

August 1, 2022

Dear Georgia Ensemble Friends,

Do you believe it's important to have a professional theatre in your area? Does access to arts and entertainment benefit the quality of life in your community? Do you like having high quality productions close to home instead of needing to drive inside the perimeter? In the 30 years we've been in Roswell, you've helped us establish GET as a beloved neighborhood destination for professional entertainment and art. You've built relationships with us and introduced us to your friends. We've watched this community grow alongside us from a small town to a bustling destination with shops, restaurants, and galleries—many of those businesses attracted by the audiences who have made it a habit to come to the Cultural Arts Center five times a year and enjoy professional entertainment in their backyard. I remember when we first opened GET...there were two restaurants on Canton Street, and I would sit in the box office night after night calling to ask them to stay open a little later so our patrons could come by after the show ended. Recent years have threatened to undo all of this growth, and we need to ask for your help to ensure that your Roswell neighborhood keeps its long-standing, high-quality professional theatre.

Our fiscal year ends on August 31st, so it's a good time to take stock of what we've accomplished and what we hope to do in the future. So many good things have happened over the last 30 years, and some hard things have happened, too. This August, as we close out our budget year, we have not yet reached our fundraising & revenue goals. We need your immediate help.

May I be honest with you? This has been a tough year. Well, a tough two-and-a-half years, in truth. About this time last year, we were optimistic. We were able to stage an outdoor concert and a mainstage cabaret series, and then to launch a 4-play mainstage season. We received a grant from the U.S. Government (the Shattered Venue Operators Grant) allowing us to rehire many of our staff members and hire replacements for those who had moved on to other opportunities. We partnered with Emory University's nursing program to review safety policies & procedures for mitigating the spread of Covid-19 and we invested in masks, sanitizers, and electrostatic sprayers. We developed a health & safety policy for artists, patrons, and staff that would offer a level of comfort for most people. We hired artists and created exciting plays. So many of you renewed your season ticket subscriptions despite the uncertainty and promised to keep supporting us and keep coming back. We were able to offer a wider variety of plays than we've had in some time—including work that featured more women writers, more artists of color, and an entire world-premiere new musical. You came to see these shows and told us that you loved them, or you were glad to see us back, or you were happy that we'd made it through the

lockdown. A few of you said you weren't ready to return but you paid for your seat anyway, just to vouch for your confidence in us. Our education programs moved into a new building and registered more students than any time in our 30-year history. Our performance ensemble students wrote and produced three brand new plays that have never been seen before. The world premiere of *The Pretty Pants Bandit* drew tremendous attention and applause from audiences and critics. All three of the shows we put on the mainstage were Suzi Bass Award Recommended. We sent our touring production of *And Then They Came for Me: Remembering the World of Anne Frank* back into schools at last after the closures of 2020-21. When I look back at where we were a year ago, I'm amazed at all we were able to do.

But the past year has not been without its obstacles. Many of you felt uncomfortable with our Covid-19 policies and decided not to attend for a year. About half of our 2500 subscribers did not renew their subscriptions in 2021 for a variety of reasons. We lost our offices at the Roswell Cultural Arts Center and had to move our administrators and Conservatory. As we limited the availability of seating to allow for safe distancing, we weren't able to sell as many tickets as usual. While we were preparing to open our January show, a Covid-19 outbreak ranged through the cast and crew despite our best efforts, and that show had to be canceled—but we had already spent the money allocated for building the set, creating the costumes, and hiring the artists. (And the prices of lumber and other building materials were astronomical at the time!) We paid out our artists' contracts. Eventually we decided to move that show to March, delaying the production of *Alabama Story* which didn't have as much expenditure invested in it yet. That meant paying the artists for a second contract on top of losing the income from the cancelled run. That put us into significant financial stress as we headed toward *The Pretty Pants Bandit*, a huge musical that was budgeted to cost far more than any of the other shows in the season. Thankfully, that show met its ticket sales goals, but it didn't generate enough extra sales to replace the lost revenue from the cancelled show. Costs of materials, rental fees, and labor have continued to rise. Because of the cancellations, changes, and unpredictability, we weren't able to launch our season ticket renewal campaign in February as we usually do—creating a further reduction in our expected income for early 2022. And due to a number of factors, many of our donors decreased or stopped their charitable giving. It's been a tough year.

So we find ourselves here at the end of our fiscal year with a shortfall of \$250,000. We need your help to raise that amount by August 31st so that we'll be able to begin production of our 30th Anniversary Season. You may have heard us say that ticket sales cover about 68% of the operating costs of Georgia Ensemble Theatre. The support we receive from foundations, grants, and most importantly, individual donors must make up the rest. (Many non-profit theatres like ours generate more than half of their income from charitable giving!) Your contribution is absolutely crucial to our future viability.

If we aren't able to meet the fundraising goal, there will be no long-term future for Georgia Ensemble Theatre. We must be on stable financial footing to plan for more than the immediate outlook. Imagine your neighborhood without a strong artistic presence at its heart. Imagine having to drive inside the perimeter every time you're looking for a night of entertainment. Imagine the loss to schoolchildren all over Georgia if we no longer bring

educational theatre to their classrooms. Imagine the broken dreams of local children who study acting or musical theatre with us in the hopes of being a great performer. You've been right there with us for 30 years, supporting our work with your charitable giving and helping us build the Roswell community. You've repeatedly expressed your confidence in GET, your love of theatre, and your pride in having such a special company in your own neighborhood. We are asking you to show up for us again by making a donation now.

Will you help us reach our \$250,000 goal? Please give today (and see how our progress is going) by visiting get.org/giving. You can donate securely online using a credit or debit card. If you'd like to give monthly instead of making one large payment, just click the button for "recurring donations" and set up the payment plan of your choice. If you prefer to mail a check, you can send it to 615 Hembree Pkwy. Suite 200, Roswell, GA 30076 (marked Attention: Development Manager). Georgia Ensemble Theatre is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization; your gift is tax-deductible and you will immediately receive a receipt by email.

If you aren't able to contribute financially at this time, would you please share this invitation with your friends and neighbors, or encourage others to buy tickets and season subscriptions? The need is urgent, and your vote of confidence in us will go a long way toward convincing others to contribute.

Thank you for your partnership, affection, and support throughout the years. We would not be opening our 30th anniversary season without you!! We hope to be around for at least 30 more years right here in your neighborhood.

With love,
Anita Farley, Producing Artistic Director
Jonathan Johnson, Development Manager

