



Detailed History

Updated: August 2024



The building at 910 Gladstone Avenue was originally a truck-repair garage. In 1982 it was transformed into the first permanent home of the Great Canadian Theatre Company (GCTC).

In 2007, when the GCTC moved to its new, purpose-built home on Wellington Street West, local businesspeople Marilisa Granzotto and Steve Martin acquired 910 Gladstone and began an ambitious renovation. One year later, the revitalized theatre opened as the Gladstone, an independent theatre with a mission to bring accessible, thought-provoking, and entertaining professional theatre to Ottawa audiences.

In 2011, members of Ottawa's indie theatre community came together to redefine the Gladstone as an affordable rental space to support the creation and presentation of independent theatre to Ottawa audiences. Plosive Productions and SevenThirty Productions joined forces to organize programming and promote the venue's shared use by theatre companies and individual artists. This partnership quickly expanded to include shows by Black Sheep Theatre, Bear & Co., Vanity Project Productions, Same Day Theatre, Three Sisters Theatre Company, and other professional and community theatre companies.

In 2015, the building was sold, and a lease was signed to keep the Gladstone operating as a theatre. The following year, a Steering Committee of producers, individual theatre artists, and arts administrators came together to explore incorporation, conducting community consultations, surveys, and facilitated discussions around the Gladstone's future. The Gladstone Theatre Inc. was incorporated as a not-for-profit in late 2016, with five Resident Companies: Bear & Co., Black Sheep Theatre, Phoenix Players, Plosive Productions, and Three Sisters Theatre Company. At the time of incorporation, the Gladstone regularly housed twelve stylistically diverse theatre companies, selling 27,000+ tickets per year.

In the following years, the Gladstone continued to professionalize its operations. Formal policies and processes were introduced to ensure the Gladstone continued to meet its commitments to the independent theatre community. The board secured grant funding for paid theatre management, with the Theatre Manager's role portfolio

including everything from logistics, operations, and financial management to patching holes in the drywall.

In 2018, the Gladstone became a registered charity. With support from dedicated volunteers and presenting companies, the Gladstone strengthened its offerings for independent theatre producers including upgraded box office services, promotional support, and collective opportunities such as professional development initiatives and shared auditions. After achieving charitable status, the Gladstone also sought more grant funding and private donations to modernize the building and increase human resource capacity.

In 2020, a local artist reached out to the Gladstone board to report past instances of sexual harassment by a producer. This producer was affiliated with the Gladstone and working as paid staff at the time the report was brought forward. This report, the immediate termination of the staff person, and the aftermath served as a critical impetus for reflection and improvement within the organization. The board took significant steps to strengthen important policies—including in-depth revisions to the organization’s health and safety policies and a revamped external and internal reporting process for complaints. A mandatory full-team meeting was instituted for every production prior to load-in, during which Gladstone staff reviews these policies with all theatre producers and their team members to ensure understanding and compliance.

Since that time, the Gladstone has continued to take proactive steps to provide an inclusive, safe, and professional space for theatre artists, producers, volunteers, and staff. Policies on everything from governance practices to fire safety to cultural modesty in co-ed dressing rooms were strengthened, and new board members with diverse perspectives were recruited to ensure the Gladstone’s accountability to the wider industry. This work remains foundational to the Gladstone’s strategic plan. The organization will continue to prioritize support for equity-deserving and underserved artists, groups, and genres in programming; expand the diversity of its membership and board; and make efforts to diversify patronage—all while proactively implementing tools to foster a dynamic, welcoming, and safe environment where independent theatre can thrive.

As of 2024, the Gladstone’s Resident Companies are Plosive Productions, Three Sisters Theatre Company, Bear & Co., and Phoenix Players. The Gladstone is actively seeking out new Resident Companies, especially those who identify as part of the IBPOC community and/or produce professional theatre.

The theatre continues to be managed by a small and dedicated part-time staff team, including the current Theatre Manager who is also an independent producer and long-time member of the Gladstone community.