

RAISE THE CURTAIN:
The Campaign for Theatre Ariel

OUR VISION:

As Philadelphia's only professional theatre company dedicated to telling stories of the Jewish experience, Theatre Ariel has been a jewel in the Philadelphia region for over 30 years. Season after season we have entertained, educated and inspired audiences -- and the demand for our content continues to grow!

At the same time, increasing anti-Semitism at home and abroad and the war in Israel -- Jewish stories happening in real time -- are urgent reminders that Theatre Ariel's mission to "tell stories of the Jewish experience" is more important than ever.

Theatre Ariel is ready to ***RAISE THE CURTAIN*** and elevate our profile, enabling us to become a more prominent hub for our region's Jewish cultural life and to reach an increasingly diverse audience of theatregoers of differing generations and backgrounds.

Under the direction of Artistic Director Jesse Bernstein, the ***Raise The Curtain*** fund has already supported the presentation of our first fully staged production in over 15 years! The ongoing campaign will also enable us to sustain current operations, including the continuation of our Salon performances, and to build capacity for future growth that will expand our impact with new and diverse audiences.

The funds we raise will enable us to broaden our impact and create a thriving community of theatre goers to whom we will provide a variety of ways to collectively experience Theatre Ariel's unique and meaningful interaction with Jewish history, thought and culture.

OUR CHALLENGE:

Though Theatre Ariel is financially stable, like every non-profit theatre company, ticket sales do not cover our annual operating budget and we must rely on our fundraising efforts to bridge the gap. Nevertheless, the success of the campaign's first two years generated a small surplus in 2025, and we aim to continue building on our success, and to continue to achieve the aims of our 5-year strategic plan, about to enter its fourth year.

Among Theatre Ariel's Strategic Plan's key objectives are: (1) becoming recognized as one of the foremost professional Jewish theatre companies in the country; (2) supporting our work with a full-time staff, a more diversified Board of Directors, a strengthened donor base and a nurtured artistic pool; (3) entertaining and enlightening a growing and diverse audience while expanding our impact in our region's Jewish and cultural life; and (4) building bridges of connection and understanding with complementary groups and organizations to combat anti-Semitism and foster deeper insight into the Jewish experience, our community and one another, including

collaborating/partnering with diverse Jewish, multi-cultural, multi-faith, and arts organizations in the U.S., Israel and around the world. ***This ambitious Plan requires significant funds.***

OUR PLAN:

The ***Raise the Curtain*** campaign is designed to raise the funds that Theatre Ariel needs to implement our strategic initiatives and enable us to begin to achieve our strategic goals over the next few years.

We currently plan to use the funds raised in the following ways:

- I. **Current/On-going Operations: \$270,000*** -- \$90,000 per year for current, on-going operations;
- II. **Full Productions: \$150,000*** -- \$50,000 for one fully staged production for each season; and
- III. **Capacity Building: \$150,000** – \$50,000 per year to be utilized approximately as follows:
 - \$30,000 per year – to maintain the hours and salary of our Artistic Director at full-time;
 - \$12,500 per year – to hire a part-time general manager for ten (10) hours per week;
 - \$1,200 per year – to increase the salary of our current part-time administrative manager;
 - \$2,500 per year – for additional marketing and community outreach expenses;
 - \$2,000 per year – for technology and infrastructure upgrades; and
 - \$1,800 per year – for commissioning playwrights to create new work.

*[Note: The above estimates and allocation of funds are approximate and will depend upon the overall success of the ***Raise the Curtain*** campaign. *Copies of 2025-26 annual budget for current operations are available upon request.]*

OUR TIMING:

NOW is the time for people who believe in the importance of telling Jewish stories to support Jewish continuity and create Jewish community to join together to write the next chapter of Theatre Ariel's story! WE THANK YOU FOR JOINING US IN THIS MISSION!

YOUR CONTRIBUTION AND RECOGNITION:

The following are the opportunities for giving to the *Raise The Curtain* campaign and the recognition you and/or your organization will receive at the various gift levels for each of the next three seasons, 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26:

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER GIFT:

- **\$25,000 and above for each campaign year**
- “Presented by” recognition for the fully staged theatre productions
- “Executive Produced by” recognition from the stage at the start of all performances and in all materials for the fully staged theatre productions
- An invitation each season to a special reception honoring all “producing level” donors
- Sponsorship of one full salon series with recognition in salon materials
- Four Theatre Ariel Memberships for each campaign year

PRODUCER GIFT:

- **\$10,000 – \$24,999 for each campaign year**
- “Produced by” recognition from the stage at the start of all performances and in all materials for the fully staged theatre productions
- An invitation each season to a special reception honoring all “producing level” donors
- Sponsorship of one full salon series with recognition in salon materials
- Four Theatre Ariel Memberships for each campaign year

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER GIFT:

- **\$5,000 - \$9,999 for each campaign year**
- Recognition from the stage at the start of all performances and in all materials for the fully staged theatre productions
- An invitation each season to a special reception honoring all “producing level” donors
- Sponsorship of a salon performance and recognition in salon materials
- Two Theatre Ariel Memberships for each campaign year

CENTER STAGE GIFT

- **\$2,500 - \$4,999 for each campaign year**
- Recognition in all materials for the fully staged theatre productions
- Recognition in salon event materials
- Two Theatre Ariel Memberships for each campaign year

SPOTLIGHT GIFT

- **\$1,000 - \$2,499 for each campaign year**
- Recognition in salon event materials
- One Theatre Ariel Membership for each campaign year

CURTAIN UP GIFT

- **\$500 - \$999 for each campaign year**
- Recognition in salon event materials

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1) Who is being asked to contribute?

We will be asking current patrons and prior corporate and individual sponsors and contributors to join the ***Raise the Curtain*** campaign. Importantly, we plan to extend our funding base by reaching out to both institutional and individual contributors whose giving histories demonstrate an identification with Theatre Ariel's mission and/or an appreciation for and interest in investing in theatre and other arts organizations. In addition, all members of the Theatre Ariel Board and Fundraising Committee have made a significant contribution to the ***Raise the Curtain*** campaign.

2) In what ways can I give?

If you wish to explore other means of financially supporting Theatre Ariel, such as a gift of appreciated stock or a contribution from your annual RMD, please contact our Treasurer, Bruce Brownstein, at Bruce.Brownstein2@gmail.com, and he will help you to do that.

3) How will the funds raised be used?

Please see Our Plan in the Case for Support above for these details.

4) Why these areas of focus?

These funds will allow Theatre Ariel to implement the initiatives recommended by our Strategic Plan, including:

- Becoming recognized as one of the foremost professional Jewish theatre companies in the country;
- Supporting our work with a full-time staff, a more diversified Board of Directors, a strengthened and more diversified donor base and a nurtured artistic pool, including actors and playwrights;
- Entertaining and enlightening a growing and diverse audience while expanding our impact in our region's Jewish and cultural life; and
- Building bridges of connection and understanding with complementary groups and organizations to combat anti-Semitism and foster deeper insight into the Jewish experience, our community and one another, including collaborating/partnering with diverse Jewish, multi-cultural, multi-faith, and arts organizations in the U.S., Israel and around the world.

5) How were these needs determined?

In the course of our Strategic Planning initiative, our Board and several outside advisors and long-term supporters came together to consider Theatre Ariel's future needs and priorities and created the vision, dreamed the dreams, and made the recommendations that the ***Raise The Curtain*** campaign will enable us to achieve.

6) Why undertake this initiative now?

Our Strategic Plan identified our need to gain firm financial footing and build infrastructure that will support and fund future growth. The Strategic Plan also identified other matters requiring immediate focus and resources (e.g., increasing staffing and investing in professional branding and marketing.) The funds raised by the ***Raise The Curtain*** campaign will enable this growth over the course of the next three seasons.

THE THEATRE ARIEL STORY

In 1990, Founding Artistic Director Deborah Baer Mozes created Theatre Ariel to address a gap in the Philadelphia cultural mosaic: the lack of a Jewish theatre. Jewish companies and plays had been a mainstay of the Philadelphia theatre since the early 18th century — but with the fading of Yiddish theatre, that presence all but disappeared. Then Theatre Ariel came along and has been filling that need for 32 seasons. Our loyal and supportive audience is a testament to the importance of our work, and its impact.

OUR MISSION

Theatre Ariel presents professional performances of new and established plays inspired by the past, present, and future of the Jewish experience – its heritage and humor, struggles and triumphs, ethics and intersections. Through our focus on the specific, we illuminate the universal. Our performances entertain, educate, and enrich audiences in intimate communal settings unique to our region’s cultural life. Theatre Ariel welcomes everyone to engage with our shows as a catalyst for exciting, thought-provoking discourse.

OUR VALUES

As Philadelphia’s only professional theatre company devoted to telling Jewish stories, Theatre Ariel values:

Community: We view collaboration with a wide range of institutions as integral to building allyship and fostering community.

Professionalism: We commit ourselves to the highest standards of quality and professionalism, including fairly compensating staff and artists, and creating empowering spaces.

Universality: We operate under the assumption that you do not have to be Jewish to love Jewish theatre and we strive to be a source of inspiration for all.

Learning: We affirm that the conversation that happens around and about the play is as important as the play itself.

Innovation: We embrace a spirit of openness, flexibility, and innovation to respond to our ever-changing world.

Diversity: We believe in the importance of celebrating the complexity and diversity of the Jewish people, and of the communities in which we live.

TA BY THE NUMBERS

- Over **2,500** Performances
- **89** New Works Presented
- Over **350,000** Audience Members Entertained
- **1,000s** of public-school students reached with our touring Holocaust production, *Survivors*
- **200+** Actors, **80+** Playwrights, **34** Musicians,
- **4** Puppeteers, and **17** Designers/Crew Employed
- **300+** Community Presenters
- **Dozens** of local Partners and Affiliates

SURVIVORS MID-ATLANTIC TOUR

In 2022, Theatre Ariel, partnering with The Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, launched a tour of *Survivors* by Wendy Kout. The play tells the true stories of ten young people who survived the Holocaust. In 2023, Gratz College produced the tour, which traveled to public middle and high schools in every county in the region. Theatre Ariel has partnered with the playwright and the original producers of the play to act as the exclusive producers of *Survivors* in the mid-Atlantic region. Our goal is to raise funds to allow us to tour *Survivors* for an extended period, going as far south as Washington, D.C., west to Pittsburgh, and north to New York City. At a time when our survivors are leaving us, when studies show 63% of young people have no knowledge of the Holocaust and 45% of adults underestimate how many Jews were killed in the *Shoah*, a play like *Survivors* could not be more timely or important to bring to our nation's schools.

OUR POSITION IN PHILADELPHIA'S JEWISH CULTURAL LIFE

In a city of over 350,000 Jews, at a time when more and more Jews are finding their own way to their faith and culture, in a moment when anti-Semitism is on the rise — at such a time and place, a Jewish theatre can have a profound impact on our region's Jewish cultural life. Theatre Ariel's influence becomes even more clear when looking at the 2020 Pew study of American Jews, which reported that **over 50% of respondents choose to engage with their Judaism through art and culture** — more than through any other option offered. This held true across generations and levels of religious involvement.

Because every Theatre Ariel performance includes post-show conversations and often is framed by additional special events such as an opportunity to meet and interact with the playwright, the play is only a launching pad for continuing interaction and exploration. In other words, **what Theatre Ariel offers is a chance for a deep and ongoing interaction with Jewish history, thought and culture** for many people of different backgrounds and levels of religious engagement. Nor does Theatre Ariel operate in a vacuum. We have partnered and continue to partner with synagogues, JCCs, the local Federation and its social groups. Theatre Ariel can help augment and supplement their work, adding to and strengthening the deep weave into our community's fabric. There are few places, for instance, where congregants and members from many area synagogues and Federation's Tribe12 members might interact in a shared experience. **Theatre Ariel offers such a space.**

OUR POSITION IN THE PHILADELPHIA THEATRE MARKETPLACE

In the 1990s, Philadelphia saw a renaissance of local non-profit theatres. The growth was so powerful and prolific that theatres like the Wilma and PTC helped become anchors for Avenue of the Arts, while the Arden Theatre was part of the catalyst for the revival of Old City. Through the financial crisis of 2008 and into the COVID lockdowns, a bevy of small theatre companies have continued to arise in the city. Some of these, as well as some of the larger institutions, present plays that one might call on some level, "Jewish." Arden Theatre produced *Indecent*. The

Walnut Street Theatre regularly produces Neil Simon plays, many of which feature Jewish characters. Theatre Horizon staged *2.5 Minute Ride*.

Yet, these are one-offs. **No other theatre company has the ongoing, deep focus on the Jewish experience, along with the resources and knowledge, of Theatre Ariel.** Very few theatres present Jewish stories that go beyond envisioning Jews as anything more than comic foils or genocidal victims. Few present Jewish life accurately, with a sensitivity to the unique beliefs and challenges of the Jewish experience. By extension, few theatres can present this kaleidoscopic, authentic Jewish picture to non-Jewish audience members. This approach serves to create understanding of the Jewish experience, which, in turn, helps to combat anti-Semitism.

Theatre Ariel occupies a unique, needed space in the Philadelphia theatre landscape.

The fact that Theatre Ariel weathered the impacts of COVID with much less attrition than many theatres serves to underscore the importance of our impact. Our Salon format allowed us to pivot to online performances, professionally presented with strong aesthetics. For our 2022-23 season, we returned to completely in-person performances and **our numbers remain consistent with our numbers before March of 2020**, when lockdowns began. It is a testament to our mission and our loyal audience. More than that, it is a sign that **Theatre Ariel is poised for a bright, bold future.**

OUR FUTURE

Theatre Ariel has had great success with our Salon Series on Philadelphia's Main Line. We intend to maintain that series while also expanding our presence in Center City and beyond.

Theatre Ariel hopes to be able to attract more funding and increase its earned and donated revenue. From there, we can grow and sustain an annual budget that provides a full-time salary to the Artistic Director and enables the hiring of more staff.

Our plans for the future extend externally, as well. Through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, we are exploring new audience development initiatives. Many of these initiatives involve collaborating with other Jewish organizations.

After 34 seasons, Theatre Ariel is as strong financially and creatively as we have ever been. Now is the time for us to take advantage of our position and become a more substantial presence in both Philadelphia's Jewish and theatrical cultural life. By doing so, we can more fully fulfill our mission to be a catalyst for community building grounded in Jewish values, culture and experience.

OUR STAFF AND BOARD

Jesse Bernstein, Artistic Director. Jesse Bernstein is a graduate of Northwestern University's School of Speech and has over 30 years' experience working in film, TV and theatre. He has

performed at the New York Shakespeare Festival, the Berkshire Theatre Festival, the Arden Theatre Company, Ventura Theatre Company and the Walnut Street Theatre Company. In 1999, he originated the role of Reuven in Aaron Posner's and Chaim Potok's stage adaptation of *The Chosen*. He has directed for the Walnut Street Theatre; Cardinal Stage, Penn Players, Rutgers-Camden and more. He has taught for theatres and organizations in Los Angeles, New York and Philadelphia as well as at Northwestern University, the Cherub program, and University of the Arts. As producer, he oversaw Philadelphia Young Playwrights productions. He also serves as President of the Board for the Alliance for Jewish Theatres.

Drew Russel Duboff, General Manager. Drew helps 6-figure and 7-figure bloggers in the "make money online" niche grow, systemize, scale and outsource their way to shatter wild revenue goals. As a business and freelancing expert, he's been featured in: Business.com, Yahoo Finance, Business Insider, MSN, GoBankingRates, The Penny Hoarder, Student Loan Hero, Clutch, Best Life, Thrive Global, Part-Time Money, Making Sense of Cents, and more. A former hospitality graduate of Johnson & Wales University, he is currently pursuing an M.B.A Concentration in Organizational Leadership and will soon be pursuing the Online Business Manager (OBM) certification.

Alize Francheska Rozsnyai, Business and Communications Manager. Alize is a professional Opera Singer and Actor, as well as Co-Founder and Artistic Director of Alter Ego Chamber Opera, the Philadelphia-based chamber opera company founded in 2019. She is delighted to be assisting Theatre Ariel, and to support a company with such a meaningful purpose and mission. A graduate of The Curtis Institute of Music with a B.M. and M.M. in Vocal and Opera Performance, Alize has performed regionally and internationally at notable venues including Carnegie Hall and with the Philadelphia Orchestra, with Opera Philadelphia, Chautauqua Opera, the Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro, Italy, Opera Den Nye in Bergen, Norway, Opera Dordogne in érigueux, France, and many others.

Theatre Ariel Board of Directors

Officers:

Co-Presidents

Marci Wilf, Esq. (President, Valeus Coaching Associates, LLC);
Judy Guzman (Retired President, Decision Maker Support, LLC)

Treasurer

Bruce Brownstein (Retired Senior Fellow, The Wharton School)

Vice-Presidents

Alan Susser (Associate Director of Life Sciences Consulting at Cognizant)
Julie Meyers, Esq. (Jewish National Fund - Director of Development, Alexander Muss High School in Israel Program)
Beth Rothschild (Retired President, Rothschild Research Consulting)
Samantha Hacker (CAO, Tablet Magazine)
Jamie Hindman (Manufacturing Finance Leader, Corteva Agriscience)

Members-at-Large:

Marissa Barnathan (Actor, Director, Teaching Artist)
Nancy Bennett (Retired Neuropsychologist, Singer)
Stephen Gollomp (Neurologist, Main Line Health)
Lonnie Klein (Accountant, Bridging the Gap for Seniors)
Jeff Kudisch (Faculty Director, Villanova University)
Susan Lodish (Retired Teacher; Artist)
Jess Meyers (Hebrew School Educator and Law Student)
Adena Potok (Retired Psychiatric Social Worker and Jewish Scholar)
Steve Slone (Chief Financial Officer, NCB Management Services)
Gloria Spitz (Registered Dental Hygienist)
Nancy Baron-Baer, Esq. (Retired ADL Regional Director)
Cantor Eliot Vogel (Cantor Emeritus at Har Zion Temple)

RAISE THE CURTAIN
The Fund for Theatre Ariel

GIFT AGREEMENT

THIS AGREEMENT is made by and between _____ (“Donors”) of _____ (address) and Theatre Ariel, effective as of the latest date of the signatures set forth below.

The Donors hereby pledge to contribute to Theatre Ariel, as more fully described below, a gift totaling \$ _____ (the “Gift”) to ***Raise the Curtain, The Fund for Theatre Ariel***. The Gift will be made in _____ annual installment(s) of \$ _____ each, as set forth below:

Gift Installment Due
on or before the following dates:

Raise the Curtain Fund

June 30, 2025

\$ _____

June 30, 2026

\$ _____

June 30, 2027

\$ _____

Theatre Ariel agrees to recognize the “Donor(s)” in all donor listings for the ***Raise the Curtain*** campaign _____ at the total Gift level or _____ anonymously (check to indicate preference).

Donors may accelerate the payment of any or all installments of this pledge so long as the cumulative total of all Gift payments are made no later than the dates set forth above. Payments shall be paid by the Donors to “Theatre Ariel” in the form of check, electronic funds transfer, appreciated stocks or other securities, contributions utilizing an annual RMD or other methods mutually acceptable to the Donors and Theatre Ariel.

DONORS:

Donor Signature

Date

Print Name of Donor

Donor Signature

Date

Print Name of Donor

THEATRE ARIEL:

Jesse Bernstein, Artistic Director

Date

My signature above indicates my agreement and desires regarding recognition for my contribution to the *Raise the Curtain* campaign as follows:

Indicate which one applies with a checkmark:

YES _____, I want my contribution to be recognized in future *Raise the Curtain* campaign materials and at Theatre Ariel productions and events that will occur during the three seasons covered by the campaign, as follows:

[Please PRINT your name(s) or your entity's name as you wish to be recognized.]

NO _____, I prefer that my contribution be anonymous and do not wish to be recognized.

Theatre Ariel is a registered non-profit under the IRS Code Section 501(c)(3) and their tax identification number is 23-2627672. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling 1.800.732.0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.