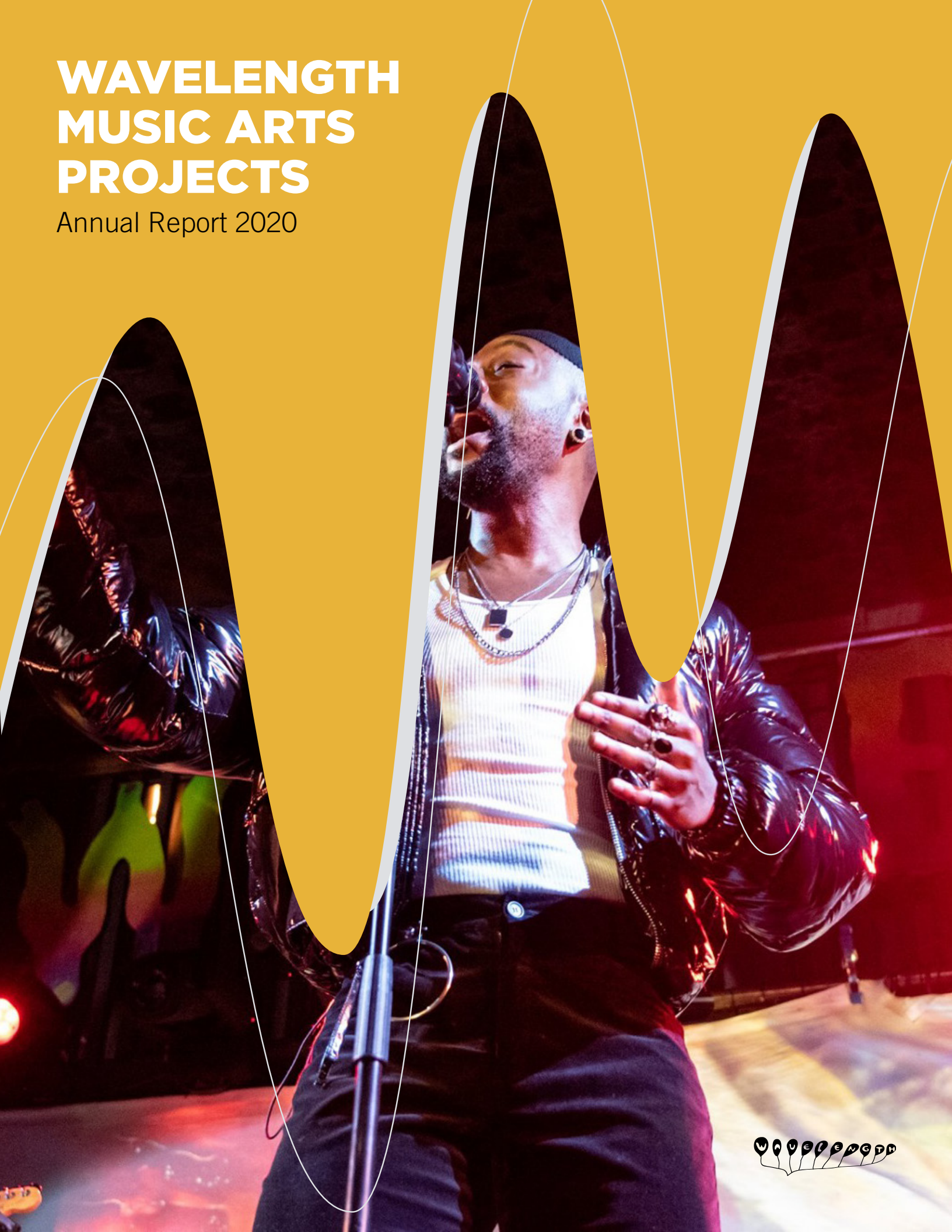


WAVELENGTH MUSIC ARTS PROJECTS

Annual Report 2020





OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

2020 was supposed to be a celebratory year for Wavelength: It marked our 20th anniversary of the launch of our series — an incredible milestone to reach for an artist-run, non-profit, indie music organization — and was to include a retrospective art exhibition, a return to Toronto Island for our summer festival, and the launch party for our co-founder and Artistic Director's first book.

Of course, 2020 happened.

Luckily, we were able to celebrate our 20th birthday in-person with our friends in the community, as our major anniversary festivities took place at our Winter Festival in February 2020 — what turned out to be one of the last music festivals held in Toronto, just a few short weeks before the pandemic shut down all live music and events. Bringing together communities, artists and faces both new and familiar, it was a beautiful celebration — though no one knew at the time it was also a goodbye party.

After those first two surreal months of lockdown, Wavelength successfully transitioned our monthly programming to a digital format starting in May 2020, and instead of celebrating ourselves, we supported the community — with educational events, free concerts, livestream listings, pandemic playlists, charitable giving, and most importantly: paying artists.

RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Wavelength's response to COVID-19 has been creative, imaginative, thoughtful and compassionate. Though the pandemic has had a devastating impact on the live music sector and the artists, venues and contractors we employ, Wavelength was in the fortunate position to retain all our core staff and continue paying artists, renting venues and hiring contractors by continuing our summer festival, monthly series, and educational programming in an online format — thanks to the support of our public funders as well as private sector partners such as TD Bank and Slaight Music.

Given that many of our audience members have also been negatively impacted financially by the pandemic, we were gratified to be able to offer all our online programming for FREE admission, and to give our more fortunate community members the option to donate to a charity with which we and our artists felt aligned.



The livestream shows we have presented have been creative and connected to local venues in an effort to avoid ‘living room stream fatigue.’ Renewed editorial content — including an ongoing Spotify playlist highlighting emerging artists and a 20th anniversary zine co-created with Myseum of Toronto — marked a return to Wavelength’s roots (in the early 2000s, our self-published print zine helped put us on the map). And our total audience has actually risen, as a result of our free, online content.

SUPPORTING BIPOC VOICES

2020 was also a year marked by renewed calls for racial justices, and Wavelength was unwavering in our commitment to supporting Black, Indigenous and People of Colour on our stages — both physical and virtual — as well as in decision-making roles. 2020 marked the wrap-up of our year-long engagement of Black writer and music industry professional Ian Steaman as our Guest Curator, who significantly contributed to the programming of our 20th anniversary Winter Festival in February. Steaman introduced us to fresh new voices in hip-hop, R&B, folk and electronic music, including DijahSB, Desiire, Kaia Kater, Lou Phelps and Torii Wolf, many of whom are now beloved by the Wavelength community.

The importance of this positive representation in our programming was noted in media coverage from Hip Hop Canada, Manifesto, and Earmilk, whose festival review was titled “Black Canadian artists are paving the way.” The success of this curatorial engagement laid the groundwork for a new partnership with Harbourfront Centre, who supported the February 2021 edition of the Wavelength Winter Festival with a financial and programming partnership championing Black Canadian artists in conjunction with their “Kuumba” Black History Month celebrations.

Wavelength also expressed support for Black Lives Matter on our website, social media and 20th anniversary merchandise design, and charitable causes supported at our 2020 livestream events included BLAC (Black Legal Action Centre) and Women’s Health in Women’s Hands (supporting healthcare for racialized women).



APPROVING STRATEGIC PLAN

The pandemic delayed yet did not derail completion of Wavelength's bold new three-year Strategic Plan. Led by facilitators Currents Group, the planning process commenced in summer 2019, with Wavelength's long-time staff leadership supported by a mostly brand-new slate of Board members. The plan was drafted in winter 2019/20, finalized in summer 2020, and approved by the Board in the fall.

The plan is summarized below:

WHY WE ARE HERE: We present outstanding music and community-building experiences that connect independent artists and curious music fans, and contribute to the vitality of Toronto as a global centre of music culture.

WHAT WE DO: We put artists first. We respect artists. We provide a professional production experience. We pay artists fair and guaranteed fees.

STRATEGIC GOALS: Our priorities for the next three years.

ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH: Establish Wavelength as a stable, trusted, and vital organization that is responsible to the community.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT: Develop audiences that will grow alongside Wavelength.

AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE: Produce unique, imaginatively conceived events that encourage and allow people in the community to discover new artists and each other.

COMMUNICATION: Revitalize the communication of our brand, our values, and our marketing initiatives.

Black Canadian Artists are Paving the Way: A Chat with Desiire, Haviah and Omega Mighty, and Lou Phelps at Wavelength Winter Festival [Q+A + Photo Journal]

1 year ago by [Celeste Daniella Ceres](#)



MEDIA COVERAGE

Positive mentions in: Toronto Star, CBC Arts, NOW Magazine, Exclaim, Indie88, BlogTO, Earmilk, Hip Hop Canada, Manifesto Canadian Beats, Daily Hive, Radio Free Canuckistan, She Does the City, Culture Addicts and more.

“It’s impossible to overstate just how different Toronto’s musical landscape was two decades ago. ... If we can identify a turning point, the evening of February 13, 2000, is as good a marker as any. That was the night Wavelength’s weekly concert series debuted at the long-gone Ted’s Wrecking Yard on College, providing a clubhouse haven for the city’s myriad indie rock, electronic and experimental-jazz niches. Over the next few years, Wavelength’s welcoming, anything-goes atmosphere made it a key developmental stage for future city stars like Broken Social Scene and Owen Pallett en route to international record deals and critical acclaim.”

— [Stuart Berman, NOW Magazine](#)

“Canada is home to trailblazing Black artists who are repping their roots and spearheading a new direction in the music scene. For Desiire, Haviah and Omega Mighty, and Lou Phelps, their identity as Black Canadian artists is embedded in the genre-fluid music they create. Earmilk caught up with the four powerhouse artists before their appearances at the 20th anniversary of Wavelength Winter Festival.”

— [Celeste Daniella Ceres, Earmilk](#)

“Bored of bad sound and living room sets? Check out this live-streamed concert series.”

— [Teaghan Beaudette, CBC Arts](#)

“At 20 years old and still resolutely outside the mainstream, they gotta be doing something right.”

— [Chris Young, Toronto Star](#)

“The Wavelength music series continues to push genre-defying acts and blend interesting music styles under one banner. The shows were well-attended, and not only that the crowd was respectful and warm. It’s all just a lot of good, old-fashioned fun.”

— [Will Bembridge, Toronto Guardian](#)



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board's major accomplishment in 2020 was the finalization of the new strategic plan, a process that analyzed the first principles of what Wavelength does well and documents what it aims to do in the future. A draft of the plan was circulated to members of the Wavelength community (past performers, sponsors, Board members) for external validation, and the Board is proud of the end result.

The Board also created two sub-committees/groups relating to marketing and programming. Each committee has met once since formation and it is anticipated that both will provide a more substantive update at the 2022 AGM.

The Board would like to recognize and thank Po Karim for his exceptional term as President. He was tremendously helpful in guiding discussions on the strategic plan and went above and beyond in co-hosting one of the first online panel discussions in the early days of the pandemic regarding the Open Broadcaster Software and how it can be used by performers.

Major thanks are also owed to Wavelength's staff, who continued to deliver on the organization's goal of presenting outstanding musical experiences and providing a platform for artists in a year like no other. In 2021 let's continue that same great work while Wavelength (hopefully) transitions to more live and in-person music events.

Finally, to any reader of this document please feel free to reach out to the Board directly at board@wavelengthmusic.ca. This email address is only reviewed by Board members, not staff. Please feel free to contact us with any questions about the Board, comments or concerns about the organization, or learn about how to run for a position in 2022.



WAVELENGTH 2020: BY THE NUMBERS

71 different
artists presented

\$40K+ paid in
artist fees

9 monthly
series shows

6 festival
shows

55% women or
non-binary artists

49% BIPOC
artists

10K+ virtual
attendees

1,200+ in-person
attendees

5 educational
events

2 full-time
staff

3 part-time contractors
(throughout year)

\$38K year-end
surplus



PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

WAVELENGTH WINTER FESTIVAL 2020

February 13-16 @ Various Venues



Wavelength celebrated the 20th anniversary of our concert series with performances by 20 different acts over four nights at four different venues. The artist lineup was 75% Torontonians, alongside visiting acts from Montreal and Los Angeles. The fest launched on Wavelength's actual anniversary with a sold-out return to our long-time home of Sneaky Dee's, followed by a two-night stand at a gorgeously decorated Longboat Hall; a packed, free, all-ages, in-store afternoon at Sonic Boom Music; and concluding with an intimate PWYC Sunday night at The Garrison.

Headline sets by homegrown international superstars who cut their teeth at Wavelength – including The Hidden Cameras and a reunion of Owen Pallett's group Les Mouches — brought out a huge proportion of our long-time audience allies. On other nights, headline sets by emerging stars from the local hip-hop and R&B communities — such as Haviah Mighty and TRP.P — brought out totally different crowds. These audiences mixed and mingled, enjoying the programming diversity that has been our strength for two decades.



WAVELENGTH MONTHLY MUSIC SERIES

9 shows, January through December 2020



The first of our year-round Monthly Music Series event took place in person in January as planned — a collaboration with OCAD University at Ignite Gallery, in the weeks leading up to our Winter Festival. Wavelength responded quickly to the pandemic when it hit in March, cancelling or postponing all our scheduled events, and reformatting our monthly series online beginning in May.

We soon became cognizant of the possibility of livestream fatigue, and made the decision to make every online show a special event including a multidisciplinary component. And we made it a high priority to work hard with artists to provide the highest possible quality A/V on their streams.

The creativity expressed in our online presentations was considerable, with events including the “Livescream” Halloween party, streamed as one continuous production over YouTube Live, with Ontario artists performing from different rooms inside an online “haunted house.” The “Wavelength Holiday Special” in December was a YouTube variety show, with songs and videos contributed by more than a dozen diverse Toronto groups. The Monthly series’ online imagination was noted in a CBC Arts piece published on Dec. 15th.



“WAVELENGTH 800” SUMMER MINI-FEST

August 15 on Facebook Live



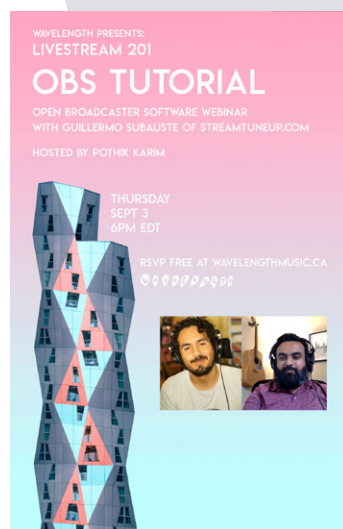
Wavelength’s annual summer festivities went online in 2020, presented as the Wavelength 800 Livestream Mini-Fest, marking the occasion of Wavelength’s 800th show as well as honouring the usual mid-August timing.

As with all our other livestream concerts in 2020, for this event we wished to enhance its visual appeal, diverse community engagement, and audio-visual production quality. The performance by WL vets Catl. was filmed live at Toronto music venue The Piston — marking our first venture in streaming from a stage.

Wavelength’s summer festivals are renowned for their diverse lineups and this event was no exception, including 100% artists or groups led by women and 50% BIPOC, representing genres from R&B and indie-pop to hip-hop and blues-punk. The festive atmosphere was knitted together with video intros and outros by stand-up comedian Arianne Tong of Question Everything Trivia (also a member of the Wavelength Board).



WAVELENGTH TALKS & EDUCATION



Our talks and educational programming moved completely online in 2020, with topics adjusted to serve our community of artists during the pandemic. The live music sector's entire move to livestreaming forced a steep learning curve for many artists — who had to create entire “venues” from their living rooms, using the ready-at-hand tech of their smartphones and laptops.

As a response, we hosted a well-received series of “Livestream 101” workshops and webinars through the spring and summer, including experts such as Guillermo Subauste of Stream Tune-up and Dan Mangan of Side Door.

In October, we hosted a well-attended (130+ registrants) panel discussion, entitled “How to Release a Record During a Pandemic,” co-curated with Wavelength Board member Angie De Medeiros (Universal Music), which Bennett (DeadBeats Records) alongside independent artist DijahSB and promoter Jesse Ohtake (The Academy Presents). And the year concluded with a timely talk on self-care and mental health, featuring Dr. Anita Shack from the AI & Malka Green Artists' Health Centre, paired with rap artist and mental health advocate Les Seaforth a.k.a. More or Les.

The level of engagement was quite high, with some events, such as the album-release panel, seeing a larger attendance than an in-person equivalent, as well as a high volume of questions during Q&A sessions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

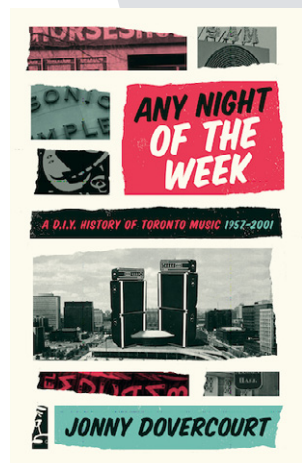
Outside of our core programming, Wavelength supported and engaged with the community through numerous different initiatives and partnerships in 2020, including:

OCAD U COLLABORATION

January 31 at Ignite Gallery (our last in-person monthly show before the pandemic), a lineup of Wavelength-curated musicians collaborated with three dozen student visual artists from OCAD's Integrated Media, DXPA and Experiential Learning programs.

MYSEUM OF TORONTO ZINE

For our 20th anniversary in February, we partnered with Myseum to publish a special edition of the Wavelength zine, featuring stories submitted by community members, reflected on their experiences at our series.



ANY NIGHT OF THE WEEK

A D.I.Y. History of Toronto Music 1957-2001 — March 2020 marked the publication of the first book by Jonny Dovercourt, our co-founder and Artistic Director, on Coach House Books. Though the March 24 launch party at the Horseshoe Tavern was postponed, the critically

acclaimed tome took on a new life online, through social media discussion and podcast appearances.

LIVESTREAM LISTINGS

In the early days of the pandemic, Wavelength aggregated and published weekly listings of livestream concerts by other artists and presenters, to support and amplify community voices.

MUSICTOGETHER

Wavestream — Our first online concert was presented May 2 in partnership with MusicTogether, an initiative started early in the pandemic by industry partners including Arts & Crafts, Shopify and Slight Music, to support hard-hit artists with paid livestreams. We curated a 10-act online festival called Wavestream, which also marked the conclusion of Ian Steaman's tenure as Guest Curator.

COLLECTIVE ARTS BREWING

A new refreshment partnership with Ontario craft brewery Collective Arts, originally intended to launch in spring 2021, went ahead in an online format. Collective offered free delivery to Wavelength livestream show attendees and invited our artists to perform in their "Happy Hour" sessions on Instagram Live.

SPOTIFY PLAYLIST — RELEASED IN ISOLATION

In summer 2020, Wavelength began compiling an ever-growing Spotify playlist, consisting entirely of music released since the start of the pandemic, by mostly Canadian emerging artists. This has allowed us to support and connect with entire new networks and generations of artists.

WAVELOG INTERVIEWS

Thanks to a Canada Summer Jobs grant, Emma Bortolon-Vettor joined Wavelength in the new position of Editorial & Marketing Coordinator. EBV coordinated our long-running artist interviews published on our Wavelog, a tradition going back to the early days of the Wavelength 'zine — and recruited a new pool of interviewers, who are now paid, rather than volunteers.

GOETHE-INSTITUT

In November 2020, Wavelength co-presented the online film premiere of *We Almost Lost Bochum*, a documentary about the influential German hip-hop music group, RAG (Ruhrpott AG).

2020 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

\$259,396 Projected Revenue

\$28,064 Projected Surplus

14.9% Private Sector Revenue

45.0% Artistic Expenses

3.3% Production Expenses

37.6% Administrative Expenses

\$231,332 Projected Expenses

4.5% Earned Revenue

80.6% Public Sector Revenue

14.1% Marketing Expenses

48.1% Staffing Expenses (included in above)

WAVELENGTH 2020 FUNDERS AND SPONSORS

PUBLIC SECTOR:

- The Canada Council for the Arts • Department of Canadian Heritage • Ontario Arts Council • Ontario Creates
- Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport • Toronto Arts Council • Government of Canada

PRIVATE SECTOR & SPONSORSHIPS:

- FACTOR • Goethe-Institut • Myseum of Toronto • The SOCAN Foundation • Slaughter Music • TD Bank

MEDIA AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

- Collective Arts Brewing • Exclaim! • Indie88 • MusicTogether • OCAD University • Office/Bureau • Side Door
- Steam Whistle Brewing • YSL Pro