

Executive Management Report to the Board

Q1 Activity (Jan-Feb-Mar 2024)

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T0 Live

PRESIDENT & CEO'S EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sitting in a windowless black box space at a conference with 30 other colleagues from Performing Arts Centres across North America, I was so proud of our team and our mission at TO Live. As most everyone else in the room bemoaned their fate of shrinking audiences and the lack of cultural diversity, we were coming off a period of incredible sales and events which spanned the Vibe Arts exhibition (one of my favorite events of the year), the Nowruz Festival takeover of the MAC, three sold out shows of Hasan Minhaj at Meridian Hall, the load-in of The Inheritance by Canadian Stage at the Bluma Appel Theatre, and another sold out run of a comedian - Sindhu Vee in the Jane Mallett Theatre. Our audiences were from every age group, representative of many different cultures and, in many ways, could only be from our amazing city here in Toronto.

Sales from our *TO Live Presents* program may have been lagging but our overall first quarter was balanced. More importantly, we are beginning to hit our stride and truly becoming the meeting place for the many diverse cultures of our city, a place where all are welcome and celebrated, and where artists can turn to for support and space to further their careers; through our *explorations* grants (a new round of applicants are just coming in), our *provision of space* program which is helping artists into our buildings at critical times in their creative journey, and our co-commissioning and presenting program which helps put great work from inspired voices on the stages of Toronto. TO Live has become the space where you can put on your own performance, partner with TO Live or be presented by TO Live, or you can come to develop your new work.

At the end of the conference, I met an artist whose work was based on the poems of Sufi and presented at a music hall in Dallas. He was mentioning how revolutionary it was for them to perform the work in Farsi; there were no singers who spoke the language and the audiences needed surtitles - everyone spoke only English. A fellow colleague from Toronto and I laughed and said we wouldn't have that problem in our city. How beautiful is it that we live in a place that can lift up people's distinct identities? How incredible is it that TO Live can play a role in doing just that for our many cultures?

I look forward to seeing you all at the theatre some time soon!



Clyde Wagner
President & CEO



PROGRAMMING

The first quarter of 2024 featured a wide array of activities across the Programming Department.

TO Live Presents

- The Dance Series in Meridian Hall featured three appearances by major internationally acclaimed companies. Mark Morris Dance Group's [The Look of Love](#) celebrated the music of the late, great Burt Bacharach; [Carmen](#) by Compañía Nacional de Danza presented a stunning interpretation of the classic opera by Georges Bizet; and the breathtaking new dance/theatre production [Message in a Bottle](#), from Sadler's Wells featured new arrangements based on the music of Sting.
- The TO Live Orchestra performed the Academy-Award winning score to [Amadeus](#) live to film.
- At The Meridian Arts Centre, Contemporary circus program [The Mirror](#) took audiences on an adventure of extraordinary acrobatics and bone jarring physicality. [Mrs. Krishnan's Party](#) featured actors singing, dancing, and cooking in an immersive theatre experience in the Greenwin Theatre.
- The music program at The George Weston Recital Hall featured Grammy-nominated contemporary classical chamber ensemble [WildUp](#) in their Canadian debut, [Jazz at Lincoln Centre](#) with Canadian trumpeter Bria Skonberg, and a sold out performance by [Doos Trio](#), a cross-cultural supergroup featuring Kayhan Kalhor from Iran, Sandeep Das from India and Wu Man from China, co-presented with our friends at Small World Music.

Making Space

Continuing TO Live's narrative as a meaningful and active contributor to Toronto's cultural life through provision of space, residencies, and other support:

- TO Live provided space and some financial support for:
 - Technical residency for Kaha'wi Dance Theatre, in preparation for their performances in the Bluma Appel Theatre in May, 2024.
 - Tanveer Alam Rehearsals
 - NAC Rose Rehearsal

Accessibility

TO Live is committed to making our spaces and programming accessible, and to providing a safe, dignified, and welcome environment for everyone. For every TO Live Presents performance, we are committed to providing an access guide and pre-show audio notes. Many TO Live Presents events also incorporate additional access measures, including audio description, ASL interpretation, captions, and relaxed performances.

- Between January and March 2024, TO Live offered audio description for four of our presentations.



- ASL interpretation featuring Deaf performers at Mrs. Krishnan's Party, and Amadeus Live featured subtitles.
- Programming department also facilitated ASL interpretation for two rental clients: AEG for their presentation of S Club and Just for Laughs for their presentation of Hasan Minhaj.

Stage Rentals

A highly eclectic slate of events took place in Q1 across all three TO Live venues. Highlights include:

- [Bugs Bunny at The Symphony](#), [Lord of The Rings: The Two Towers in Concert](#) and a special performance by [Lang Lang](#) who performed the Disney songbook with the Ontario Philharmonic.
- Persian superstar [Homayoun Shajarian](#) featuring the Siavash Orchestra performed three sold out concerts in Meridian Hall.
- Renowned astrophysicist, author and science enthusiast [Neil deGrasse Tyson](#) gave a lecture in Meridian Hall on the ongoing effort to search for habitable planets and life in the cosmos.
- Comedian [Hasan Minhaj](#)'s *Off With His Head* tour included four sold-out performances in Meridian Hall.
- UK and Ireland's top-selling album group of the 21st century [Westlife](#) performed three concerts to adoring fans at Meridian Hall.
- Critically acclaimed and considered a modern masterpiece, Canadian Stage presented [Inheritance](#) at the Bluma Appel Theatre.
- In the Jane Mallett Theatre, longtime resident companies Music Toronto, Opera in Concert and Hannaford Street Silver Band all presented concerts as part of their annual season series.
- The George Weston Recital Hall at Meridian Arts Centre continues to be a destination for classical orchestral music. Q1 highlights include The Toronto Symphony Orchestra conducted by Peter Oundjian performing Rachmaninoff, Sinfonia performing Schumann and Respighi, and Kindred Spirits Orchestra.
- Tirgan's annual Nowruz Festival, celebrating Persian New Year, took over the Meridian Arts Centre with a variety of performances, vendors and of course, food.

Communities and Outreach

- We hosted **VibeArts** and their **NExT exhibition** for the 4th consecutive year. NExT was built on the vision to build, connect, and strengthen networks of Black artists throughout the GTA and to increase the visibility of Black youth artists in public Canadian exhibitions.
- Our collaboration with North York Arts through their **Creative Minds - My Safe Place** continued over March and April where we offered a mixed media painting workshop.



- **Wildup masterclass** – Our focus on creating opportunities to engage students and the arts through some of our visiting mainstage artists saw us offer a masterclass for 72 high school students. Through this session, the musicians took the students through exercises in listening and creation of music.
- Through our collaboration with **Xenia Concerts** under the **Arts & Wellness program** (which offers performing arts experiences for children, their families, and others within those communities who face systemic and social barriers to inclusion), hosted concerts at our downtown and uptown spaces.
- In collaboration with another of our **Arts & Wellness** partner **Dancing with Parkinson's** (which offers people living with Parkinson's disease and seniors' opportunities to create connections), we conducted sessions with our international TO Live presentations of *Look of Love* and *Message in a Bottle* (over 400 participants for these sessions).

Corporate and Private Events

Coming off a remarkably successful 2023, the Corporate and Private Events Department continued to grow and diversify, notably, in comparison to first quarters of past years.

Comments:

- Wealth Builder University is a new client that has already become recurring, with a booking in Q3 2024. WSIB is also a new Meridian Hall client.
- Dance companies continue to grow with new clients, BRDRLESS Dance, Reach Dance and So Dance Studios.
- Educational sector continues to grow with new client Bais Chomesh.
- Community group private events were held by The Vietnamese Students Association and MP Ali Ehsassi.
- Recurring clients St Clair College, Nestle and Seneca all returned in Q1.
- There is a positive trend in Q1 activity, with increased interest for 2025 activity already being observed.
- Awareness of TO Live venues for private events has been boosted by excellent social media coverage via its various channels including [@toliverentals](#) and a [podcast series](#).

Production

- Production continued its program of updating equipment and infrastructure in the theatre spaces, through both its own initiatives and working with the Capital Projects department.
- Through development of new contacts at Seneca, the Production Services department has found new candidates for the mentorship program that aims to have young members of BIPOC communities gain practical production management experience in working venues at the start of their careers. Two candidates from Seneca started their internship in Q1.



- Our strong relationship with Adamson Pro Audio and Live Sound Reinforcement (as a service and product vendor), saw them approach us about using the George Weston Recital Hall to demonstrate new products for industry professionals.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Marketing and Communications

- ecognized holidays of national and social/cultural importance on social media and digital signage, including New Year's, Family Day, Pink Shirt Day, Black History Month (artist Instagram takeovers by Dainty Smith & James Baley [Xenia Concerts artist]), Ramadan, Easter, and International Trans Day of Visibility.
- Created and shared content to highlight TO Live Presents shows, including:
 - [editorial article](#) on Lukas McFarlane, associate choreographer and dance lead in *Message In A Bottle* "From reality TV fame to dancing with Sting, Lukas McFarlane is ready for his hometown debut"
 - Backstage with... artist Q&A featuring 6 artists from TO Live Presents shows, including:
 - [Bria Skonberg](#) (from Jazz at Lincoln Centre, *Sing & Swing*)
 - [Benny Benack III](#) (from Jazz at Lincoln Centre, *Sing & Swing*)
 - 4 artists from Gravity & Other Myths, *The Mirror*:
 - [Issy Estrella](#)
 - [Hamish McCourty](#)
 - [Em Gare](#)
 - [Meg Drury](#)
 - Artist Instagram takeovers for Dallas McMurray (from Mark Morris, *The Look of Love*), Josh Strachan (from Gravity & Other Myths, *The Mirror*), Christopher Roundtree (from Wild Up), David Cottle (from Kate Prince, *Message In A Bottle*), Bria Skonberg & Benny Benack III (from Jazz at Lincoln Centre, *Sing & Swing*),
 - TikTok/reel for [Mrs Krishnan's Party](#)
 - TikTok/reel for *Mrs Krishnan's Party* [audience reactions](#)
 - TikTok/reel [Message In A Bottle](#) audience reactions
 - TikTok/reel series for *Carmen*:
 - [Carmen the novel](#)
 - [Carmen the opera](#)
 - [Carmen by Johan Inger](#)
 - TikTok/reel for [Doos Trio](#)
 - TikTok reel for [The Look of Love](#)
 - TikTok/reel for [2023 wrap](#)
- TO Live created content highlighting a provision of space artist, Susanna Fournier, who was in our spaces working on *HEART/BODY*:
 - [TO Live residency artist](#)
 - [Space for artists to play](#)



Media highlights included:

- Toronto Star – “[The 5 dance shows we can’t wait to see in 2024 \(thestar.com\)](#) List includes Mark Morris Dance Group (*The Look of Love*), *Message in a Bottle*, and Compañía Nacional de Danza (*Carmen*) - 3/5
- **Mark Morris Dance Group** (*The Look of Love*): Toronto Star - “[He mined Beatles music for emotion. Now choreographer Mark Morris does the same for Burt Bacharach songs](#)” by Michael Crabb
- **Gravity & Other Myths’ *The Mirror***: Ludwig Van Toronto by Anya Wassenberg – “[‘Gravity & Other Myths’ *The Mirror* Uses Circus Arts To Ask: What Is Entertainment In The Modern World?](#)”
- **Compañía Nacional de Danza** (*Carmen*): Ludwig Van Toronto - CRITIC’S PICK - [Classical Events You Absolutely Need To See This Week](#)
- **Mrs. Krishnan’s Party**: CBC Radio One – *Here and Now* – “[An immersive, multisensory theatre experience has just landed in North York from New Zealand.](#)”
- **Wild Up**: CBC Radio Two – “[In Concert On Demand with Paolo Pietropaolo.](#)”
- **Jazz at Lincoln Center**: Ludwig Van Toronto - CRITIC’S PICK - [Music Events You Absolutely Need To See This Week](#)

Ticket Services

- While less hectic than Q4 of 2023 (per the usual trend of Q4 being the busiest ticketing quarter of the year), Q1 of 2024 saw a nearly 50% increase in ticketing activity compared with Q1 of 2023, with nearly 140K ticketed attendees and over 110K new tickets booked within the quarter.
- As part of an initiative to provide more regular training, support, and feedback opportunities for staff, Ticket Services launched quarterly training refreshers for both Duty Managers and Box Office Attendants.
- Improvements to internal communications and practices staff support were made, including a new shared source for quick-reference show information, beginnings of a larger project to clean up department information in shared folders, and overhauling the naming and policies pertaining to accessible seating classes.

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

Finance

- Prepared for year-end audit.
- Completed audit with flying colours.

Payroll

- Prepared for year-end audit.
- Issued too many T4s.
- Prepared for transition to new Payroll and HR system.



Information Technology

- Completed FFRF Client Firewall project.
- Completed digital signage platform additions and upgrades at Meridian Arts Centre.
- Completed migration from legacy Microsoft Mobile Device Management to Microsoft Intune.
- Completed migration from legacy Microsoft Azure log analytics to new Microsoft Azure Arc Update Manager.
- Completed STLC Presentation Centre project.
- Setup 2024 Cybersecurity training for all staff.
- Setup Q1 2024 Phishing Campaigns.

HUMAN RESOURCES & ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

- 422 employees at the end of Q1 (+73 (21%) compared to Q1 (2023)
- 36 positions filled in Q1
- Employee turnover was 2.5% in Q1 compared to 5.7%% at the same time last year
 - 10 employees left the organization last quarter
 - unspecified (45%) Other employment (8%), attendance (8%), made up 61% of the reasons for leaving the organization
 - those with tenure less than 6mths (23%), 1-3 years (23%) and 1 – 3 years (23%) made up 69% of those who left the organization

HR Round Table

- Focus on Sikh religious devices education
- Two sessions per month In-Person and Virtual

Training

- **Compliance training – Online:**
 - 251 employees - *Addressing Racism in the Workplace Training for Employees*
 - 280 employees - *AODA Customer Service Standards Training (Comprehensive Content, Immersive)*
 - 264 employees - *Addressing Racism in the Workplace Training for Employees (Immersive)*
 - 261 employees - *Demonstrating Respect at Work Training*
 - 203 employees - *Unconscious Bias Training for All Audiences*
 - 265 employees - *Workplace Violence and Harassment Refresher Training for Employees (Ontario, Immersive)*
- **In person Training**
 - 40 employees attended - *AODA Management and customer services training (TO Live customized training) including senior management.*
 - Training will be rolled out to the remaining employees during the remainder of the year

Employee Relations

- IDEA Engagement survey was conducted, and the action plan has been prepared



OPERATIONS

Facility Services

- Undertook corrective works to resolve deficiencies identified during the last annual fire safety system inspection at all locations.
- Upgraded Building automation system (BAS) MH & STLC for cybersecurity compliance.
- Conducted a waste audit to identify gaps and opportunities towards improving waste diversion.

Patron Services and Event Services

- Engaged with approximately 91,00 visitors.
- Enhanced concessions offering on a show specific basis.
- Introduced a new water sponsor at concessions.
- Expanded staff training initiatives.
- Introduced new catering menu for corporate events.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

- **Meridian Arts Centre** highlights include:
 - AODA Work Package 5 (Theatres Phase 2): completed.
 - AODA Work Package 6 (Offices and Lunchrooms): completed.
 - AODA Work Package 7 (Back of House support Phase 1): phase 1 completed. Phase 2 will be completed by the end of the year.
 - AODA Work Package 8 (Venue Renovations): tender documents to be published in Spring.
 - Technical Theatres Improvements: multiyear project. Installation is ongoing.
 - Rigging Replacement for GWRH and Lyric: detailed design is completed, and procurement commenced.
 - MAC Exterior Repair: completed; Stone cladding is scheduled for August 2024
 - NET Zero Carbon Initiatives: consultant has been engaged. Emission baselined has been reported and decarbonization options have been modeled.
 - Life Safety Systems - Repairs & Testing: tender documents in the design phase.
- **Meridian Hall** highlights include:
 - Door Replacement: deficiencies list is progressing.
 - AODA Projects - Work Package 4 (Front and Back of House Services): remaining scopes are stage lift and acoustic tiles. Lift is scheduled to be completed in June 2024
 - AODA Projects – Work Package 5 (Lobby Washrooms Phase 2): phase 1 is completed. Phase 2 procurement is progressing.
 - AODA Projects – Work Package 6 (Venue Renovations): tendering in spring
 - PSVC Systems: final elements to be completed in Q2 2024
 - Exterior Envelope & Site Work: construction started. Estimated completion is Q4 2024
 - NET Zero Carbon Initiatives: consultant has been engaged. emission baselined has been reported and decarbonization options have been modeled.



- Sprinkler Expansion: Initial investigation and reporting completed. RFP to be issued.

DEVELOPMENT – Philanthropy & Corporate Sponsorship

- Government
 - Submitted Federal and Provincial grant applications totaling \$115K (Department of Canadian Heritage, Canada Council for the Art, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Ontario Arts Council)
- Major Gifts & Foundations
 - Submitted foundation and major gifts proposals totaling \$250k
 - Renewed program support for Xenia Concert Series from Lewitt Foundation with a \$10k increase from 2023 (\$20k).
- Sponsorship
 - Launched new venue partnership with the Earth Group as exclusive still water partner
 - Renewed partnership Muskoka Cottage Brewery Inc., 1 year.
 - \$10k confirmed in sponsorship to support programming from Sultan of Samosas. It was committed in Q1 but delayed for future programming and is a conversation for us to follow up on, not sure if we can still present it
 - Presented sponsorship proposals totaling \$65k
- Stewardship
 - Hosted reception for *Message in a Bottle*
 - Finalized Q3 – Q4 Impact Report for Meridian
- Continued to cultivate potential venue and programming sponsors, donors and foundation partners.

TO Live Foundation and TO Live fundraising are separate entities.

StLC REDEVELOPMENT

- Completed 90% Schematic Design
- Continued Indigenous consultation
- Prepared and executed public Town Hall with Architectural Team, including livestream and Q & A

