

**THE
MUSIC
GALLERY**

**STRAP
IN**

2024-2029

THE MUSIC GALLERY STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2029

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PHOTO: PAULINE OLIVEROS
+ IONE, ANNE BOURNE,
& DOUG VAN NORT
BY CLAIRE HARVIE

INTRODUCTION

The Music Gallery was founded in 1976 by Peter Anson and Al Mattes of the free improvising group Canadian Creative Music Collective (CCMC). Over time, a widening group of artists would rally around the far-reaching sonics of the CCMC. As their regular gathering space, the Music Gallery was brimming with collaborative activities, experimentation with creative technologies, and memorable concerts.

The Music Gallery was so named to evoke a blank canvas: in our space the structure of an event, the art, and the audience experience are determined solely by the artists. As an organization, we believe this framework allows for deeper collaborations.

From our earliest days, the Music Gallery has been a space for artists to imagine what is possible, and thus began a history of possibilities realized: Running Music Gallery Editions, an experimental record label; starting MusicWorks magazine, the long-running publication focused on music and sound art; programming Toronto's first electronic music festival alongside A Space Gallery and the Canadian Electroacoustic Community; curating an ongoing graphic

arts show, Art in View, at our former location on Richmond Street; fostering artistic exchanges with various festivals from FIMAV to Mutek; presenting an outdoor sound sculpture festival across Toronto in 1986; and Island Music, a series of performances on Toronto Island at Gibraltar point in 2000, to name a few.

Artists who have worked with the Music Gallery are countless, and iconic. Our programming often includes artists in early career stages, and can support and/or showcase artists who become era-defining.

This strategic plan is at once a reminder and a path forward, an invitation to acknowledge our history, and a guide to cultivating future partnerships.

The photos on these pages and the names atop each page are only some of the phenomenal artistic forces whose performances helped make The Music Gallery what it is today.

PHOTO: AUDIENCE AT THE NEW FLESH
BY ARTUR AUGUSTYNOWICZ

ORGANIZATION AND ARTISTIC PROGRAM

The Music Gallery was founded nearly 50 years ago, and has operated continuously in the heart of Toronto. The organization has been a beacon to adventurous artists, and a bastion for local experimentalists. We have broken and rebounded through various challenges, growing and changing to reflect that enduring creative spirit.

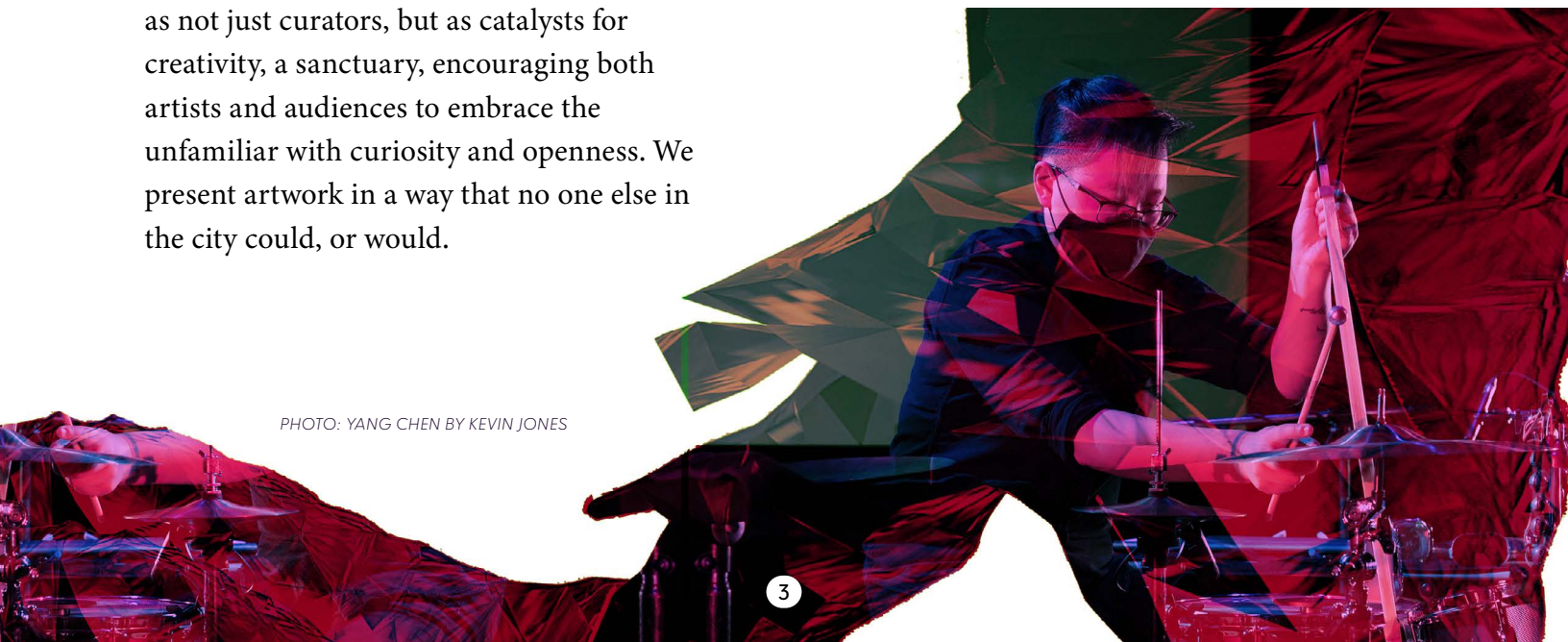
Currently comprising two full-time staff and a dynamic team of part-time and contract workers, the organization fosters a diverse and innovative musical landscape. With an annual operating budget of approximately \$450,000, the Music Gallery curates a nine-month season of 30 events (from festivals, and concerts to exhibits and installations), as well as a two-month residency program, workshops, and open calls.

Central to our mandate is the commitment to providing a platform for artists to explore alternative futures, tell their unique stories, and challenge conventional boundaries of expression. We see our role in the industry as not just curators, but as catalysts for creativity, a sanctuary, encouraging both artists and audiences to embrace the unfamiliar with curiosity and openness. We present artwork in a way that no one else in the city could, or would.

As we step into the calendar year of 2024, and build towards our 50th anniversary in 2026, the Music Gallery is poised for a transformative chapter in its history. The focus is on creating even deeper and more unique spaces for artists to hone their craft and present works that defy expectations. The ethos we seek to cultivate is one of bravery, daring, and boldness. The measure of success is not solely in the outcome but in the willingness to try, and to venture into uncharted territories.

With a growing audience and dedicated fan base, the Music Gallery is entering a new stage of its history; one where our community can take the reins, and participate in more aspects of our work. This evolution marks a significant shift from concert presenter to community hub. The Music Gallery is becoming a collaborative space where artists and audiences alike can actively contribute to the unfolding narrative of experimental music in Toronto.

PHOTO: YANG CHEN BY KEVIN JONES



REFLECTIONS ON OUR PAST PLAN

Our last Strategic Plan was published in 2016, and grouped its objectives into three key categories of Artistic Development, Equity and Diversity, and History and Archives. That plan gave us a sure-footed foundation through the changes and turmoil of an evolving local cultural landscape and a pandemic.

The values, the ethos, the vision, and the spirit expressed back then remain at the core of who we are and what we want to achieve today and in the future. While we achieved many of the objectives set out in our 2016 plan, others linger as works-in-progress or have presented themselves for reconsideration within changing circumstances and organizational reinvigoration.

We offer our thanks to our predecessors for creating the conditions for our current activities. The love for the Music Gallery lives on in this new strategic plan. We send this document forward with care to the succession of staff and board members who will inherit and interpret its contents.



PHOTO: NUKARIK
BY CLAIRE HARVIE

PLANNING PROCESS

As we mentioned in the opening statements of our 2016 strategic plan, the Music Gallery has been many things to many people. We always wonder at the vibrant and kaleidoscopic stories we receive from former staff, audiences, artists, and partners. As a result, we intentionally began at that widest point, drawing together the contrasting opinions of our community.

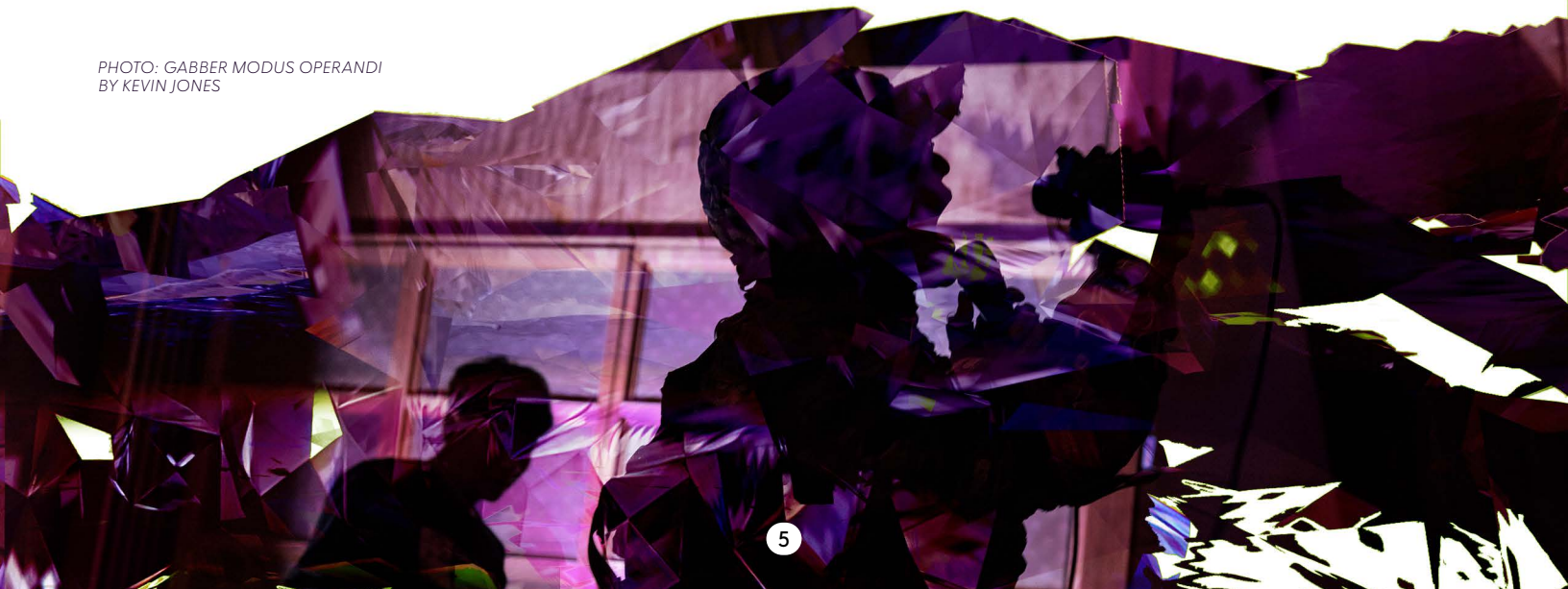
With the assistance of Jenny Ginder (Ginder Consulting) we were able to structure several phases to our planning process between July and December 2023 which included: a community survey; stakeholder interviews; roundtables with audiences, members, and staff; all culminating in a full weekend retreat including senior staff and the Board of Directors, facilitated by Jenny. Following a pandemic period when all board meetings were conducted remotely, this opportunity to gather, share meals, laugh, and connect beyond the boundaries of a board agenda was powerful. Each exercise during the retreat synthesized community feedback, and generated the basis of this current document.

A working group of the board and staff spent a month considering and crafting this document, which was approved by the Board of Directors on January 30, 2024 and taken to the membership at the February 2024 AGM. While we declare with enthusiasm that we have arrived at this exciting stage, this document will live, breathe and grow as we implement, evaluate, and adjust our objectives in the coming years.

The generosity and care of the Music Gallery community was apparent from the start of this process. Thoughtful listening and responding, a desire to extend conversations, and sharing insightful anecdotes and critiques. In particular we were heartened by participants at each stage feeling comfortable in challenging us and pointing to the deficiencies or mistakes we make as much as they encouraged and celebrated successes. For this we are forever grateful.

Our 2024 Strategic Plan acts as a five-year plan, with three years of prioritized actions summarized in each section.

PHOTO: GABBER MODUS OPERANDI
BY KEVIN JONES



MISSION

The Music Gallery cultivates artistic experimentation and community through sound, music and sharing in the creative process.

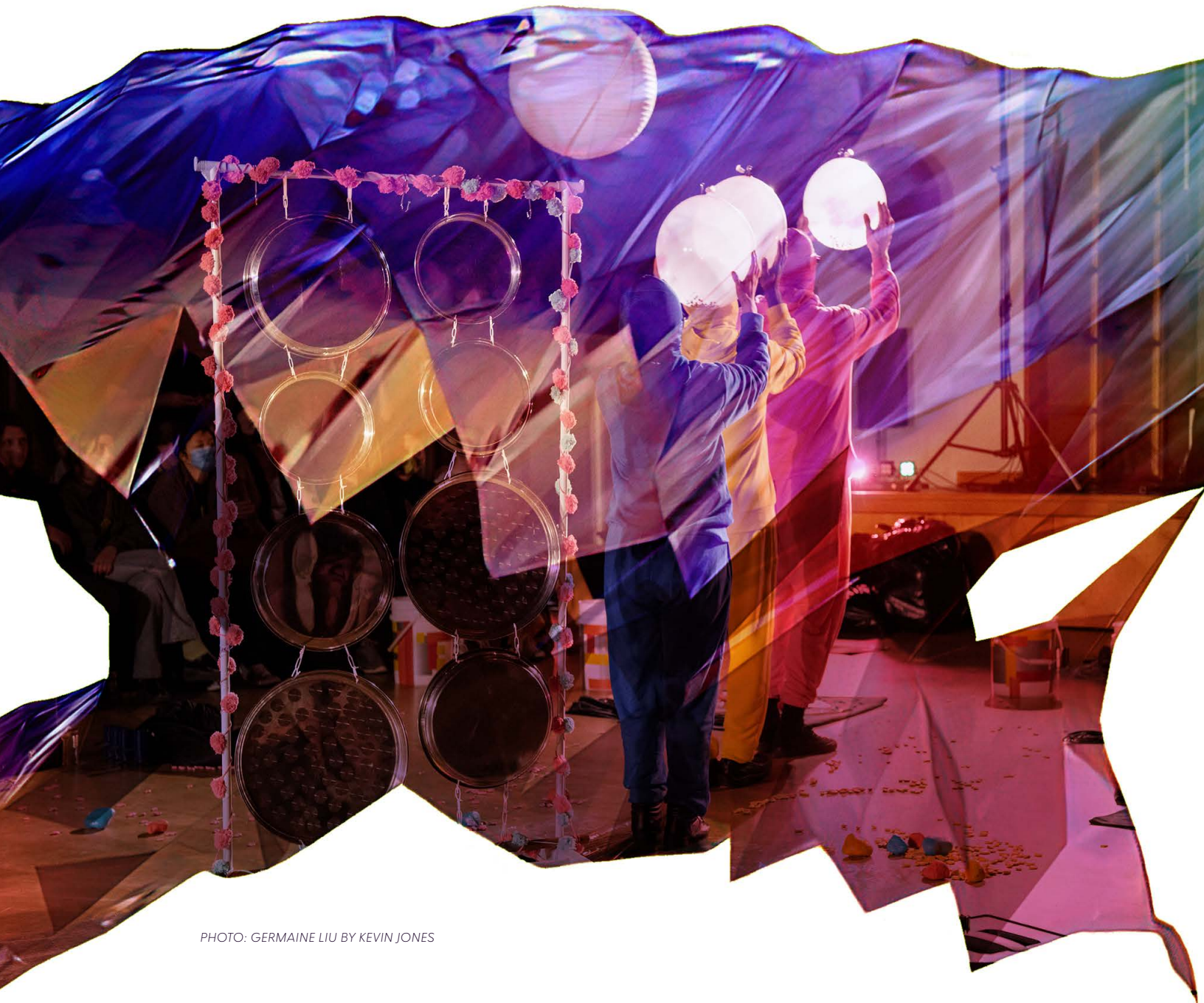


PHOTO: GERMAINE LIU BY KEVIN JONES

VALUES

We see an organic relationship between deeply-rooted values that underlie our work, and those values enacted in daily conversations and decisions.

A tree serves as an analogue for our interrelated values.

- ▶ We prioritize access to better serve the needs of artists and our communities.
- ▶ We intentionally nurture and care for one another through our work.
- ▶ We know that transparency is key to growing and sustaining community.
- ▶ We are nothing without integrity - we are committed to radical loving justice.
- ▶ We invite creativity and dream of possibilities in each step of our process.
- ▶ We reach for mindfulness, and take our time to make the kindest decisions.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Through the strategic planning process, and in particular during the working group meetings that followed our board retreat, we arrived at four strategic directions that define our plan. We present each direction along with the resulting objectives and actions in the next section. The objectives reinforce and inform one another. Presented in alphabetical order, these are:

- ▶ *Deepening the program experience*
- ▶ *Developing organizational capacity*
- ▶ *Evolving inclusivity*
- ▶ *Strengthening our signal*

PHOTO:
LIDO PIMIENTA
+ BRANDON VALDIVIA
BY KEVIN JONES.

DEEPENING THE PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

After years of close engagement and dedication to building our community, we are fortunate to be surrounded by artists who feel at ease in seeking more from us. Our programming better reflects the diversity of the city, and the needs of that talented and passionate community. Through expanded programming, and lessons in caretaking during the pandemic, we have come to understand that the Music Gallery is, has been, and always should be something more than a concert promoter. We are a hub for connections, and for breaking and for birthing new art. We are a space that can provide artists a once-in-a-lifetime experience of support, encouragement and deep exploration of what it means to interpret sound and music.

In order to reflect these changes, we explore the concept of growing in depth. To us this means more hands-on experiences, greater knowledge-sharing between generations, less gatekeeping of opportunities and increasingly thoughtful programming that shifts the audience from spectator to collaborator.

Within our audience we aim to excite inspiration, drawing them into dialogue with our artistic choices and their own creative impulses. Multiple objectives and actions in this plan hint at this historic precedent, as it will be integral to our ongoing work.

We recognize that we are agile, and often commended for this skillsket. In order to remain adaptable and responsive to the community's needs, we will continue to value our autonomy. Our primary goal does not imply more programming, but creates structural space for expanding our programs, developing powerful partnerships, increasing our flexibility in response to changing political dynamics, and consistently providing a nurturing environment for artists to wonder, dream, and create.

Integral to these objectives, and the endurance of our mission, is a focused evaluation of our venue needs and aspirations. Our programming and accessibility goals elide on this point as we consider all of the dimensions of Toronto and its communities, and where/how we create shared space.



PHOTO: CASTLE IF
BY KEVIN JONES

DEEPENING THE PROGRAM EXPERIENCE: ACTION PLAN

ACTIONS BY YEAR

Objective	Year 1, 2024	Year 2, 2025	Year 3, 2026
The artistic development experience is improved and better resourced	Evaluate residency program, and develop a project and funding plan for future iterations	<p>Revise budget for core performances to reflect increased rehearsal activity for MG concerts in order to grow artist time with venue, equipment, and technician support</p> <p>Develop strategy for local residency, and variations on residency outcomes, and/or local run-out performances with partners, emphasize activity outside of the downtown core, with objective of highlighting 50th anniversary efforts</p>	Pursue dedicated funding source to resource expanded activity in years 4 and 5
We deliver increased program partnerships, exchanges, and curatorial streams	<p>Explore expanded regional and international artistic exchanges, working towards co-commissioning, and touring partnerships</p> <p>Engage wider community members in shaping/widening artist representation.</p>	Partner with artist(s) on application(s) for dedicated creation funding, build on research and development routine for newly commissioned works	Develop partnerships (co-curated, co-presented, co-commissioned) with partners operating accessible spaces in tandem with venue/accessibility goals
Audience engagement is deeper across a variety of mediums and formats	<p>Develop opportunities to strengthen connections between Music Gallery artists and audiences</p> <p>Annual audience survey is developed and utilized to track data related to event experience</p>	<p>Integrate oral history, artist interviews, and other formats as focused event activities (centered along with standard performances)</p> <p>Utilize audience survey to measure impact of new and evolving strategies for audience engagement</p>	Design and implement modified audience survey to measure growth and engagement in relation to increased programming in other venues
A venue strategy is developed by year three and informs years 4 and 5 of the strategic plan	<p>Establish mentorship/friendship with similar sized performing arts organizations who own and/or operate their venue.</p> <p>Compile existing research and learning on performing arts venues suited to Music Gallery programming, emphasizing improved accessibility infrastructure, modularity for workshop and performance activity, and integrated production equipment .</p>	Research culminates in recommendations for the most effective options for control of our space.	Integrate learning into financial and staffing plans.

DEVELOPING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The deeper we look into our history, the clearer the pattern, one that is experienced by so many nonprofits, of Music Gallery staff going beyond capacity to make our programming happen.

As our plan unfolds, we will align our work with the care of and compensation for our staff, partners, and artistic collaborators. We can and will grow, and that growth must be targeted, intentional, and sustainable.

Music Gallery staff and volunteers have achieved remarkable feats, and we want to honour their contribution. Our team has proven to be resourceful, responsive, and highly regarded for their skills time after time. In this next stage, we want staff and volunteers to be playful as well, to feel that they contribute to the artistry of an event, to be reminded of and encouraged in their growth along with us.

Our actions are intended to create a nurturing environment for the entire team (full time, part time, and contract staff) and support their collaboration. These actions also build on training, mentorship, and succession strategies to increase the skills and resilience of our organization. As with our work with performers, we must supply the staff with the resources they need to succeed.

► We include measurable targets in several of the objectives and actions including increases to our core operating budget, memberships, and private sector revenue. Percentages and other numeric figures reflect trends over the last five years in individual donations, increased efforts towards donor cultivation, as well as our initial successes with foundation support. We include actions as part of the Strengthening Our Signal strategy which also feed into the financial objectives outlined in this section. We aim to build on these trends and efforts, and achieve increases to our operating budget that will sustain the programming and staffing goals outlined in this document.



PHOTO: KRISTINA GUISON
BY KEVIN JONES

DEVELOPING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: ACTION PLAN

ACTIONS BY YEAR

Objective	Year 1, 2024	Year 2, 2025	Year 3, 2026
A staffing model and resulting budget plan are redefined	<p>Implement formalized performance review for individual staff, and evaluation of organizational model guided by new strategic goals</p> <p>Develop short and medium term staff and budget plan to address goals, including membership and donor cultivation strategies</p>	<p>Adopt new configuration of staff in response to strategic plan, and in relation to ongoing evaluation of financial growth and sustainability</p>	<p>Review and revise medium term staff and budget plan in preparation for year 4 and 5 of the strategic plan</p>
A strategy for staff retention and skills enhancement is implemented	<p>Implement technician mentorship program</p>	<p>Enhance guest curator role and responsibilities</p> <p>Define and schedule unstructured staff time for individual and team development, adopt as annual component of our work</p>	<p>Pursue dedicated funding for mentorship position on staff that encompasses administrative and artistic work</p>
Financial sustainability of the Music Gallery is improved, and the core operating budget is increased by 20%	<p>Implement initial recommendations from development consultant</p>	<p>Measure and contrast effectiveness of donor, sponsor, and foundation strategies</p>	<p>Evaluate and establish new revenue targets, with emphasis on private revenue strategies</p>
The board structure and board/staff working model is optimized and aligned with organizational goals	<p>Assess size and composition of board and executive roles</p> <p>Assess effectiveness of board/staff relationship in keeping with organizational values and intentions to flatten hierarchy</p> <p>Implement any resulting changes</p>	<p>Evaluate committee structure</p> <p>Measure effectiveness of changes</p> <p>Develop and implement board succession plan strategy</p>	<p>Review and make any necessary changes to by-laws</p>

EVOLVING INCLUSIVITY

Our 2016 strategic plan asserted the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusivity to our work. In the years that followed we expanded our approach to curation, defining new artistic roles in order to share decision-making and establish relationships with a diversifying community of artists and audiences. Training and discussions of anti-oppression, safer spaces, and related topics have been centered at the Music Gallery in policy development.

We are now able to consider our underlying assumptions about “our work”.

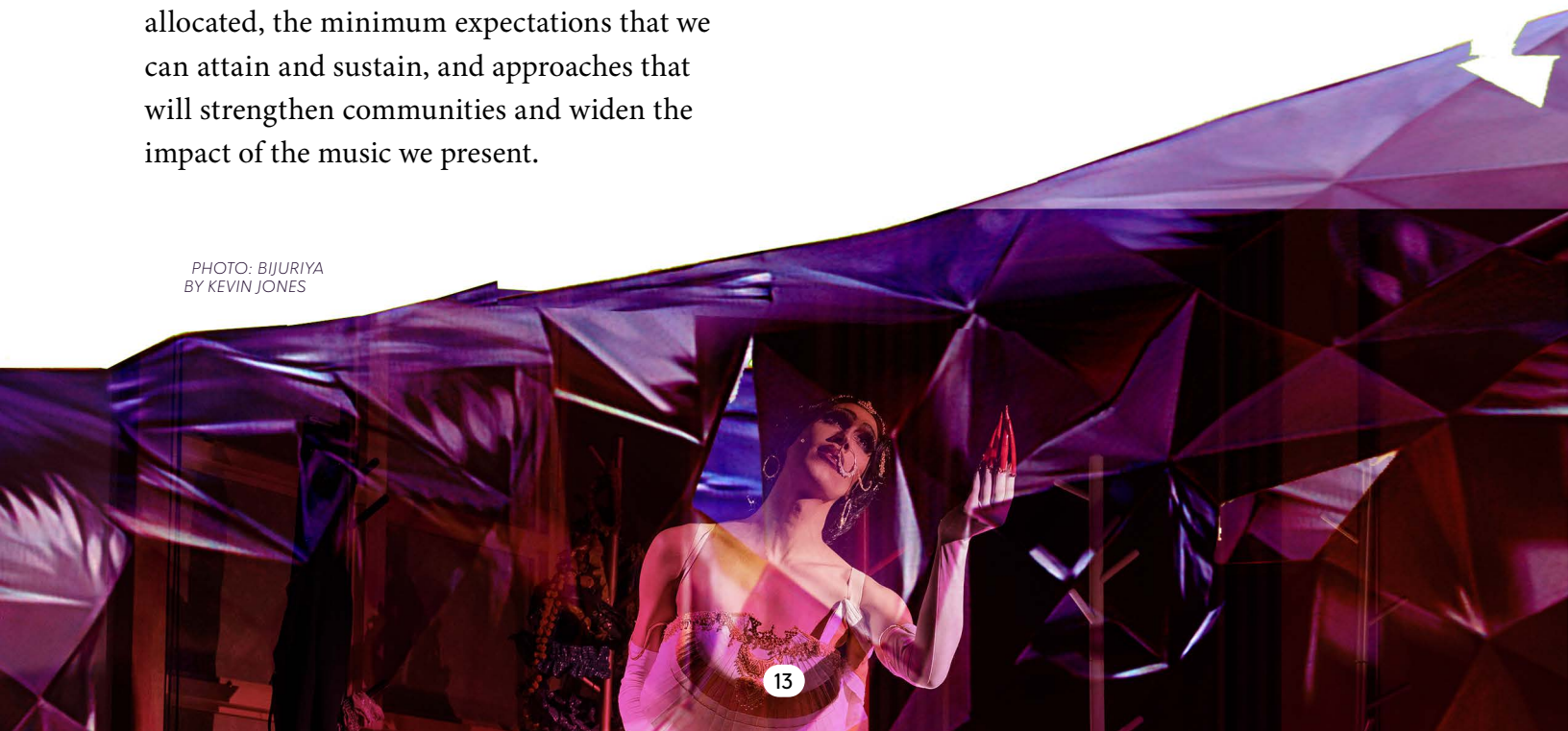
The heading for this strategic goal speaks to an embodied practice—processes that are indelibly tied to our environment and survival. We embrace a state of ongoing learning, of continual change, in response to insights and perspectives that we seek out, ask for, and are open to receive. We challenge ourselves to reimagine how resources are allocated, the minimum expectations that we can attain and sustain, and approaches that will strengthen communities and widen the impact of the music we present.

▶ *Since 2017 we have been programming a majority of our events in 918 Bathurst. Our work to address the limits to physical accessibility at our home venue are at the centre of several objectives we outline in this section, and align with other strategic objectives.*

▶ *This plan reflects and inspires a multi-faceted approach to accessibility which includes, but is not limited to, physical conditions of a venue. Other efforts that are specifically named have been seeded. In particular, the Music Gallery staff team has been engaged in ongoing discussions with the artists and technologists at Vibrafusion Labs (Hamilton) regarding strategies for integration of vibrotactile systems in our event infrastructure.*

▶ *During 2023, members of the staff and board have been developing an Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity policy with the support of facilitator Nadia Bello. This policy, yet to be adopted at the time of writing, informs our strategic plan and is woven into actions in this section.*

PHOTO: BIJURIYA
BY KEVIN JONES



EVOLVING INCLUSIVITY: ACTION PLAN

ACTIONS BY YEAR

Objective	Year 1, 2024	Year 2, 2025	Year 3, 2026
Barriers to participation are identified and learning is integrated into further actions and policies	<p>Engage EDI expertise to conduct organizational audit reviewing all aspects of operations</p> <p>Adopt organization-wide comprehensive strategies and model for future learnings over the current and subsequent year</p>	<p>Revisit recommendations of organizational audit and resulting strategies</p>	<p>Re-engage expertise to revisit audit and progress made, and update goals for next two years of strategic plan</p>
New policies and financial plans are adopted to ensure sustainability of evolving inclusivity standards	<p>Implement EDI policy and a resulting finance policy to guide development and sponsorship strategy</p>	<p>Adopt revised budget formula for event productions to reflect new learning, accompanied by annual review</p> <p>Pursue and dedicate resources (finances, granting/sponsors, staff) to key actions and projects</p>	<p>Evaluate new funding, sponsorships against finance policy, and adjust strategy accordingly</p>
Partnerships that align with learning and mentorship goals are engaged	<p>Sustained dialogue and partnership with Vibrafusion labs</p> <p>Build experience with ASL performance and vibrotactile systems</p>	<p>Evaluate and establish new partnership based on existing model</p>	<p>Review partnership strategy, and develop new goals for years 4 and 5 of the strategic plan</p>
A growing percentage of public activity is hosted in venues with improved physical accessibility	<p>Music Gallery programs 10% of public events in venue(s) with improved physical accessibility</p>	<p>Music Gallery programs 25% of public events in venue(s) with improved physical accessibility</p>	<p>Music Gallery programs 40% of public events in venue(s) with improved physical accessibility</p>

STRENGTHENING OUR SIGNAL

With nearly half a century of history in Toronto and the international creative music arena, we believe the Music Gallery has a story worth telling. The roster of artists who've graced our stage over the decades is truly awe-inspiring, the musicians who now fill our space with their incredible music will undoubtedly serve as an inspiration to future generations.

The stories we tell of our past and present, the voices who share in the telling, shape our future. These stories rekindle local and global resonances, and extend the Music Gallery's work beyond the fringes. This work fosters collaborations across cultures, geographies, and artistic genres; it also recognizes and hastens the fluidity of artist-audience identities, inspiring and deepening participation. This strategic goal of strengthening our signal symbolizes our unwavering dedication to welcoming and involving the community, and creating a space where artists take risks and new art flourishes.

Our dedication ensures that those communities that need us know us, and that we know them.

Many of our actions revolve around our 50th anniversary which will be a major conduit for reflection, story-telling, and relationship building. This objective has implications for the resilience of the Music Gallery, as our ability to tell our story has direct implications for our connections with members, donors, funders, and sponsors.



PHOTO: LAL
BY GREEN YANG

STRENGTHENING OUR SIGNAL: ACTION PLAN

ACTIONS BY YEAR

Objective	Year 1, 2024	Year 2, 2025	Year 3, 2026
Compelling stories of Music Gallery’s past and present are shared routinely across all platforms	<p>Compile information on Music Gallery archival resources held at York University and their relevance to current activities/objectives, emphasizing our 50th anniversary</p> <p>Engage storytellers (artists, elders, journalists, musicologists, audiences) to create 3-5 impactful stories of the Music Gallery</p> <p>Establish media partners for embedded storytelling in future programming</p>	<p>Integrate stories into Music Gallery website, and promote across all available platforms/mediums</p> <p>Adapt new storytelling techniques to document and share outcomes of residency program</p> <p>Establish process for documentation of major accomplishments, and crowd-sourced commemorative actions</p>	<p>Evaluate and vary/refine storytelling techniques, and share 2-3 new Music Gallery stories on our site and across all available platforms/mediums</p>
The membership program is revitalized and memberships increase by 25% over each of the first three years of the plan	<p>Redesign membership program and incentive structure for start of 2024/25 fiscal year</p> <p>Implement new membership-specific communications routine</p>	<p>Increase membership by 25% over previous year</p>	<p>Evaluate membership program and modify in response to recent trends</p> <p>Increase membership by 25% over previous year</p>
The base of financial support is broadened, and private sector revenue is doubled	<p>Hire development consultant to prepare donor and sponsor strategy, built around 50th anniversary campaign</p>	<p>Implement donor and sponsor cultivation strategy</p> <p>Track outcomes of strategy</p>	<p>Evaluation and refinement of staffing and cultivation strategies</p> <p>Define campaign based around it being the 50th anniversary year</p>
The Music Gallery is recognized by artists, partners, and audiences beyond the downtown, and beyond Toronto	<p>Explore expanded regional and international marketing exchanges</p> <p>Identify venue partners outside of the downtown core</p>	<p>Evaluate and sustain regional and international connections, with additional emphasis on media partners, building towards 50th anniversary</p>	<p>Develop hyperlocal marketing strategies in parallel with expanded residency/run-out programming</p>

LOOKING AHEAD

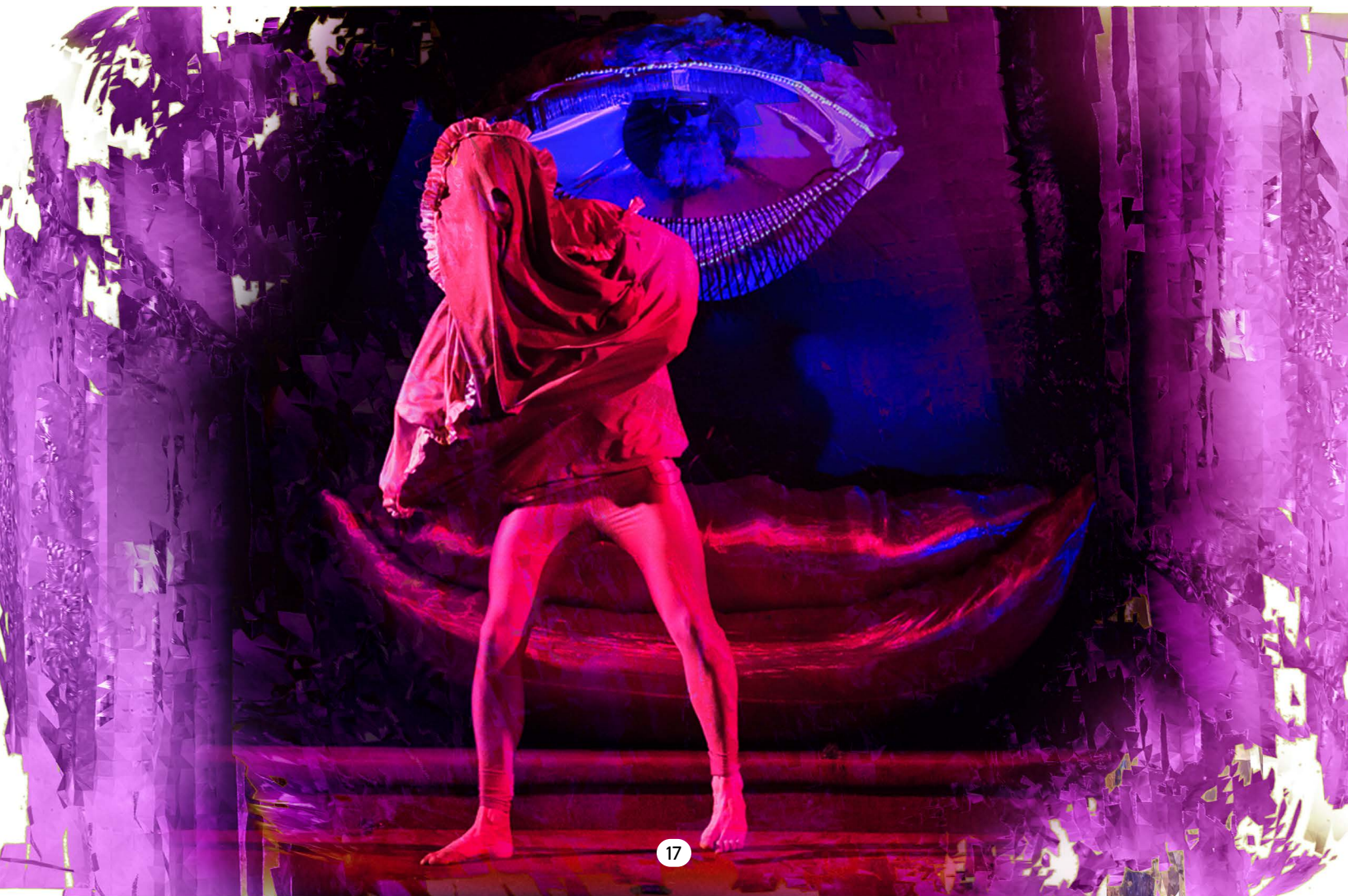
This strategic plan outlines a set of interlocking objectives and actions that we will implement during the next three years. As outlined above, the Music Gallery team will be living with this document, and continually evaluating and adjusting our plan in response to new insights and revelations, shifting political, cultural and financial contexts, and timely opportunities.

Years 4 and 5 of our action plan will be authored at a later stage to reflect these realities, and will build on the learning processes that we have named in this document.

We hope that as you read this document you have seen spaces that you will occupy, work that you will contribute to, and programming that you will participate in.

We all share in the history of the Music Gallery through its many contrasting complexities. It is our connection as a community that sustains the Music Gallery, and that connection will be the ultimate measure of the success of this plan.

PHOTO: STILL BOYS BY KEVIN JONES



Thanks to the Music Gallery staff, curators, and board members who contributed during the development of this plan:

- | | | |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Akash Bansal | Franny Flores | tUkU Matthews |
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