

# Actors Bridge Ensemble Theater of Nashville Inc



## General Information

### Contact Information

<b>Nonprofit</b>	Actors Bridge Ensemble Theater of Nashville Inc
<b>Address</b>	4610 Charlotte Avenue Nashville, TN 37209
<b>Phone</b>	(615) 498-4077
<b>Web Site</b>	<b>Web Site</b>
<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Facebook</b>
<b>Twitter</b>	<b>Twitter</b>
<b>Email</b>	info@actorsbridge.org

### At A Glance

**Year of Incorporation** 1998

- Act Like a GRRRL
- Sideshow Fringe Festival
- Sideshow Ensemble
- Act Like a Big GRRRL

# Mission & Impact

## Statements

### **Mission**

Our mission is tell the stories that matter to Nashville as we train theater artists, produce socially conscious plays, create new work, expand what counts as theater in our community, and help artists and audiences find their authentic voice on stage and in life.

### **Background**

Actors Bridge was founded in 1995 by Bill Feehely and Vali Forrister. Bill saw the need to create ongoing professional actor training in Nashville and Vali longed to bring to her hometown the new socially-relevant plays she was seeing in New York, Chicago and London.

In the last 20 years, the company has trained over 4,000 students in the Meisner Technique. Those actors have gone on to perform on local, regional and national stages as well as in film and television. There are few local productions that do not include a performer in some way influenced by Actors Bridge training.

As a professional theatre company, we have produced over 90 plays, including 14 World Premieres and 60 Nashville premieres.

In 1995, Actors Bridge began in the Belmont Little Theatre. From 1996-2003, we were the theatre-in-residence at St. Augustine's Chapel on the campus of Vanderbilt University. In 2003, we became pioneers in Germantown at the Neuhoff Site. In 2013, we joined the revitalization of Charlotte Avenue by moving our studio space to the LeQuire Gallery building. In 2015, we outgrew our LeQuire space, we moved three blocks further down Charlotte to the Darkhorse Chapel (located directly behind Darkhorse Theater).

In 2007, we took a risk on two emerging theater artists graduating from Belmont University's Department of Theatre and Dance. Jessika Malone and Mitch Massaro honed their artistry at Actors Bridge over the next 7 years and then headed to graduate school. In 2016, they returned to Actors Bridge Jessika with an MFA in directing from Illinois State University and Mitch with an MFA in technical design and production from the Yale School of Drama.

Actors Bridge performs at our Darkhorse Chapel studio and a Belmont University's Troutt Theater Complex where we are a professional theater company in residence.

## **Impact**

2016-17 Accomplishments:

Training: We diversified offerings to include classes in solo performance, scene study, storytelling, and Theater of the Oppressed workshops. Through direct mentorship, we provided professional debut opportunities to 2 new directors.

Season: Our 2016 world premiere production of THE ICE TREATMENT by Nate Eppler is currently one of 6 finalists for the American Theatre Critics Association/Steinberg Award for Best New Play Produced Outside New York. This year's finalists include Pulitzer and Tony winners (Tracy Letts, Michael Christoffer, David Rabe) and nationally recognized companies that regularly produce brand new plays (Steppenwolf, Court Theatre). ABE's operating budget and national profile is not on scale with these other theatres, which makes the accomplishment even more significant.

Our recent production of Dominique Morisseau's DETROIT '67 included post-show community conversations with Black Lives Matter's Rhina Anthony, Nashville Vice Mayor David Briley, Infinity Fellowship's Rev. Jeff Obafemi Carr, the cast and director discussing the play's historical content and Nashville's current political climate. Our annual production of THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES by Eve Ensler at City Winery featured a diverse cast, including Nashville Mayor Megan Barry.

ALAG: In 2016, Vanderbilt University's graduate program in Community Research and Action chose to study and design evaluation tools for ALAG. Year one implementation is demonstrating ALAG's effect on GRRRLS and the circles in which they interact (school, family, neighborhood, faith group). To add to existing evidence of ALAG's success: no reported drug abuse, truancy, unwanted pregnancy plus an increase in self-esteem, improved relationships, academic excellence, intolerance of bullying and hope for the future.

SFF: SFF has tripled in size in both performance offerings and attendance. Last year, over 100 local artists performed during the 4-day festival celebrating a diverse array of disciplines including aerial dance, puppetry, comedy, clowning, solo performance, new play readings, and family/sensory friendly offerings.

Current Goals:

Training: We are formalizing our professional mentorship and cross-training program to provide structured, ongoing support to the next generation of theatre makers. We are exploring opportunities to provide training to directors in the region with an emphasis on directors of color.

Season: Furthering our mission to create new work, we plan to produce two world premiere productions in our 2017-18 season, including WE SEE WHAT HAPPEN: An Immigration Play by Jonathan Alexandratos and HAUNTED: A Nashville Experience devised by ABE in collaboration with FALL Dance, Abrasive Media, and Sailors & Maidens Puppet Theater.

ALAG: We are exploring opportunities to open ALAG chapters in neighborhoods surrounding Nashville. We plan to offer facilitator training to teaching artists and ALAG graduates to staff new chapters.

SFF: In 2017, we expanded SFF from a 4-day festival to a 2-weekend festival to meet the current demand of artists and audiences.

## **Needs**

Actors Bridge offers a tremendous array of important and highly regarded programs with a full-time staff of only one person. We need funding to create contract support in fundraising, marketing, grantwriting, and office management.

In addition, we seek scholarship support for teenage girls in financial need to attend Act Like a GRRRL and seed funding to create new chapters of ALAG in other middle Tennessee communities.

## **Other ways to donate, support, or volunteer**

Mail checks to:

Actors Bridge Ensemble  
4610 Charlotte Ave  
Nashville, TN 37209

In-kind donations of goods and services also welcome.

## Service Categories

### **Primary Organization Category**

Arts, Culture & Humanities / Theater

### **Secondary Organization Category**

Youth Development / Youth Development Programs

### **Tertiary Organization Category**

Education / Educational Services

## Areas of Service

### **Areas Served**

---

TN - Davidson

TN - Dickson

TN - Rutherford

TN - Williamson

TN - Wilson

TN - Montgomery

Actors Bridge classes take place at our studio in the Darkhorse Chapel in West Nashville (across the street from Richland Park). Performances take place at our studio and at Belmont University's Troutt Theater Complex, where Actors Bridge is one of the professional theatre company in residence.

Audiences and students come from as far away as Huntsville, AL and Bowling Green, KY to participate in Actors Bridge programs.

# Programs

## Programs

### Classes - Year Round Training

<b>Description</b>	Actors Bridge provides local actors an opportunity for serious study. The program uses an acting technique developed by Sanford Meisner, founder of the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. All students begin at Level One regardless of stage experience or training background because the Meisner Technique uses specific tools and vocabulary that must be learned in sequence. Actors Bridge has trained over 4,000 students many of whom are working professionally on stages or in film in New York, L.A. and Nashville. There are 5 Levels of the Meisner Technique. All are offered at Actors Bridge. We also offer training in the Suzuki Method, as well as On-Camera Acting, Stage Combat, Audition Technique and Storytelling.
<b>Budget</b>	20000
<b>Category</b>	Arts, Culture & Humanities, General/Other Theater Arts Instruction
<b>Population Served</b>	Adults, General/Unspecified,
<b>Examples of Program Success</b>	<p>Interest in the training program is at an all-time high and currently exceeds capacity. Students who are in or have completed the Meisner training find that they are cast more often for both stage, film, video and commercial work.</p> <p>Three of our students in 2010-11 moved to New York and were accepted at the prestigious William Esper Studios. Esper is the most renown teacher of the Meisner Technique and his program is incredibly competitive. Two of the 3 students have decided to pursue a career in New York. One recently wrote us to say: "it wasn't for you I don't think I'd be here at the Esper studio. So, thank you. You all are amazing! I'm proud to say Actors Bridge is my roots."</p>

## Act Like A GRRRL

### **Description**

Act Like A GRRRL is an autobiographical writing program for young women to achieve a public voice, working with female mentors in professional creative fields, while engaging with peers from diverse backgrounds.

Numerous studies have shown that when they hit adolescence, formerly assertive, confident, healthy girls begin to change. They stop excelling academically, they develop eating disorders and anxieties about their bodies, and many become depressed or engage in self-destructive activities; in short, they begin conforming to the demands of a culture that is often hostile to them.

ALAG gives girls the tools to analyze critically the culture in which they live so that they become active change agents rather than passive recipients of cultural messages. ALAG celebrates girls' strength and girls' voices and by so doing, promotes girls' leadership.

The program has expanded to include offerings for adults, middle school girls and incarcerated women. We have conducted versions of the program in settings as diverse as a retreat center in Bolivia and the Tennessee Prison for Women and a co-housing community in Fairfax County, Virginia.

### **Budget**

30000

### **Category**

Arts, Culture & Humanities, General/Other Performing Arts

### **Population Served**

Adolescents Only (13-19 years), Females, Adults

### **Short Term Success**

Short term success for teenage girls participating in Act Like a GRRRL include improved relationships with friends and family, increased academic excellence, intolerance for bullying and hope for the future. To date, there is no reported drug abuse, truancy or unwanted pregnancy. All our graduates have gone to college.

## **Long term Success**

The ultimate changes resulting from Act Like a GRRRL are empowered young women living full lives -- lives they might not have envisioned for themselves before this program -- like Kamilah and Haviland who were part of the very first ALAG group and have continued their involvement in the program:

"Act Like a Grrrl is an intention to build a community where there are no judgements, and where we seek to break the stereotypes of girls being negative toward one another. Without ALAG, I wouldn't be as brave or accepting as I learned to be and I wouldn't have chosen the career path that I did. Every young woman who seeks to better herself and her community should be a part of this group." Kamilah, age 20, Middle Tennessee State University

ALAG inspires you to reach beyond the boundaries you didn't realized you had imposed on yourself. You can take charge of your life and allow your fullest ambitions to be realized. ALAG instilled in me a spirit to "prove them wrong," and go after typically male-dominated studies and professions, specifically in astrophysics, optics, and philosophy. I feel smarter and more capable now than I ever thought I could be." Haviland, age 21, Agnes Scott College

## **Program Success Monitored By**

Act Like a GRRRL's success is measured in multiple ways. Based on standards from the American Camp Association, a summer camp is considered "successful" if it maintains a retention rate of 50% of its campers and 40-60% of its counselors. ALAG's retention rate for the last 13 years has been over 90% among participants and 100% among facilitators (counselors). That is a huge testament to the power of our mission.

Another measure of success is participant improvement as tracked through pre- and post-program surveys and year-round follow-up with an adult support person in each GRRRL's life (GRRRL VIPs). We examine emotional well-being, resiliency, self-agency, family and peer relationships and academic performance.

To date, 100% of our graduates have gone to college. There is no reported drug use, truancy or pregnancy among GRRRL participants. They do report a significant increase in self-confidence, academic excellence, improved relationships with family and hope for the future.

## **Examples of Program Success**

Of course, the most meaningful measures of success always come in the form of stories: the GRRRL who becomes the first in her family to go to college; the one who stands up to an abusive father and helps her mother find the courage to move to a safe place; the bully who recognizes her behavior and becomes an anti-bullying activist; the girl who thought her only options were teacher or secretary who expands her dreams and becomes a National Science Foundation fellow getting a PhD in atmospheric chemistry.

Our first generation of GRRRLS is now entering graduate school in fields like social work, law, creative writing, atmospheric chemistry, nursing. We continue to maintain relationships with 90% of past program participants. Many report that they discovered their passion for the career they are now pursuing because of an initial inspiration by a guest artist at ALAG.

## Performance - Professional Theatre Production

<b>Description</b>	Actors Bridge Ensemble performs a four show professional season. Actors Bridge Ensemble remains committed to bringing new and evocative theater to the Nashville community with over 90 plays produced, including 14 world premieres and 60 Nashville premieres. Our commitment to excellence has garnered Actors Bridge a strong reputation as a company committed to boldness and grounded in high performance standards.
<b>Budget</b>	150,0000
<b>Category</b>	Arts, Culture & Humanities, General/Other Theater
<b>Population Served</b>	General/Unspecified, ,

## Sideshow Fringe Festival

<b>Description</b>	The Sideshow Fringe Festival is the annual summer performance event for Actors Bridge. Through their work on the Fringe Festival, emerging artists from a variety of performance disciplines get to take bold risks, build their professional resumes and have the support and feedback of established professional mentors. The Sideshow Fringe Festival attracts a growing audience of Nashvillians interested in experimental performance art and innovative theatrical work. The Festival is held the first weekend in August at venues in the Belmont/12 South neighborhoods and in East Nashville. The Festival draws artists from all over Nashville and the Southeast. We are members of the US Association of Fringe Festivals.
<b>Budget</b>	15000
<b>Population Served</b>	, ,

# Governance

## Board Chair

<b>Board Chair</b>	Ms. Jane Alvis
<b>Company Affiliation</b>	Alvis Company
<b>Term</b>	Aug 2013 to July 2018
<b>Email</b>	jane@alviscompany.net

## Board Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Status</b>
Ms. Rachel Agee	Tennessee Housing Authority	Voting
Ms. Kamilah Ajamu	Event Specialist	Voting
Ms. Jane Alvis	Alvis Company	Voting
Mr. Tom Amirante	CFO Business Strategies, Inc.	Voting
Ms. Kathryn Beasley	Kraft CPAs	Voting
Ms. Vali Forrister	Actors Bridge Ensemble	Voting
Mr. Turner Gaw	V.P. Small Lending Division	Voting
Ms. Tracy Gershon	Warner Brothers Records	Voting
Ms. Cynthia Harris	Tennessee Kidney Foundation	Voting
Mr. Pierre Johnson	Dell Computers	Voting
Ms. Heather Connelly Leftkowitz	Vanderbilt University / Peabody College	Voting
Ms. Leah Lowe	Vanderbilt University Dept of Theatre	Voting
Mr. Charlie Strobel	Campus for Human Development	Voting
Mr. Paul Walwyn	Walwyn & Walwyn Law	Voting

## Board Demographics - Ethnicity

<b>African American/Black</b>	4
<b>Asian American/Pacific Islander</b>	0
<b>Caucasian</b>	10
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	0
<b>Native American/American Indian</b>	0
<b>Other</b>	0

## Board Demographics - Gender

<b>Male</b>	5
<b>Female</b>	9
<b>Unspecified</b>	0

## Governance

<b>Board Term Lengths</b>	3
<b>Board Term Limits</b>	5
<b>Board Meeting Attendance %</b>	90%
<b>Written Board Selection Criteria?</b>	Yes
<b>Written Conflict of Interest Policy?</b>	Yes
<b>Percentage Making Monetary Contributions</b>	90%
<b>Percentage Making In-Kind Contributions</b>	10%
<b>Constituency Includes Client Representation</b>	Yes
<b>Number of Full Board Meetings Annually</b>	4

## Standing Committees

Advisory Board  
Executive

## Risk Management Provisions

Commercial General Liability

## Additional Board Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Ms. Gina Gershon	Community Volunteer
Ms. Emmylou Harris	Community Volunteer
Ms. Maura O'Connell	Community Volunteer

## CEO Comments

Our board of directors is made of our various constituents: from audience members, to acting students, to former participants in Act Like a GRRRL, to former actors in our company.

# Management

## Executive Director/CEO

<b>Executive Director</b>	Ms. Vali Forrister
<b>Term Start</b>	Jan 1998
<b>Email</b>	vali@actorsbridge.org

### Experience

#### VALI FORRISTER

Vali is the chief executive officer and producing artistic director of the Actors Bridge Ensemble, which she co-founded with Bill Feehely in 1995. She has produced over 90 productions for the company, has acted and directed over 25, and authored six. She created and serves as vision-keeper of Act Like A GRRRL, a year-round autobiographical writing and performance program for teenage girls to gain public voice by articulating their lived experience.

Vali is a recipient of the 2016 Louisa Nelson Award from Green Brier Distillery, Nashville Business Journal's 2013 Women of Influence Award as a "Trailblazer," Vanderbilt's Women Mentoring Women Award, Broadway World's STAR Award and is consistently listed as one of Broadway World - Nashville's "Top Directors" and "Top Actors." She was a member of Leadership Nashville's Class of 2014.

Vali is a member of Actors Equity Association, and her work as an actor has been called "a tour-de-force," and "seemingly effortless" by the Tennessean, "consistently excellent," "major league" and "expert" by the Nashville Scene, and "a lesson on the acting craft without revealing that craft," by stagecritic.com. BroadwayWorld describes her acting as "exhilarating and heartbreaking at the same time,"

Vali holds a master's degree in Performance Studies. Her thesis work in the scripting and performance of intimate personal narratives as a means of personal and social change became the research basis for the highly-praised ACT LIKE A GRRRL program.

Vali is on faculty at Belmont and Lipscomb universities where she teaches the Meisner Technique.

Broadway World recently celebrated Vali's 20th anniversary as ABE'S Producing Artistic Director, praising her leadership of Nashville's "cutting-edge, forward-thinking, boundary-pushing, status quo-challenging theater company that has helped to make Music City USA somehow more creative and more welcoming to artisans who flock here to pursue their dreams."

Vali is a member of the 2018 Metro Arts Racial Equity in Arts Leadership Cadre.

## Staff

<b>Full Time Staff</b>	1
<b>Part Time Staff</b>	0
<b>Volunteers</b>	100
<b>Contractors</b>	50
<b>Retention Rate</b>	100%

## Plans & Policies

**Does the organization have a documented Fundraising Plan?**

Yes

**Does the organization have an approved Strategic Plan?**

Yes

**Number of years Strategic Plan Considers**

3

**When was Strategic Plan adopted?**

Dec 2017

**In case of a change in leadership, is a Management Succession plan in place?**

Under Development

**Does the organization have a Policies and Procedures Plan?**

Yes

**Does the organization have a Nondiscrimination Policy?**

Yes

**Does the organization have a Whistle Blower Policy?**

Yes

**Does the organization have a Document Destruction Policy?**

Yes

**Affiliations**

<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Year</b>
Actor's Equity Association	1996
Nashville Arts Coalition	2000
Tennesseans for the Arts	1998
Metro Arts Commission	1999
Tennessee Arts Commission	1998
National Independent Theatre Consortium	2007
NowPlayingNashville.com	2007
Hands On Network	2010
Arts & Business Council of Greater Nashville	2007
Americans for the Arts	2007
Center for Nonprofit Management CEO Network	2013
Leadership Nashville	2013

**Awards****Awards**

<b>Award/Recognition</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Year</b>
Women of Influence Award	Nashville Business Journal	2013
Best Local Theater	Nashville Scene	2011
Star Award - Vali Forrister	BroadwayWorld	2012
Best Youth Theatre Movement	Nashville Scene	2012
Women Mentoring Women Award	Vanderbilt University	2008
Star Award - Jessika Malone	BroadwayWorld	2015
Louisa Nelson Award	Green Brier Distillery	2016
First Night Honors - Vali Forrister	BroadwayWorld	2017

# Financials

## Fiscal Year

<b>Fiscal Year Start</b>	July 01 2017
<b>Fiscal Year End</b>	June 30 2018
<b>Projected Revenue</b>	\$152,492.00
<b>Projected Expenses</b>	\$152,492.00
<b>Endowment Value</b>	\$0.00
<b>Endowment Spending Policy</b>	N/A
<b>Endowment Spending Percentage (if selected)</b>	0%

## Detailed Financials

### Revenue and Expenses

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	\$173,841	\$152,679	\$114,007
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$182,049	\$151,002	\$137,134

### Revenue Sources

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>Foundation and Corporation Contributions</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Government Contributions</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Federal</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>State</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Local</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Unspecified</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Individual Contributions</b>	\$54,637	\$44,094	\$63,889
<b>Indirect Public Support</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Earned Revenue</b>	\$110,809	\$99,088	\$50,118
<b>Investment Income, Net of Losses</b>	\$1	\$1	\$0
<b>Membership Dues</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Special Events</b>	\$7,934	\$7,496	\$0
<b>Revenue In-Kind</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Other</b>	\$460	\$0	\$0

### Expense Allocation

Fiscal Year	2017	2016	2015
Program Expense	\$168,496	\$125,387	\$114,173
Administration Expense	\$13,553	\$25,615	\$22,961
Fundraising Expense	\$0	\$0	\$0
Payments to Affiliates	--	\$0	\$0
Total Revenue/Total Expenses	0.95	1.01	0.83
Program Expense/Total Expenses	93%	83%	83%
Fundraising Expense/Contributed Revenue	0%	0%	0%

### Assets and Liabilities

Fiscal Year	2017	2016	2015
Total Assets	\$41,108	\$47,746	\$48,297
Current Assets	\$38,132	\$47,746	\$48,297
Long-Term Liabilities	\$0	\$0	\$0
Current Liabilities	\$5,686	\$4,116	\$6,344
Total Net Assets	\$35,422	\$43,630	\$41,953

### Short Term Solvency

Fiscal Year	2017	2016	2015
Current Ratio: Current Assets/Current Liabilities	6.71	11.60	7.61

### Long Term Solvency

Fiscal Year	2017	2016	2015
Long-Term Liabilities/Total Assets	0%	0%	0%

### Top Funding Sources

Fiscal Year	2017	2016	2015
Top Funding Source & Dollar Amount	Program Revenue \$110,809	Program Revenue \$99,088	Contributions, Gifts & Grants \$63,889
Second Highest Funding Source & Dollar Amount	Contributions, Gifts, and Grants \$54,637	Contributions, Gifts and Grants \$44,094	Program Services \$50,118
Third Highest Funding Source & Dollar Amount	Fundraising Events \$7,934	Fundraising Events \$7,496	--

### Capital Campaign

Is the organization currently conducting a Capital Campaign for an endowment or the purchase of a major asset? No

Capital Campaign Goal \$0.00

Capital Campaign Raised-to-Date Amount \$0.00 as of 0

Capital Campaign Anticipated in Next 5 Years? No

### State Charitable Solicitations Permit

TN Charitable Solicitations Registration Yes - Expires Dec 2018

Registration No 0

### Organization Comments

Actors Bridge experienced 2 deficits in the last 3 years. These deficits were covered by budget reserves. During those years, expenses outpaced revenue due to two major factors. First, ABE was forced to move from its 10-year location due to gentrification in the Germantown. We were given only 30 days notice for this move. The

related expenses (moving, build-out of new space) were unplanned and therefore not budgeted. Operating expenses increased by 300% at our new location.

At the same time, ABE lost 3 of its 4 part-time staff. One retired; Two took leaves of absence to pursue graduate degrees in theater. These departures impacted our ability to generate revenue through classes and production income.

In 2016, we ended the year with no deficit and a significant increase in operating budget.

In 2017, with the return of 2 staff with fresh graduate degrees, our expenses outpaced revenue again.

The board of directors is taking action to make sure we do not experience a deficit in 2018.

### **GivingMatters.com Financial Comments**

Any foundation or corporate contributions are included in Individual Contribution sum, as these amounts are not separated in 990EZ.

Financial figures taken from 990.

Financials completed internally by organization.

Comment provided by Nicole Rose 02/02/2018.

