A Year of the Unexpected
Annual Report FY17

POTUS Among Us • Photo by Jeff Salmore
As national stress levels seem to reach new highs every day, WIT provides catharsis, discovery, and escape to more and more Washingtonians. Our classes bring people together and get them out of their heads. Our performances inspire laughter and levity.

Our work is a light in the dark—fueled by the power of spontaneous creative play. Our growing community is a testament to how people are responding to our positivity.

—Mark Chalfant
WIT Artistic/Executive Director
By the Numbers

330
SHOWS PERFORMED

23,000
AUDIENCE MEMBERS

350
DC ARTISTS INVOLVED

133
CLASSES OFFERED

1,545
ENROLLMENTS IN CLASSES

50
IMPROV FOR ALL WORKSHOPS

60
WIT @ WORK TRAININGS CONDUCTED

2,000
WIT @ WORK PARTICIPANTS

720
IMPROV FOR ALL ATTENDEES

300
YOUTH SERVED

389
TOTAL DONORS

$11.79
AVG TICKET PRICE
In its fourth quadrennial run, the election satire *POTUS Among Us* was WIT’s most immersive show ever. The production, which drew cast members from multiple WIT ensembles, centered around participatory democracy and received praise from *The Washington Post*, as well as a five-star review from *DC Metro Theater Arts*.

**Melanie Harker (Co-Director):**
I was interested in putting together a cathartic theatrical experience that would allow us not to feel so helpless with the barrage of craziness that this election cycle has served up.

**Citizens’ Watch**

Inspired by the British TV series *Broadchurch*, dramatic production *Citizens’ Watch* told a new tale of a small-town murder each night. The show also brought WIT’s production values to a new level with its impressive technical design. It was an audience hit — imbuing typically light improv with the effects of shock, tension, grief and horror.

**Michael Hendrix (Director):**
The humor, when we’re doing it right, is coming from a really different place than most improv. It comes from the characters themselves being funny out of sincerity ... And there’s so much tension to break in this show, I think it’s ripe for moments of laughter.

**Shows**

FY17’s mainstage programming was more ambitious and innovative than ever before. WIT pushed the boundaries of longform improv to find new ways to connect with audiences.
iMusical Tenth Anniversary

iMusical members past and present celebrated the company ensemble’s tenth anniversary at the GALA Hispanic Theater for a one-night-only performance. The show featured alumni from Chicago, LA, and NY, who united in improvised song to celebrate the milestone and raise money for WIT’s creative programming.

iMusical member Jaci Pulice:
My favorite iMusical moments all have heart and the songs that have stuck with me are the ones with emotional truth and weight. iMusical brings realities to stage and makes people laugh, applaud, gasp, and sometimes (if you’re like me) cry.

Finalist for the Mayor’s Arts Awards

As a testament to the excellent work of our company ensembles and project shows, WIT was named a finalist for the Mayor’s Arts Awards for Excellence in the Arts in fall 2016. These awards are the most prestigious honors conferred by the District on arts organizations.

Tenth Annual Improvapalooza

Improvapalooza continued to feature one-of-a-kind experimental performances for nearly 900 audience members. Highlights of this year’s series included the dance stylings of a toddler in “Baby Modern Dance” and visual art representations of scene work in “The WIT Museum of Post-Postmodern Improv Art.”

Fourth Annual District Improv Festival

Produced in alliance with District Improv, the fourth annual District Improv Festival brought in record audiences. All of WIT’s company ensembles were featured, and teams from all over the country performed. the renowned duo Dummy headlined.
**Fighting Improv Smackdown Tournament**

The Fighting Improv Smackdown Tournament (FIST) drew record audiences as the March Madness-style tournament entered its eleventh year. This year, four-person teams were allowed to compete for the first time, with Childish Things (pictured) taking home the coveted championship. Nearly 300 improvisers competed in the tournament.

**Rise Up! Performance Series**

In the wake of the presidential election, WIT’s community of artists felt a jolt of creative restlessness and channeled it into *Rise Up!*—a performance series highlighting diverse perspectives which took place over the weekend of the inauguration and Women’s March. Guest performers from New York, Chicago, Atlanta, and more took the stage.

**Vagina! An Improvised Monologue Show**

This one-night-only all-female show combined improv with vulnerable truth-telling to benefit House of Ruth, a local organization that provides comprehensive services to the victims of intimate partner violence and their children. Directed by Annie Barry (WIT ensemble Nox!), the show featured members of multiple WIT ensembles and Harold teams.

**Expanding Harold Teams**

The Harold team family continued to grow, expanding to seven teams. Over the course of the year, the Harold team program featured 93 players, including 39 players new to the program. 6,190 audience members attended Harold Night for free in FY17.
Growth in Enrollment and Gains in Diversity

Within our core multi-level curriculum, WIT reached 1,545 enrollments. Over the past three years, WIT’s enrollments have increased by nearly 40%—a testament to student satisfaction and positive word of mouth. In this era of growth, WIT has maintained high ratings on student surveys.

In order to underscore the importance of representation in our classes program, WIT made gains in increasing the diversity of our faculty. The percentage of classes taught by women in FY17 increased to 42% from 33% in FY16. Notably, spring 2017 saw the first time more than half the classes were taught by women. WIT increased the number of classes taught by people of color to 17 percent in FY17.

Improv For All Expands

In FY17, WIT expanded the scope of its Improv For All workshops, which continue to reach every ward of DC. More than 50 of these free, two-hour workshops were held in FY17, and over 700 participants attended.

Diversity Scholarship Program Debuts

In April, WIT launched its first diversity scholarship. WIT has committed to increasing diversity among the voices and talent in DC’s improv community, and we believe this work starts in the accessibility of the classes program. The scholarship covers the cost of the entire curriculum for selected students, with the specific aim of increasing racial and ethnic diversity. In our first quarter of awarding the scholarship, we supported seven students.
Cohort of Students Finishes Curriculum in Anacostia

With the support of an East of the River grant from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, WIT has programmed subsidized classes at Anacostia Arts Center for two years. In November 2016, a cohort of eight students finished the WIT curriculum entirely at Anacostia Arts Center with Education Director Jonathan Murphy personally teaching the cohort’s final two classes.

Camille Kashaka, Director of the Anacostia Arts Center:
Of the many stories from people who have taken WIT’s classes in Anacostia, there is one common theme: taking improv classes with WIT helps people overcome themselves to be more confident and liberated.

Youth Programming Expands

WIT grew its youth programming in FY17, including work in DC Public Schools. With the assistance of a Creative Spark grant from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, WIT provided improv workshops at schools such as Murch Elementary and Moten Elementary.

In all, WIT provided 22 improv workshops for more than 300 young people free of charge.

Building Offerings for Advanced Improvisers

In FY17, WIT more than doubled the number of WIT University workshops offered. These learning opportunities allowed more improvisers to build unique skills in stand-alone, specialized sessions with expert facilitators. Instructors included Butt Kapinski creator Deanna Fleysher, Second City’s Jamie Moyer, Magnet Theater’s Megan Gray, and Second City’s Frank Caeti.

WIT also offered multiple new 8-week, advanced elective classes to the curriculum. These classes included two sections of Improv Personal Training with Dan Miller, the Evente format with Annie Barry, the monoscene with Reaves McElveen, and multiple sections of Intro to Musical Improv with iMusical director/accompanist Travis Charles Ploeger.
Record Growth for WIT@Work Engagements and Participants

WIT dramatically increased its WIT@Work engagements from 38 trainings in FY16 to 60 in FY17—it’s biggest year of growth to date. The program reached 2,000 participants from a wide variety of organizations including new clients like Discovery Communications and grocery chain Lidl (pictured below).

Returning Satisfied Clients

Nearly half of WIT@Work’s FY17 engagements were with returning clients, including the National Institute of Health, Capital One, the University of Maryland, and Goodwill International.

Adding Notable Clients

WIT@Work added many exciting new clients to its roster, including the likes of the World Bank and NPR, who used WIT@Work to develop their workplace efficiency—a testament to how the program is broadening its reach across various industries throughout the DC Metro Area.

Following a successful training with WIT, NPR's Claire O’Neill wrote:
Regardless of the medium, improv skills would be useful to anyone who has to think on the fly — a reporter who acts as “talent” or a producer who is problem-solving behind the scenes; an interviewer or an interviewee.
WIT Welcomes Jordana Mishory to Staff Role

In May, Jordana Mishory became WIT’s fourth full-time staff member. In the newly created role of operations manager, Mishory supports and oversees projects across all areas of WIT’s programming. A longtime teacher, coach, and performer with WIT, Mishory has also been active behind the scenes, helping plan Improvapalooza for the past four years as well as serving on the board of District Improv since 2014.

Five New Members Join WIT’s Board

WIT welcomed five new members to its board of directors this year, each contributing a diverse and impressive skill set to the advancement of our mission. Deborah Cotter, Terrell Fuller (pictured), Graziella Jackson, Jaci Pulice, and Krystal Ramseur all joined the board in FY17.

WIT in Space Fundraiser

In May, WIT embarked on its greatest voyage yet—the journey towards a permanent home. At the WIT in Space fundraiser, the community came together to enjoy food, drinks, and improv in support of WIT’s quest for a permanent theater space. The event not only ignited excitement for the future of our community, but launched us toward our fundraising goals by generating over $40,000.
**DC Commission Awards WIT Heritage Grant**

The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities renewed its support of WIT as a Heritage Grant Program recipient, providing over $90,000 in general operating support for the upcoming DC fiscal year. The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation increased its support for WIT as well.

**Three-Year Strategic Plan Concludes**

FY17 brought a three-year strategic plan to a close. The plan, instituted by the board in May 2014, outlined objectives that guided WIT’s growth over the time period. WIT is now entering a new three-year strategic plan, created with input from the board and community stakeholders.

**Tracking Diversity to Assess Efforts**

WIT continues to track racial and gender diversity at every level of the organization including student enrollment, teachers, performers, directors, staff, and board members. The number of women in performing in company ensembles (from 33% in FY14 to 39% in FY17) and Harold teams (FY14 40% - FY17 53%) has increased. WIT’s board is 63% women.

WIT’s gains in serving people of color have increased in our training program, with 26% of students identifying as people of color in FY17 (up from 16% in FY 15). WIT’s board is 37% non-caucasian.

**Sexual Harassment & Discrimination**

Prompted by a national discussion on the topic, WIT worked on strengthening its Sexual Harassment and Discrimination policy. Using feedback from a stakeholder survey and expertise from WIT’s board of directors, WIT ensured that its policy is readily accessible (http://www.witdc.org/discrimination) and that lines of communication are open and reliable for community members that need to report.
WIT has remained fiscally stable while growing organizational reserves.

**Financials**

**Exceeding Revenue Goals for FY17**
With the help of a strong budgeting process that included ambitious, but achievable, revenue goals, WIT’s overall revenue exceeded our projections.

**Reaching Goal for Operating Reserves**
With the help of healthy surpluses, WIT successfully reached its goal of having three months worth of operational expenses in a dedicated cash reserve fund. This nonprofit best practice has been in the making since WIT underwent an organizational evaluation as a recipient of the Upstart grant from the DC Commision on the Arts and Humanities.

**Statement of Financial Positions**

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<th>ASSETS</th>
<th>FY2017</th>
<th>FY2016</th>
<th>FY2015</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Checking/Savings</td>
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<td>369,809</td>
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<td>Accounts Receivable</td>
<td>45,651</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Current Assets</td>
<td>13,981</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Current Assets</td>
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<td>Fixed Assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Assets</td>
<td>2,850</td>
<td>2,450</td>
<td>2,450</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>549,955</strong></td>
<td><strong>394,267</strong></td>
<td><strong>296,536</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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| LIABILITIES & EQUITY | | | |
| Liabilities | | | |
| Current Liabilities | 128,265 | 76,750 | 99,598 |
| Total Liabilities | 128,265 | 76,750 | 99,598 |
| Equity | 421,690 | 317,517 | 196,938 |
| **TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY** | **549,955** | **394,267** | **296,536** |

**FY17 Revenue**

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>43%</td>
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<td>Performances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<td>WIT@Work</td>
<td>9%</td>
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**FY17 Expenses**

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Performance</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared Costs</td>
<td>16%</td>
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</tbody>
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Individual and Corporate Donors Provide Unprecedented Support

Through the WIT in Space fundraiser, an increase in monthly donors, and generous individual donations, WIT received more individual support in FY17 than ever before. Among these donations was a $3,000 gift from an anonymous donor to support WIT’s diversity scholarship—the largest individual gift to WIT to date. WIT extends heartfelt thanks to all our donors.

$1,000+

$500-$999
Caliber Home Loans, Mark Chalfant, Deborah Cotter, Megan Cummings & Kevin Gauthier, Ceci De Robertis, District Improv, Terrell Fuller, J.G. Harrington, Dennis Johnson, Adam Koussari-Amin, KVS Title, Lee’s Flower and Card Shop, Bri Lux, Zach Mason, Molly & Colin Murchie, Liz Rowan, Goli Samimi
$200-$499
Lura Barber, Barrel Oak Winery, Boating in DC, Meredith Buchanan, Richard Casey, Alfredo Casta, Jennifer Coken, Dana Malone Coaching, Chandrima Das, DogfishHead Brewery, Keith Eby, Escape Velocity, GALA Hispanic Theater, Tom and Ann Harris, Michael Hendrix, Lidia Hernandez, Sarah Houghton, Olga Howard, Graziella Jackson, Tyler Korba, Jamie Lantinen, Tony Lazzeroni, Robin Miller and Bob Levine, Nick Martinez Photography, Taylor Morinigo, Jessica Norman, Veronica Norman, Caroline Blair Pettit, Alison Pine, Alan Prunier, Lawrence Rickards, Ris, Katie Rush, Signature Theater, Kate Symes, Susan Tettleton, VIDA Fitness, Stewart Walsh, Washington Glass School, A.J. Wilson, Matthew Winterhalter, Lynn and Richard Wyvill

$100-$199

Up to $99
To support WIT’s mission and work in DC, visit witdc.org to donate online.

You may also contact External Relations Director Dan Miller (dan@witdc.org; 202-204-7772), to discuss targeted support of any area of our work.
WIT Staff

Mark Chalfant
Artistic/Executive Director

Dan Miller
External Relations Director

Jonathan Murphy
Education Director

John Windmueller
WIT@Work Director

Jordana Mishory
Operations Manager

Board of Directors

Ceci De Robertis (Chair), Adam Koussari-Amin (Vice Chair), Thomas Harris (Treasurer), Goli Samimi (Secretary)

Whitney Brimfield*, Mark Chalfant, Deborah Cotter, Terrell Fuller, Ehmonie Hainey, Graziella Jackson, Michael Kitces, Kimberly Martin, Aaron Mosby, Jaci Pulice, Krystal Ramseur, Cici Sattarnilasskorn, Alex Stille, Greg Tindale*

FY17 Interns

Emma Gold, Brian Klose, Sarah Marksteiner, Matt Miller, Alexandra Rood, Emma Shoemaker, Emily Vokal

*FY17 was last year of board term