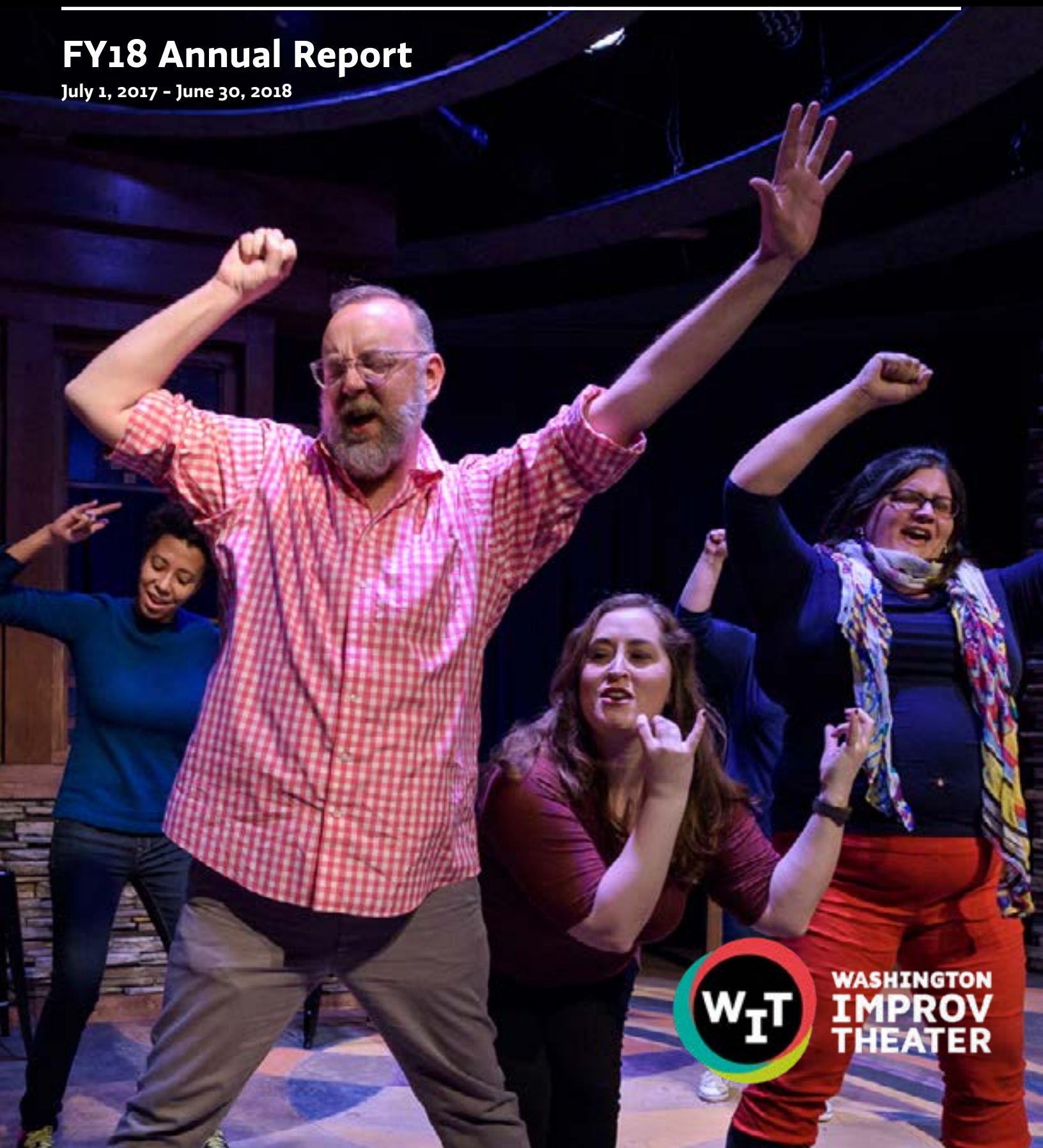


Washington Improv Theater's 20th Anniversary Year

FY18 Annual Report

July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018



**WASHINGTON
IMPROV
THEATER**

“Twenty years ago, I was part of a group of newbie improvisers who staged WIT’s first shows in a church basement near Dupont Circle. The audience was just family and friends.

None of us would ever have believed all that WIT as achieved today—our performances push the boundaries of our art, our classes are flourishing, WIT@Work is serving clients of every size, and we are doing more community work in places like DC Public Schools than ever before.”

–Mark Chalfant, Artistic/Executive Director



FY18 BY THE NUMBERS

351

INDIVIDUAL
PERFORMANCES

6,945

HAROLD NIGHT
ATTENDEES

23,468

TOTAL PERFORMANCE
ATTENDEES

17

DIVERSITY
SCHOLARSHIP
RECIPIENTS IN FY18

1,618

CLASS
ENROLLMENTS

9%

ENROLLMENT GROWTH
OVER FY17 FOR
LEVEL ONE
CLASSES

62

IMPROV FOR ALL
WORKSHOPS

1,000

IMPROV FOR ALL
ATTENDEES

8

WARDS
PROGRAMMED WITH
IMPROV FOR ALL

66

AFTER-SCHOOL SESSIONS
TAUGHT AT
MARIE REED
ELEMENTARY

495

TOTAL
DONORS IN FY18

77

MONTHLY
DONORS

SHOWS

In the beginning ... the first incarnation of WIT was Mainstage. The fledgling organization presented performances around Logan Circle at venues like the now-shuttered Metro Café and Diversité, as well as Adams Morgan's DC Arts Center.

WIT's company ensembles are the lifeblood of WIT's performance programming. Made up of some of the most experienced and dynamic performers in the city, WIT's ensembles continued to set the bar for longform improv in DC during FY18.



**WIT Mainstage circa 2001
(clockwise from top left):**

**Dave Johnson, Katie Carson, Tyler Korba,
Mark Chalfant, Brian Coleman, Colin Murchie,
Topher Bellavia, Natasha Rothwell**

Ensembles Deliver Exciting New Formats

Commonwealth continued to develop its audience interview format “On the Brink” and began a series of Lottery Shows that allowed students to enter for a chance to perform with the ensemble.

iMusical continued to delight audiences while welcoming five new members to its ranks: Ryan Brookshire, Darnell Eaton, Patrick Fleury, Jess Lee, and returning member Catherine Deadman.

King Bee presented “Off Book,” a format where the team delivered cold readings of the beginnings to scripted plays and improvised the rest. In spring 2018, the ensemble ended its run with a finale performance featuring alumni players from across the years.

Love Onion delved into the “Blooming Onion,” a format the team initially devised for Improvapalooza, which juxtaposed the energy of large group scenes with the vulnerability of solo scenes.

Madeline tackled a format inspired by the legendary ensemble JTS Brown that featured fluid scene transitions to create new scenes based on stage pictures from the preceding scene.

Inspired by its “Leakers Gon’ Leak” format that the team created for fall 2017’s Rise Up! series, **Nox!** performed a format based on improvised character monologues.

Hellcat Becomes Newest Ensemble

In fall 2017, ongoing project show The October Issue became reborn as **Hellcat**. In the spring, Hellcat became WIT’s newest company ensemble. The all-female cast cultivated a following based on their energetic shows featuring guest monologists reading from embarrassing texts (diary entries, AIM conversations) from their past.

Harold Night Audiences Surge

WIT’s Harold team program continued to thrive, spanning seven teams. 108 players performed as part of the program in FY18. Harold Night smashed records with audiences totalling nearly 7,000 patrons!

WIT'S DIRECTORS SERIES INNOVATES AND INSPIRES WITH UNIQUE AND AMBITIOUS VISIONS



Yearbook

Summer 2017's *Yearbook* brought high school drama to the WIT stage.

Director Jaci Pulice drew inspiration from coming-of-age movies like *Never Been Kissed* and *Can't Hardly Wait*.

In an interview with *DCist*, Pulice described the show as having "a high school heart, but an adult brain." She said, "We do get to rewrite the story and have someone make a choice they wouldn't have made in high school, or break the tropes and do something we might not have seen in all these teen movies."

In Lieu of Flowers

Spring 2018's *In Lieu of Flowers* staged the funerals of five different audience members over the course

of its run. Directed by Lura Barber and Zach Mason, the show featured an in-depth audience interview and a sensitive, but humorous celebration of their lives. "Until Elon Musk defeats time itself, we're going to experience the deaths of people we love and ultimately, our own deaths," said Barber. "I think comedy is the perfect way to have this conversation."





Improv Actually

WIT invited audiences to **fall in love with Improv Actually, the long-running romantic comedy** now under the direction of Macey Schiff. Featuring five new cast members, the show headlined multiple curtains during the Wintry Mix road shows at DC Arts Center.

Citizens' Watch

2016's darkly dramatic murder mystery Citizens' Watch returned in **2017** with new cast members and the most extensive production values ever for a WIT show. Director Michael Hendrix and Technical Director Raymond Simeon created mood-enhancing lighting and sound designs to accompany the second run of WIT's small town drama.



Interplay

In Spring 2018, WIT programmed one of its most ambitious projects to date: Interplay. Funded through a grant from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, this seven-week series at DC Arts Center featured seven collaborative partnerships pairing WIT's own improvisers with interdisciplinary artists ranging from dancers to musicians to puppeteers.

INTERPLAY COLLABORATIONS:

- WIT ensemble **Hellcat** teamed up with visual artists from **Super Art Fight**.
- WIT ensemble **Love Onion** created a performance structure that relied on percussion from famed musician **Tom Teasley**.
- WIT ensemble **Commonwealth** created shows inspired by **Story District** storytellers.
- A team of improvisers created a collaborative performance with an ensemble of dancers including **Stefanie Bass, Kelly Hogan, Carrie Monger, and Rebecca Weiss**.
- **The PuppetCo Artistic Director Christopher Piper** brought his puppets to life for an improv set for grown-ups (pictured at right with player Matt Strote).
- **Poetic Resistance** created an expanded performance structure with special guest poets including **13th of Nazareth, John MacDonald, and P.S. Perkins**.
- **A mash-up of contemporary musicians** created soundscapes for a team of improvisers.





Clockwise from upper-left: Paul Chen and Raymond Simeon (front) with Marissa Goodstone, Sarah Ann Houghton, Kristin O'Brien, Lauren Woody, Justine Hipsky, and Katie Watkins in *Handmaidens Tale*; Chris Ulrich, Joe Randazzo, Jane White, and Nina Hsu in *Double Date*; and Beth Lyons, Kaelan Sullivan, and Olivia Martinez in *Vagina!*

WIT's Performance Calendar Spanned 300+ Shows in FY18

- **FIST XII:** *Double Date* emerged victorious in the twelfth annual Fighting Improv Smackdown Tournament. The tournament featured 69 teams and featured the first-ever Comeback Bracket, which allowed a defeated team to return to the tournament in the final match. *Double Date* was eliminated in the semi-finals, but emerged victorious in the decisive Comeback Brawl and went on to take the title.
- **Rise Up!:** WIT's politically oriented series reprised for a three-weekend run including *Ivanka! The Musical* and *Shock and Awesome*.
- **Guests:** WIT welcomed guest performers from multiple cities including **The Cast** (NYC), **GIRLish** (Chicago), **Elastic Time Cannon** (NYC), **Fōn** (New York/Austin), and performers from **The Second City** (Chicago).
- **Vagina! An Improvised Monologue Show:** For the second year in a row, WIT supported the House of Ruth with February's show featuring truthful monologues from female-identifying improvisers.
- **Improvapalooza:** WIT's annual experimental improv marathon featured shows like Calhoun County Carolina Court, *Handmaidens Tale*, and *Soul (tri)Cycle*.
- WIT served as host for two improv competitions. Jos. A. Banksy (Alex Beard, Jordana Mishory, Liz Sanders) won the second annual **contest4improv4humans**, which featured teams competing in an improvised podcast competition. Georgetown Improv Association took the title in the regional finals of the **College Improv Tournament**.



WIT ALUMNI MAKE WAVES

WIT alumni enjoyed national success in FY18.

- iMusical alum **Natasha Rothwell** (pictured to the right) starred and co-wrote on the HBO series *Insecure* and was cast in a role in the upcoming movie *Wonder Woman 1984*.
- Former WIT ensemble member **Aparna Nancherla** (pictured above) debuted a stand-up special on Netflix.
- Former ensemble member **Zhubin Parang** continued his tenure as head writer on *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*.
- Former WIT ensemble member **Josh Patten** continued work as a writer for Weekend Update on *Saturday Night Live*.



UPDATE: DIVERSITY ON WIT'S STAGE

Harold Teams See Increase in Diversity

At the end of FY18, 23 percent of Harold team members were people of color. This percentage rose after WIT cast increasingly diverse cohorts of players, including the spring 2017 audition round where 41 percent of incoming Harold team members were people of color.



Sherry Edmonds, member of Wonder Whale Harold team



Michael Burgos and Eva Lewis, members of FIST 2018 finalist team The Prosecution

Diverse Teams Represented in WIT Performances

In order for WIT's stage to better reflect the diversity of Washington, D.C., WIT spotlighted teams with cast diversity when scheduling guest performer groups to appear in WIT shows. In FY18, these teams included:

- **Lena Dunham** - a team with an all-African American cast that debuted during Improvaplooza 2017
- **White Privilege, Black Power** - featuring longtime WIT improvisers Greg Tindale and Eva Lewis, this show that offers candid conversation on race and other areas of diversity debuted as part of WIT's original Rise Up! Series in January 2017. In FY18, special guests included Sabahat Chaudhary, Nina Hsu, Kristina Martinez, David Richman, and more.
- **Sábado Picante** - a Spanish-language telenovela featuring multiple Latinx and/or Hispanic cast members
- **Latinx States of America** - a team with an all Latinx cast improvising based on stories from their lives
- **Ugh and Conversion Therapy** - teams featuring all LGBTQ cast members
- **Rancy Neagan, Sweater Kittens, and more** - teams featuring all-female casts

CLASSES

WIT unveiled its training program in 2000, and it has grown in popularity ever since, serving aspiring performers, individuals wanting to push their creativity, and people wanting to make connections with other Washingtonians. Since FY14, enrollments in WIT's classes have grown by 45 percent.

With enrollments exceeding 1,600 annually, WIT's training program shares the art of longform improv, and its accompanying life lessons, with people from every walk of life.





Clockwise from top left:
Charles Lipper; Justine Hipsky's spring level two class; Rachel Greenberg and Bex Ehrmann

Highlights from FY18 include:

- Level One Intensives Debut:** In FY18, WIT offered three intensive Foundations of Improv classes that gave time-challenged students the ability to take an entire eight-week class over the course of two weekends. The intensives were taught by Annie Barry and Dan Brown.
- Elective Offerings Continue to Expand:** In FY18, WIT offered a variety of electives including Advanced Harold with Jordana Mishory, Advanced Character with Kate Symes, Advanced Character with Dave Johnson, Narrative and Storytelling with Mark Chalfant, Improv Boot Camp with Dan Miller, as well as a sketch class and Form-a-Palooza with The Second City's Ross Taylor. iMusical accompanist/director Travis Charles Ploeger taught three sessions of Intro to Musical Improv, as well as an audition-only elective called Scenes into Songs.
- WIT U Workshops Grow Dramatically:** WIT's continuing education workshop series, WIT U, reached a record number of participants in FY18, spanning 23 workshops and reaching more than 300 enrollments. These offerings included workshops by visiting artists like Megan Gray and Hannah Chase (Magnet Theater), Caitlin Kunkel (*The New Yorker*, *McSweeney's*), and Joey Bland (Improvised Shakespeare). Workshops from local instructors included Improvising with the Camera by Tony Lazzeroni and a workshop-sized version of Dave Johnson's Relax class.

Year One: Diversity Scholarship

Only one year into WIT's diversity scholarship, WIT has already begun to see positive results. The intent of the scholarship is to enable more diverse communities to pursue improv, which would mutually benefit the improv community and the individuals selected.

- **In total, 26 individuals have received WIT's diversity scholarship—6 of whom have successfully completed WIT's curriculum.**
- **So far, three diversity scholarship recipients can regularly be seen on WIT stages.** Recipients have been cast three times on Harold teams, twice on special projects, and once on a WIT ensemble.
- One diversity scholarship recipient appeared in WIT's one-night show *Vagina!: An Improvised Monologue Show*.

To date, these awards have amounted to nearly \$10,000 worth of classes with **another \$18,000 budgeted for FY19.**

“One year into the program, the program has exceeded my expectations—it’s been a remarkable success. The fact that we’ve already had so many recipients join our performer community convinces me that we’ve chosen the right approach for our program.”

**—Education Director
Jonathan Murphy**



Karyn Wilson, diversity scholarship recipient
and member of Out Sick Harold team

More than ever before, WIT invested time and resources into building its community outreach portfolio in FY18.

Improv For All Workshops Reach Record Numbers

WIT's free two-hour Improv for All workshops reached every ward of the District in FY18 as well as venues in Maryland and Virginia. **For the first time ever, the number of participants in these workshops reached 1,000 individuals.**

Improvise Analía Gómez Vidal (pictured below,

center-bottom) created a **new series of Improv for All workshops designed specifically for participants who speak English as a second language** (pictured below). These workshops have served individuals speaking languages including Spanish, French, Russian, Arabic, Nepali, and Chinese.



Improv for All Venues

WIT's Improv for All program connected to more venues than ever in FY18. We brought the joy of improv to all of these locations:

- 1) CentroNia (Ward 1)
- 2) Columbia Heights Educational Campus (Ward 1)
- 3) Lapis Bistro (Ward 1)
- 4) Latin American Youth Center (Ward 1)
- 5) Mt. Pleasant Library (Ward 1)
- 6) Source (Ward 1)
- 7) Georgetown Library (Ward 2)
- 8) National Museum of Women in the Arts (Ward 2)
- 9) Tenley-Friendship Library (Ward 3)
- 10) Northminster Presbyterian Church (Ward 4)
- 11) Third Floor (Ward 4)
- 12) Dance Place (Ward 5)
- 13) Capitol Hill Arts Workshop (Ward 6)
- 14) Deanwood Library (Ward 7)
- 15) Anacostia Arts Center (Ward 8)
- 16) Anacostia Senior High School (Ward 8)
- 17) NSA Bethesda (Maryland)
- 18) Central Library (Virginia)



WIT's Youth Work Expands

FY18 was a year of building experience and capacity in delivering high quality arts education to youth in the District. Education Director Jonathan Murphy oversaw multiple engagements with youth clients in an effort to ramp up WIT's community outreach.

Key engagements included:

- WIT faculty member Jack Novak taught **two semester-long after-school programs to fourth and fifth-grade students** (pictured below). The engagements were among the most highly rated after-school programs by the students and the sessions won raves from administration. "Mr. Novak has made a connection with our students beyond our expectations," said administrator Walter Castillo. "Marie Reed Elementary school's fourth and fifth grade are not an easy group to build rapport, Mr. Novak did it wonderfully."
- WIT faculty member Annie Barry facilitated an **after-school program for teenagers at the Kingman Boys and Girl Club**, located around the corner from WIT's home venue Source.
- Funded by a Creative Spark grant from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, WIT also conducted a **series of workshops at elementary schools in DC Public Schools**. The schools included Brent and Neval Thomas Elementary Schools.



A photograph of two people, a man and a woman, high-fiving. The man is on the left, wearing a checkered shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a striped shirt and glasses. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background is a plain wall. The entire image has a teal overlay.

WIT@Work

WIT@WORK REACHES NEW CLIENTS, WINS REPEAT CUSTOMERS

Engaging nearly 2,200 participants in FY18, WIT@Work served a diverse set of clients ranging from large law firms to small nonprofits.

WIT@Work's new clients for FY18 included the Environmental Protection Agency, Pepco, Perkins+Will, and Brunswick PR (whose training included 150 participants and required six trainers).

Twenty-two satisfied clients booked WIT@Work for return engagements. Repeat clients included leadership for KIPP charter schools, Leadership Montgomery, and Deloitte's Cornerstone Project Management Training (held at Deloitte University in Dallas). Also, for the second year running, WIT@Work created a performance for the Washington Business Journal's Best Places to Work Awards.

Improv for Business Intensive Launched

WIT@Work Director John Windmueller launched a one-day intensive class that taught the principles of applied improvisation. In FY18, WIT ran three sections of the class, which opened up this learning opportunity to individuals outside of our organizational clients. One participant wrote: "John's improv class for business is a real treat. You will walk away with actionable ideas to improve teamwork, engagement at work, and you'll be able to boost your creativity."

"All day, I kept hearing people say how your session really stood out as the most fun and helpful. People found it really approachable and loved that you talked about the science behind it."

WIT@Work Provides Discounted Trainings For Select Nonprofits

In connection with WIT's nonprofit mission, Windmueller provided a steeply discounted workshops for staff at **Bright Beginnings**—a shelter for women and families—as well as the staff of a domestic violence shelter. WIT has formalized a process of providing subsidized trainings to a limited number of select nonprofits, especially those serving children and at-risk communities.

Even the very most introverted employees raved about how much they enjoyed it."

—WIT@Work client

Organizationally, WIT is stronger than ever. In its twentieth year, WIT's board of directors grew to 20 individuals and WIT's staff includes four full-time employees and two part-time employees.

Most recently, Raymond Simeon (pictured below) joined WIT's staff as a part-time production manager. In this role, Raymond plans, manages, and meets production needs for all WIT shows. These responsibilities include lights, sound, projection, audience seating/riser configuration, and set and stage furniture. Raymond's lighting, audio design, and technical director credits with WIT include POTUS Among Us, Citizens' Watch, and Yearbook.

The Search for a Space: In FY18 WIT continued the initial stages of its search for a long-term home, where we will be able to present performances year-round. Funded by a Facilities and Buildings Grant from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, WIT completed work on the business plan to map our transition through construction into operations in a new space. With our commercial broker we assessed and/or did site visits to over a dozen properties. WIT leadership had discussions with nine real estate development companies concerning projects they have in the works. Additionally, WIT met with DC's Office of Planning Director Eric Shaw and his team and was active in advocating for including cultural space needs as a top priority in DC's Cultural Plan, which the Office of Planning expects to release by the end of 2018.



WIT Scores Fundraising Wins

As a milestone for our twentieth anniversary, WIT received its first-ever national grant in FY18. The National Endowment for the Arts awarded WIT a grant to support a year's worth of classes at Anacostia Arts Center.

WIT secured continued funding from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities with awards in three separate grant programs: General

Operating Support, Facilities and Buildings (supporting a business plan for WIT's future space), and Projects, Events, and Festivals (supporting spring 2018's Interplay series).

Additionally, WIT received continued support from the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation. WIT's ROAR 20th Anniversary Gala grossed more than \$35,000.



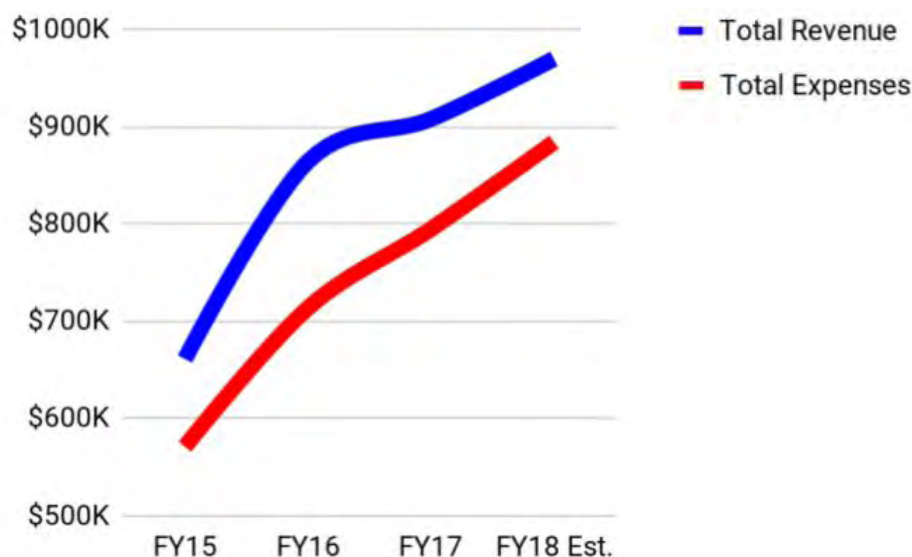
WIT Board Members
Kimberly Martin and Sheena Foster
at the ROAR 20th Anniversary Gala

WIT Financials

Stability: WIT’s finances for FY18 were stable. Revenue remained well above expenses continuing a trend of four years which has allowed WIT to build its operating reserves and cash reserves. Operating reserves help us through the up-and-down cash flow cycle that performances and classes create.

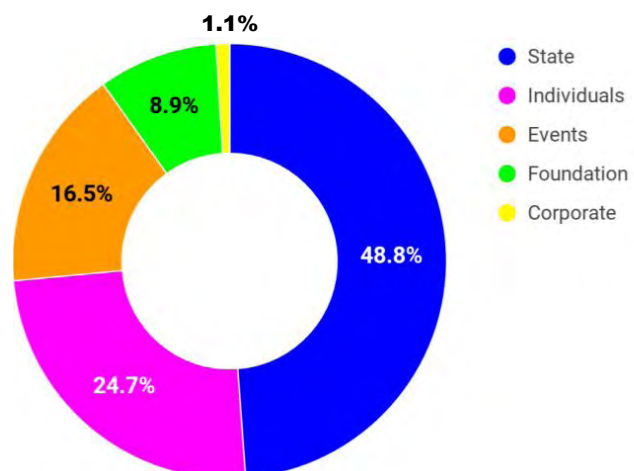
Cash reserves exist in case something unexpected happens (an unanticipated expense, or a big dip in revenue). Maintaining reserves is a best practice among nonprofits; it shows funders and investors that we manage our finances responsibly and that we’re serious about making sure WIT is sustainable.

Total Revenue and Total Expenses



FY18 Contributed Revenue by Donor Type

Contributed Revenue Grows: Individual contributions are considered the number one predictor of a nonprofit’s long term health. In FY18 your support for WIT grew for the fourth year running! WIT’s fundraising events (notably the 20s-themed bash “ROAR” in May) continued to garner significant support for the organization as well. A growth in monthly donors added stability to our individual giving program.

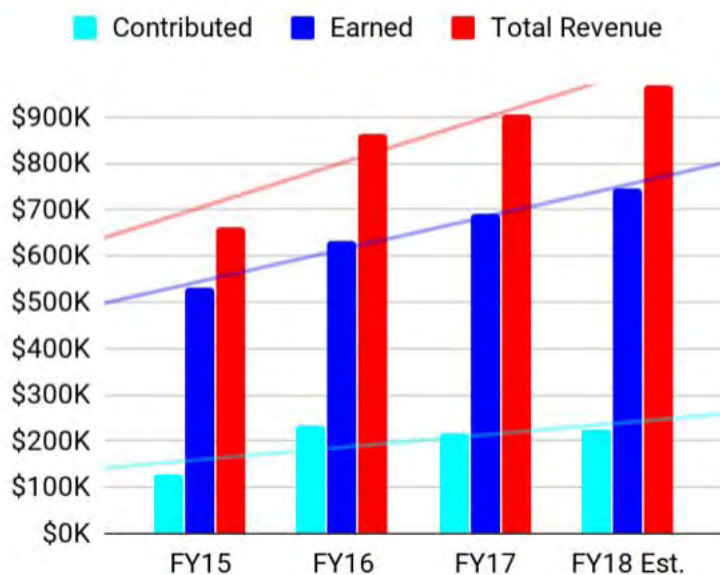


Growth and limits: Both contributed revenue (individual donations, special event proceeds, foundation grants, and state support) and earned revenue (program revenue from classes, performances, and WIT@Work trainings) continued to grow in FY1

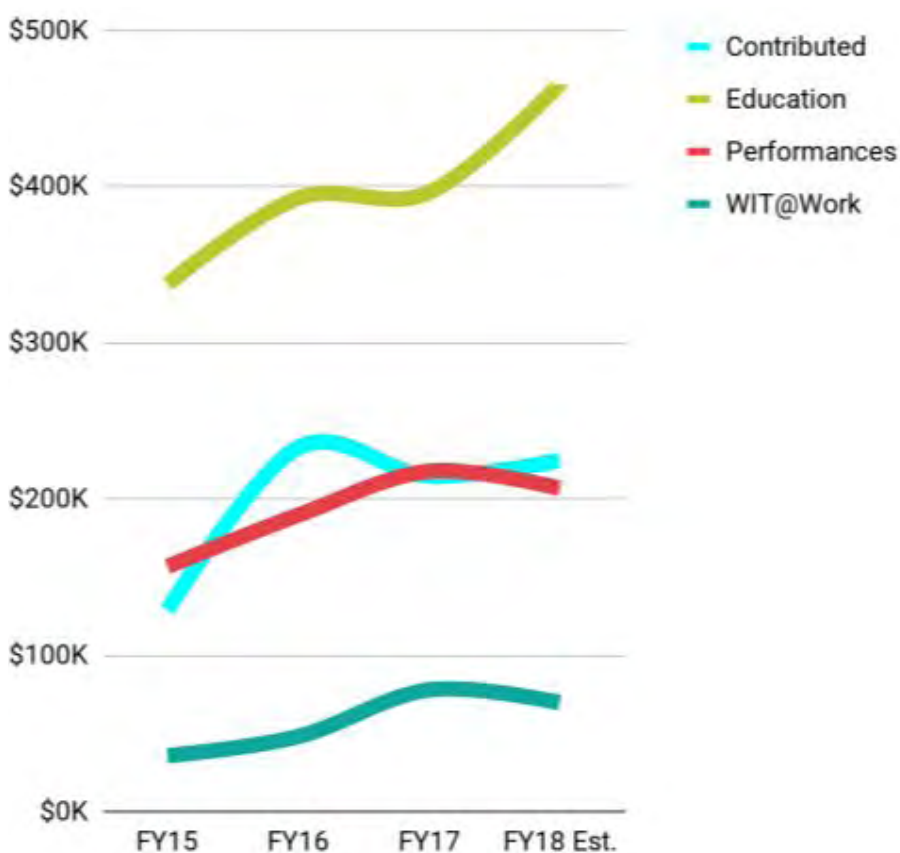
Growth per se is not the ultimate goal for WIT. However, since our mission is to share improv with the whole DMV it feels like there's always more to do: More performance visions to bring to stage. More audience members to surprise and delight. More ideas to explore in classes. More students to enroll. More organizational clients with whom to share applied improv's takeaways.

While WIT's core programs (classes, performances, and WIT@Work trainings) all experienced growth in activity levels over FY17, this is not reflected in the Revenue by Program Over Time. For WIT@Work we're still finalizing accounts. For performances we've reached a point where it's hard to expand our performance calendar any further - there simply aren't available venues. This limitation is one of the main motivations for our space search. So while we welcomed more audience members in FY2018 than the previous year, the related revenue dipped slightly because a larger share of tickets were discounted or give-aways.

Contributed, Earned and Total Revenue



Revenue by Program Over Time

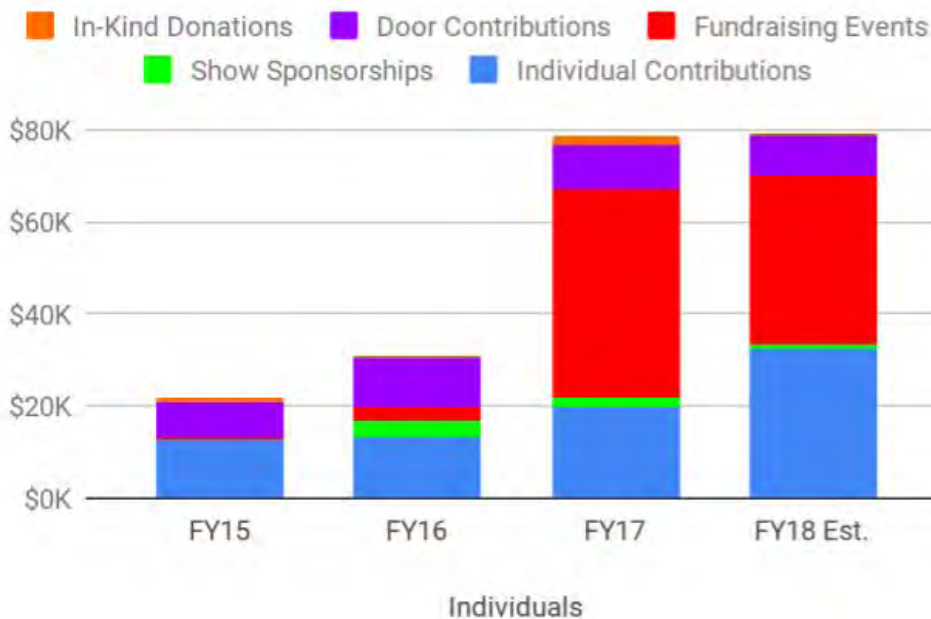




Statement of Financial Positions

	<u>FY2018 Est.</u>	<u>FY2017</u>	<u>FY2016</u>
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Checking/Savings	541,244	485,654	369,809
Accounts Receivable	49,568	45,651	17,084
Other Current Assets	8,356	13,981	3,523
Total Current Assets	599,168	545,286	390,416
Fixed Assets	2,012	1,819	1,400
Other Assets	400	2,850	2,450
TOTAL ASSETS	601,580	549,955	394,267
LIABILITIES & EQUITY			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities	104,731	128,265	76,750
Total Liabilities	104,731	128,265	76,750
Equity	496,849	421,690	317,517
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	601,580	549,955	394,267

Individual Giving Breakdown by Source



WIT's Supporters

Your support makes everything we do possible. In addition to the support of organizations like the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts, individual donors help fund everything from Improv for All workshops to our diversity scholarship to our work in DC Public Schools. Thanks to all of our FY18 donors.

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