adults.. For the spring performance, an intergenerational cast presented a delightful selection of African folktales. Summer students performed at Juneteenth Freedom Fest. Residencies with East Cleveland School District and Cleveland School of the Arts took Karamu's unique approach into the community. In alignment with Karamu's social justice focus, the Arts Academy team piloted a new workshop entitled, "Passing the Torch – Reigniting Hope," delivered through community partners with content designed to advance the youth voice in advocacy through arts activities.



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Revenue & Support



FOUNDATIONS
55% | \$2,735,209
GOVERNMENT
25% | \$1,225,673
THEATRE REVENUE
15% | \$587,294
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS
5% | \$198,902

EXPENSES



GENERAL
43% | \$1,125,880
PRODUCTION
29% | \$749,118
MARKETING
25% | \$662,012
OTHER
3% | \$34,083

OUR DONORS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Donor List

July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

\$1 Million+

Bank of America
The George Gund Foundation

\$250,000-\$499,999

The Cleveland Foundation
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

\$100,000-\$249,999

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation,
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\$75,000-\$99,999

The National Trust for Historic Preservation
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Ohio Arts Council

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Cleveland Clinic Foundation
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Kulas Foundation
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