

Executive Management Report to the Board

Q4 Activity (Oct-Nov-Dec 2024)

•
T0 Live

PRESIDENT & CEO'S EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"The circus is an honest theatre: it shows us danger so that we may find courage, it shows us laughter so that we may remember joy, and it shows us flight so that we may dream."

— Ernest Hemingway

It may come as a surprise to some, but the end of 2024 gave us plenty to celebrate. For those who missed it (and what a shame if you did!), the Circus came to town for the month of December. Our presentation of *Cirque de Soleil's 'Twas the Night Before* closed out our season - and the year - with some much-needed dose of magic, joy, and a welcome boost at the box office.

The year wasn't without its challenges. We started with sluggish ticket sales, which caused some concern over the summer months. But momentum picked up across all our venues, and we raced toward the finish line with a balanced budget (our VP of Finance & Administration will want me to add here: that's *pre-audit* numbers).

In his insightful article, "[Put Down Your Phone and Head to the Theatre](#)", Chris Abraham of Crow's Theatre eloquently reminds us why the arts are essential - and the perfect balm for our soul - especially now. Sitting in Meridian Hall over the holidays, watching acrobats soar through the air, I was struck by a simple truth: culture is not just enrichment; it's an escape. And in today's world, that is more valuable than ever.

As we move through our first quarter of 2025, our halls are still echoing with laughter and applause. If you haven't joined us for a show yet, consider this your invitation. Let the lights dim, settle in (perhaps with a libation in hand) and rejoice - because if the world can create art, theatre, music, comedy, and circus performances this extraordinary - there is hope.

A heartfelt thank you to the incredible TO Live team, whose passion and dedication made the magic of 2024 possible. In our own small way, we bring light to this amazing city.



Clyde Wagner
President & CEO



PROGRAMMING

The fourth quarter of 2024 featured a wide array of activities across the Programming department.

TO Live Presents

- [*'Twas the Night Before*](#), a co-presentation with Cirque du Soleil was performed 30 times in Meridian Hall to the delight of families during the holiday season. Ticket sales exceeded 85% of capacity.
- [*Wonderful Joe*](#), created by Canadian puppetry legend Ronnie Burkett received rave reviews from critics and audiences alike. Masterful craftwork and storytelling in a one of a kind show presented in the Jane Mallett Theatre.
- The relentlessly innovative [*Cecile McLorin Salvant*](#) performed an unforgettable night of jazz in the George Weston Recital Hall, followed the next afternoon by a sold out concert with [*The Kingdom Choir*](#) that had audiences singing and dancing in the aisles.

Making Space

- Through our **Making Space** initiative, in the last quarter of 2024 we supported 6 companies (Dance Immersion, Fall for Dance North, Jaber Dance theatre, Disability Collective, Garage Collective, and Cote Dance) and through those, 80 individual artists with rehearsal spaces and technical residency support amounting to an in-kind value of CAD \$14,000.

Stage Rentals

Q4 Highlights include:

- Meridian Hall was, as always, a destination for great global artists reflecting Toronto's rich diversity. Concerts included Richie Jen (Taiwan), Alireza Talischi (Iran), De Yun She (China) and Maxim Galkin (Russia).
- The St Lawrence Centre for the Arts was busy with My Name is Lucy Barton presented by Canadian Stage as well as events presented by resident companies Toronto Operetta Theatre, Hannaford St Silver Band, Music Toronto and Sinfonia Toronto
- Meridian Arts Centre, in particular The George Weston Recital Hall maintained frequent high caliber classical music activity in North York, which included concerts by Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Mandle Philharmonic, Amadeus Choir, Orchestra Toronto and a co-presentation with TO Live and Music Toronto.



Communities and Outreach

- At the Meridian Arts Centre, **free zine-making Community Classes** were led by *Morgan Kagesheongai* in partnership with North York Arts. Downtown, the [*Resin Art with Arefa*](#) **workshop series** concluded, garnering enthusiasm from the community for further visual arts workshops.
- Hosted two **Xenia Concerts** (which offers free performing arts experiences for children, their families, and others within those communities who face systemic and social barriers to inclusion) with the vibrant, dynamic [*Thalea String Quartet*](#) in November and classical, contemporary [*Duo Perdendosi*](#) in December at Meridian Hall.
- Presented two much-anticipated **pre-show chats** with Grammy-winning composer *Christophe Beck* in advance of each performance of "Frozen in Concert" for over 340 children and families.
- **Explorations** programme supported 6 artists with \$7000 grant each. 4 out of 6 artists will be presenting their work during Doors Open 2025. The artist check-ins are done, and their final grant payments have also been cleared.

Corporate and Private Events

Strong Q4 with 30 corporate events, 13 featuring new companies. Significantly outperformed forecast.

- New blue-chip events include Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, City of Toronto Small Business Forum and TD Bank Awards.
- 35% of recurring events were educational institutions including top schools, Seneca and St Clair Colleges.
- A surge of fundraisers at MAC including new events, Ezer Mizion, Friends of the Israel Guide Dog and Abraham Global Peace Initiative.
- Picked up two side events from Franklin Templeton and Scott Associated, piggybacking on 'Twas the Night Before.

Production Services

- Primary focus in the final quarter was program delivery with shows/activity in all seven theatres. The addition of *'Twas the Night Before* as a seasonal programming event at Meridian Hall had a cascading effect for the Bluma Appel theatre, with the Nutcracker being transferred there, and keeping us busy throughout the holiday season.
- Upgrades to our life safety equipment, particularly for working at heights, were initiated, concurrent with appropriate safety training for elevated work platforms and working at heights for activities, such as rigging; this safety program is expected to continue into the first quarter of 2025.



- Continued to partner with our colleagues in IATSE Local 58, the stagehands local, to use our facilities as training spaces for new and junior members of the Union. This program has yielded many benefits with more stagehands being familiar with our facilities and possessing a greater skill set, making for a more efficient crew when working our events.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Marketing and Communications

- Recognized days of national and social/cultural importance on social media and digital signage, including Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Thanksgiving, Diwali, Remembrance Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Giving Tuesday, Hanukkah, Christmas, Boxing Day, and winter holidays.
 - Partnered with artist Krystal Ball, part of the Black Artists' Network in Dialogue (BAND), to create a [custom holiday illustration](#).
- Created and shared content to highlight TO Live Presents shows, including:
 - [11 videos promoting and exploring Wonderful Joe](#) featuring Ronnie Burkett and John Alcorn (scroll down in link)
 - 1 audience [reaction video](#) of *Wonderful Joe*
 - 1 [interview blog](#) featuring John Alcorn
 - 2 reels promoting *'Twas the Night Before...* featuring a [partnership with Chotto Matte](#) and the [decorated bus shelter](#)
 - A [How to Train Your Dragon TikTok/reel](#)
 - 4 reels promoting [What Makes It Great](#) featuring [Rob Kapilow](#) and the [Cheng2Duo, Silvie and Bryan Cheng](#)
 - 3 [reels](#) featuring [interview clips of Cécile McLorin Salvant](#)
 - 1 [interview blog](#) featuring Cécile McLorin Salvant
- Supported the announcement of the 2024 *explorations* artist cohort with [social media](#), updated central webpage on tolive.com/explorations, and a [media release](#).

Media Highlights included:

- **Wonderful Joe** (Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes) - Globe and Mail – [Ronnie Burkett's Wonderful Joe is a dark and moving puppet extravaganza](#), Toronto Star – [A show by one of the world's greatest puppeteers is a moving example of empathy when we need it most](#), Ronnie Burkett interview on CBC Radio One's *Here and Now* [Wonderful Joe | Here and Now Toronto](#)
- **What Makes It Great?** with **Rob Kapilow** and the **Cheng2 Duo** - The New Classical FM hosted a special live broadcast of "What Makes It Great? [Concert - The New Classical FM](#)
- **Frozen - Live with Orchestra** - Ludwig Van Toronto - [Canadian Composer Christophe Beck Visits Toronto For Frozen Orchestral Performance](#)



- **Cécile McLorin Salvant** - Caribbean Camera - [Haitian Jazz Star Cécile McLorin Salvant in Toronto](#), Radio-Canada - “Y a pas deux matins pareil” [Culture : Cécile McLorin Salvant en concert](#)
- **The Kingdom Choir** - Caribbean Camera – [Kingdom Choir Brings Holiday Magic to Toronto Concert](#)
- **'Twas the Night Before... by Cirque du Soleil** - Breakfast Television – [Exclusive look at Cirque-du-Soleil's first ever holiday show](#), Global News - [Cirque-du-Soleil gets festive with 'Twas the Night Before](#), and dozens more media articles.

Ticket Services

- Continuing a trend from the last couple years, Q4 of 2024 was the busiest quarter of the year in terms of ticketed activity, in addition to being the busiest quarter since the pandemic closure in general. Ticket Services providing box office support and customer service across over 190 events, centered around the massively successful run of Cirque du Soleil’s ‘Twas the Night Before, the highest-selling show in TO Live’s history, and the second-highest selling show in the history of Meridian Hall.
- The ticketed events in Q4 of 2024 saw over 194K ticketed attendees (over 5% higher than Q4 of 2023, the next-busiest quarter since reopening), along with over 192K new tickets booked within the quarter.
- A long-awaited improvement in Ticketmaster’s online package/plan sales tool was implemented, allowing purchase of show packages across multiple venues using the interactive seating map.
- Enhancements were made to the building and management of price codes in the Archtics system, allowing automatic adding of service fees, and expanding the usability of recently introduced Invoicing and Pay-by-Link features.
- Several internal processes were introduced/updated within Box Office to help identify, track and resolve errors and issues, including better activity tracking, error checking, and internal shift reporting.

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

Finance

- Completed 2025 budget notes
- Completed interim audit for 2024
- Started work on 2024 audit preparations
- Worked with City staff in extensive review of a corporate asset plan to meet provincial regulations for July 1, 2025
- Regular business



Payroll

- Engaged on year-end preparation processes, tax updates, and getting ready for 2025
- Reviewed compliance updates for staff benefits and OMERS regulations
- Finalized negotiations with new payroll/HR system, started data collection for new system
- Regular business

Information Technology

- Completed all reviews and legal updates related to the Memorandum of Understanding from the Office of the Chief Information Security Officer
- Continued preparations for phone migration project from Mitel to Microsoft
- Completed all feedback/revisions for Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery document

Other

- Continued work on TO Live Programming contracts

HUMAN RESOURCES & ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

- 417 employees at the end of Q4 (+22 (6%) compared to Q4 (2023)
- 20 positions filled in Q4. 77 positions filled in 2024
- Employee turnover was 6.9% in Q4 compared to 4.5% at the same time last year
 - 30 employees left the organization last quarter
 - unspecified (52%) , another job (11%), performance (7%), job abandonment (7%)
 - those with tenure 1-3 years (33%), less than 6 months (20%), 5-10 years (17%) and 6 months – 1 year (16%) made up 86% of those who left the organization.

Training

- **Compliance training (online)**
 - 305 employees - *Addressing Racism in the Workplace Training for Employees*
 - 312 employees - *AODA Customer Service Standards Training (Comprehensive Content, Immersive)*
 - 299 employees - *Demonstrating Respect at Work Training*
 - 207 employees - *Unconscious Bias Training for All Audiences*
 - 284 employees - *Workplace Violence and Harassment Refresher Training for Employees (Ontario, Immersive)*



OPERATIONS

Facility Services

- Collected and disposed of all chemicals and hazardous waste from all locations.
- Completed annual fire safety inspections.
- Replaced failed glass panels at the MAC
- Replaced of failed cooling valves at MH
- Investigated and fixed fresh air duct obstruction for AC1 at MH

Patron Services and Event Services

- Welcomed approximately 200,000 visitors across all venues.
- Collaborated with partners to introduce new wine selections and non-alcoholic beer.
- Continued progress on policies and service plans.
- Began preliminary research into new kitchen facilities to better support corporate events.

Capital Projects

- **Meridian Arts Centre highlights include:**
 - AODA Work Package 6 (Offices and Lunchrooms): Completed, working on close-out documents and deficiencies.
 - AODA Work Package 7 (Back of House support Phase 1): Phase 1 completed, construction of Phase 2 completed, Phase 3 commenced and currently 60% completed. The elevators under construction and 30% completed.
 - AODA Work Package 8 (Venue Renovations): Phase 1 commenced and 50% completed.
 - Technical Theatres Improvements: 4 out of 5 subprojects are completed.
 - Rigging Replacement for GWRH and Lyric: Pre-work has been completed, main scope scheduled for July and August 2025.
 - NET Zero Carbon Initiatives: Final report has been received. Completed
- **Meridian Hall highlights include:**
 - Door Replacement: Working on final tasks of along with closing documents.
 - AODA Projects - Work Package 4 (Front and Back of House Services): Completed.
 - AODA Projects – Work Package 5 (Lobby Washrooms Phase 2): Phase 1 completed. Phase 2 completed.
 - AODA Projects - Work Package 6 (Venue Renovations): Project commenced for work areas 1 & 2. Multiyear project and completion forecasted for summer 2026.
 - Exterior Envelope & Site Work: 95% completed. Awaiting remaining fixtures to be received.
 - NET Zero Carbon Initiatives: Final report has been received. Completed.



DEVELOPMENT – Philanthropy & Corporate Sponsorship

- Government
 - Submitted grant to Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (\$50k)
 - Prepared final reports for all 2024 government funding
- Major Gifts & Foundations
 - Submitted proposals to foundations and individuals totaling \$1,050,000 in support of Programming
- Annual Giving
 - Launched the TO Live Champions Membership Program and introduced a membership table in the lobbies at select performances
 - Executed ‘Giving Tuesday’ and End of Year Campaigns, and launched a Seat Naming Campaign
- Sponsorship
 - Submitted sponsorship proposals totaling ~ \$155k
 - Hosted a sponsorship cultivation event during ‘*Twas the Night Before*’ which successfully established new corporate relationships for TO Live
 - Launched new partnership with SpotHero
- Stewardship
 - Initiated 6-month trial partnership with Partake Brewing as exclusive venue partner for non-alcoholic beer
 - Hosted receptions for Cécile McLorin Salvant and Kingdom Choir featuring artist talks and live music to kick off the holiday season
- Continued to cultivate potential venue and programming sponsors, donors, and foundation partners

TO Live Foundation and TO Live fundraising are separate entities.

StLC REDEVELOPMENT

- Post Executive/Council meetings in October, worked with Hariri Pontarini to adjust scope of work from Schematic design to future “renovation” Enhanced SOGR
- Completed contract with Monumental consultants; Report on ***TO Live Strategic Alignment***
- Continued to collaborate with Arts & Communications to solicit naming of STLC and district
- Building Case for Support in anticipation of launching capital campaign

