



south carolina children's theatre™

TOTALLY PROFESSIONAL. DELIGHTFULLY IMMATURE.



**A Case for Charitable Investment for
A Permanent Campus and Expanded Programming**

February 2015

DRAFT

Introduction

“There is no better indicator of the spiritual health of our city, its neighborhoods, and the larger region than the state of the arts. The arts deepen our understanding of the human spirit, extend our capacity to comprehend the lives of others, allow us to imagine a more just and humane world. Through their diversity of feeling, their variety of form, their multiplicity of inspiration, the arts make our culture richer and more reflective.”

- **Jonathan Fanton**
The MacArthur Foundation

Greenville has a reputation for being a leader in nearly every important category—business, education, innovation, the arts—but is known near and far as a special place where children and families are recognized and celebrated as the foundation of our community.

The state of Greenville’s well-being, and its opportunities for families to flourish, has been strengthened these last three decades by the presence, spirit, and growth of the South Carolina Children’s Theatre (SCCT). Since its inception, SCCT has been guided by a critical mission: *to educate and stimulate the minds and imaginations of young people and their families through participation in high-quality theatre, year-round education, and accessible outreach.*

And while SCCT has performed this mission as an entertainer and teacher, it has also served as a beacon, drawing visitors into our town; a mentor, reaching out to children and adults (who might otherwise not have the nurturing to develop their greater potential or experience the arts); a collaborator, supporting the endeavors of other non-profits in the region; and a financial partner, providing a “service” that brings revenue into the community.

SCCT is first and foremost a theatre for children, but very much measures performances and success against professional adult theatres across the region. SCCT’s acting classes aren’t simply about reading lines, but rather about preparing young people to succeed in adult theatres someday. They learn the art and the craft, both on-stage and behind the scenes, of good theatre and their performances reflect their hard work. A testament to their professionalism lies in the fact that SCCT performances sell out nearly every time. Audiences come to Greenville to watch SCCT performances, not because of our child actors, but because of our extraordinary actors. Seeing children on stage and behind the scenes connects the audience to the young people, inspiring them, and serving as a model for budding children’s theatres across the state and region.

While SCCT may be most often associated with young actors, its reach extends far beyond to parents, adult students, and the community at large. Each workshop, production, and outreach program touches someone, while shaping the future of our citizens and our community. Here, everyone has a chance to become part of the magic.

SC Children's Theatre is now at a crossroads: it has clearly outgrown its current space while it has also been gifted a parcel of adjacent land that would enable a permanent and purposefully designed performance, teaching, and administrative facility to be built. Conditions exist on the gifted land dictating that construction must begin within the year or the land will go to the City of Greenville for use as a park. If this opportunity is not seized soon, it will be lost.

The Impact of SC Children's Theatre

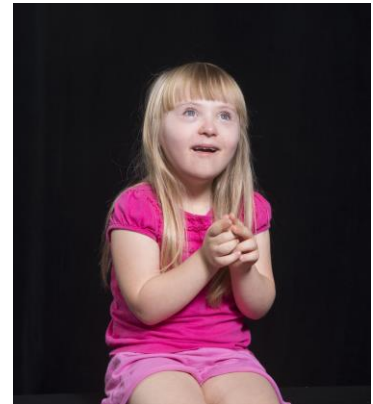
Unique among children's theatres, SCCT operates year-round, and offers significant programming outside of formal performances. Students enjoy consistent, varied, and inspiring coursework that most no longer receive at school. Unlike a summer theatre camp or a two-week run show, the non-stop offerings provide seamless education and mentorship, an opportunity for students to express themselves in new ways, and immerse themselves in culture. Over 48,000 children and adults were touched by SCCT programs and performances last year, each finding joy and satisfaction through their relationship with the Theatre:

- ❖ **Young actors:** Children take on both challenging parts and leadership roles at a very early age, giving them an advantage in all aspects of their lives. These children learn to act, but also to take direction, lead, and cooperate. While they can have a lot of fun, SCCT actors can also step ahead of their peers thanks to the education they receive and the skills they develop.
- ❖ **Students:** While SCCT offers traditional acting classes for children, it also works with schools. Last year, over 6,000 students from 32 schools attended shows on bullying prevention, and another 2,000 children learned about healthy choices through entertaining, fun programming. Lessons they might not learn anywhere else are brought into their daily lives by SCCT.
- ❖ **Parents:** Many SCCT actors' parents didn't grow up with access to theatre. Their children's involvement has transformed their lives as well, bringing art and culture into their lives. This common interest forges new and interesting relationships with their children, but also bolsters real-life assets like self-confidence and interpersonal and public speaking skills.
- ❖ **Special needs children:** Many children with physical or mental limitations never get to experience the arts. They spend much of their lives focused on mastering simple, daily tasks. Yet everyone's life can be enriched through participation in the arts. Last year, outreach programs brought the magic of theatre to mentally or physically challenged children at Marshall Pickens, The Wonder Center, Camp Courage, and The Meyer

Center. These workshops allow children to develop confidence, improve self-expression, build social skills, and hone physical capabilities in ways their everyday therapy cannot.

- ❖ **At risk children:** Greenville is a wholesome community where strong family values influence everything around us. We provide opportunity and we take good care of our children. But there will always be children with complicated and challenging home and school lives.

Some are victims of violence while others live in poverty, which affects everything from their parents' employment to their education. For them, SCCT's outreach programs are a true lifeline. When home life is tumultuous, the theatre provides warmth, camaraderie, and stability.



When an underfunded school doesn't see a child's potential, the theatre provides a challenge and mentorship to something greater. The theatre offers a safe haven, a stimulating alternative to the ordinary struggles of daily living. On more than one occasion, an at-risk child has credited SCCT for quite literally saving his life. For this group, SCCT is often a route up and out of bad circumstances to become well-rounded and productive citizens.

Challenges and Opportunities

Currently, SCCT occupies several spaces including a 7,500 square foot shop, a 6,000 square foot warehouse, and a 9,000 square foot facility which houses offices, classrooms, and a small stage. SCCT also has access to 15,000 square feet of space at the Peace Center. Unfortunately, all of this is leased space, meaning undertaking technical upgrades or structural changes is impossible. The Peace Center does not allow the Theatre to store props or costumes on-site and children aren't able to participate in the technical elements of performances there. The spaces are also spread out across the city; logistically, this causes problems and reduces efficiency, but it also paints a picture of the Theatre as something disjointed and incomplete.

A larger and permanent campus with expanded programming would foster:

- **Better attendance.** With bigger, more professional productions, more visitors will come from a larger area to attend shows. This translates into a more varied and sustainable audience base, but also more dinners, more hotel stays, and more outside dollars spent in Greenville.

- **Improved outreach.** Already, SCCT reaches into the community through residency programs, classes, free performances, and educational efforts for over **14,000** children each year. With additional funding, more young people will have access to theatre.
- **Stronger leadership.** The theatre has the expertise and the talent to lead by example and share what they know. A larger, more advanced space would allow SCCT to invite other theatre groups (and audiences) to participate in a state or regional Theatre Festival. Cultural festivals draw visitors, increase exposure and economic growth, and position our host theatre as a model for up and coming children’s theaters.
- **Better educated, cultured population.** Studies have shown that cutting arts education from schools has tremendous negative consequences—reduction in math and science scores, less creativity among students, and decreasing cultural awareness among children and adults. As arts education is supplanted by “teaching to the test,” community arts organizations will bear a greater responsibility and role in educating the population in art, music, and theatre. Those organizations which are capable and well-funded will fill an ever-growing void in public education.



An Urgent Opportunity to Seize

SCCT has an exciting but limited window of opportunity to establish a permanent home in the West End. Designated as the City's intended Arts District, the West End is the ideal home both thematically and geographically for SCCT. While the Theatre is leasing its current space, property values have begun to increase dramatically. Furthermore, SCCT has just received notice that its lease on its shop where they build and paint the sets will not be renewed due to new ownership and will soon expire. Fortunately, through the generosity of the late Josephine Cureton, a long-time supporter, SCCT is the beneficiary of her trust, which offers unlimited use of the property next door for \$1 a year, but only if the Children's Theatre begins construction in the next year. If SCCT cannot seize this opportunity, there might not be another financially viable alternative to establish a permanent home in the West End.

In addition to this time constraint is the very real, very immediate need for more space. Every performance at the Theatre is sold out, with seats filling up faster with each production. Programs, likewise, are booked as soon as advertised and, without fail, additional sessions are added to accommodate the increased need. Children's programming at other arts organizations, like The Peace Center, are increasing as more families from further away embrace the incredible opportunities for their children. The market has spoken and it demands more from SCCT.

SCCT is a model non-profit organization, raising 70% of our funding through ticket sales, class fees, and our own fundraising events, and an excellent steward of donor contributions. This model has sustained the theatre and seen growth beyond expectation. But to take this exciting and bold step, SCCT will need to act quickly and in collaboration with our greatest supporters.

SCCT's Proposed Plans

With a projected \$15 million investment, SCCT can construct a new 47,000 square foot facility, technologically advanced, and custom-built with children in mind (currently housed in four separate locations totaling 37,500 square feet). The campus will increase operational efficiencies and feature dedicated spaces for professional theatrical performance, education, and administration.

This project will empower SCCT with the resources to perform anything—on its own stage—and afford the space and resources necessary to expand outreach activities, bringing cultural education and personal development opportunities to young people in the neighborhoods in which they live.



Proposed Design- Developed by Craig Gauden Davis

Expanding Walls, Expanding Impact

Theatre is a living, breathing, ever-changing thing. Unlike movies, when you go to the theatre, you become fully engaged with the actors. You laugh out loud, you cry, you clap. You sense opening night jitters and feel the energy of the actors. And, critical to the experience, they feel yours as well.

This same symbiosis exists between SC Children's Theatre and the community. Every interaction generates a reaction. Every additional class offered shows 15-20 new students how to tackle a

problem creatively. Every extra day spent with a class of at risk children is more opportunity to inspire someone to grow and begin to see broader horizons. And every superior production brings thousands more visitors from and to Greenville.

While “build a bigger building” and “hire more instructors” or even “create a permanent home” may not initially seem like the loftiest of aspirations, the fact is that these three relatively simple goals will positively transform SC Children’s Theatre and dramatically increase its impact on the community:

- ❖ **Pushing the boundaries:** With more space, no production will be too complex. SCCT will have the square footage, technology, and technical support to produce the highest quality, most technically challenging works. Providing more technical opportunities also helps young people who love the theatre, but prefer to participate behind the scenes instead of on stage. Pushing the boundaries benefits the Theatre, certainly, but also improves the audience’s experience and the Upstate’s reputation as a cultural hub.
 - ❖ **Achieving greater efficiencies:** Additional space means more than one class can be offered at a time. Dress rehearsals can be held on the main stage while a class is underway. Nothing has to come to a standstill when a big production is about to launch. More space allows for more consistent performance and education. Especially for our at-risk children, guaranteeing no breaks in their education (and therefore access to mentors and friends) ensures steady attention and engagement which is important to their continued growth.
 - ❖ **Making children feel at home:** Building for children is different from simply adapting an “adult” building for new use. If the space is designed especially for children, they will enjoy a safe, inviting venue where they feel comfortable, confident, and capable in ways the current space doesn’t allow. For young people whose home lives are a constant struggle, having a place where they feel secure and involved is critical to their success.
- Creating the community we want to have:** SCCT’s mission and beneficial impact extend beyond just children’s performance. By establishing a bigger, better, and permanent facility, the community gains another high quality cultural option. The entire community benefits when our arts organizations succeed. Our city and the Upstate are becoming better known as a cultural hub others want to be a part of, bringing new families and businesses to the region. A cultured, educated population is one of the biggest draws for both individuals and corporations to relocate and our city has the opportunity here to be the smart, cultural space people will want to experience.
- ❖ **Expanding outreach:** Reaching out to even the youngest in the community, those with special needs, and children with little or no exposure to the arts, will help to create a community where everyone can feel valued and has a chance to participate and

contribute. Making these children part of something, through theatre, ensures that they don't end up as outsiders but as valued, valuable members of their community.

Over 14,000 children have been touched by SCCT's outreach programs. The marvel of bigger space is that the reach of the theatre will grow as a result: Increased resources and committed teachers will spread further into the community, defining "theatre" not just as a building but as the actors, the family, the community that enriches the lives of people who come into contact with SCCT.

- ❖ **Enticing faculty and designers:** With more resources, SCCT can attract the best actors, instructors, and designers who have made a career out of theatre artistry. This will strengthen staff and the reputation of SCCT nationwide as a cultural and artistic force.
- ❖ **Increasing course options:** More children will be able to experience SCCT through a greater variety of courses, resulting in a more well-rounded, more experienced theatre.



Why the Future of SCCT is So Important

Greenville is a vibrant place with many non-profit organizations with important missions, each of which makes for a better, stronger region. South Carolina Children's Theatre positively affects the entire spectrum, from the tiniest of actors to the cultural well-being of the entire region.



- ❖ **For children:** Keep art education alive, by bringing creativity, commitment, and critical thinking to the young people. Ensure outreach programs touch those most at risk to give them the opportunity to enjoy the arts and choose to participate in ways their homes and schools cannot provide to them. Everyone deserves this type of education and exploration.
- ❖ **For families:** Help prepare parents to take a more active role in their children's education and cultural growth. You're helping those with no background in the arts see, appreciate, and participate in the creative process and share that experience with their children.
- ❖ **For adults:** Give someone the tools to perform at our venue and to succeed and thrive in their daily lives.
- ❖ **For Greenville.** Nationwide, the arts industry creates some 5.7 million jobs and over \$160 billion in total activity. Ticket sales, meals, lodging, fuel, dollars spent with local artists who provide goods or services for the theatre...The ripple effect of healthy, vivacious SCCT in the Upstate is potentially huge.
- ❖ **For the Upstate:** Cultivate the cultural, civic, and business leaders of the future. With the best possible space and instruction at their disposal, today's child actors and production assistants will become tomorrow's engaging teachers, gifted artists, cultured parents, and impassioned organizational and civic leaders. Through time spent with SCCT, they will become more knowledgeable, skilled, and cultured than they would have been without. And they will no doubt pay this gift forward.
- ❖ **For South Carolina:** SCCT can serve as a model and resource for children's theaters throughout the State—in Columbia, Myrtle Beach, Hilton Head, Charleston—helping to elevate arts programming for youth in all major population areas.

Can you imagine a better way to touch so many people in such a critical and lasting way?

To Be or Not to Be?

Every day we face choices and opportunities that shape our future. For non-profit organizations there is no status quo—they are growing or they are falling behind. With an ever expanding area population and growing competition for commercial space in downtown Greenville, maintaining the status quo through a patchwork of leased buildings and improvised spaces means the future of SCCT will become more challenged and less certain.

Thanks to the possibilities from land offered to SCCT through the trust of the late Josephine Cureton, we, as community members, have an opportunity to imagine something greater and a choice to seize the opportunity before us to create a permanent, dynamic, inspiring, and impactful home for SC Children’s Theatre in the heart of Greenville.

This comes at a time when South Carolina is following a national trend in which communities are experiencing a significant reduction or elimination of public arts education while simultaneously seeing local and regional arts organizations rise to the occasion to meet the public need. Theatres, musical companies, and art museums are advancing efforts to ensure that children see art not just as a “nice to have” or even a means to improve “must haves” like math and science scores. A population with a love for, and understanding of, the arts can find it strengthens families, draws together people of different backgrounds and outlooks, develops appreciation and understanding of the human experience, and fosters stronger economies.

With a timely opportunity to build a permanent performance and education center, SC Children’s Theatre can do for children and their families what the Peace Center has done for adult performing arts. Together, Greenville and the Upstate will be able to lead the State and region with the best in performing arts and education. Everyone benefits. With the new facilities and expanded programming, SCCT would be well-positioned to positively impact today’s youth and families, and the community at large for generations to come.

A once-in-a lifetime opportunity is before all of us right now. Choices made today will have a significant and lasting impact on the future of the area. We invite you to choose to join us in helping to fund a permanent home for SC Children’s Theatre and positively shape the future of Greenville, the Upstate, and the State by enriching and transforming the lives of tens of thousands of young people, adults, and families in the communities we call home.