

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

AGM September 18, 2026

To our Board of Directors, staff, instructors, volunteers, families, students, supporters, and community partners,

As I look back on the past year at Encore Arts Centre, I am filled with an incredible mix of pride, gratitude, exhaustion, and excitement for what comes next.

This past year was about much more than teaching performing arts. It was about taking what YPC was and turning it into an organization that thrives in our community. It was about creating a home for young performers, building programs, developing staff, producing shows, finding funding, navigating challenges, and most importantly, creating a place where children and young people could discover who they are and what they are capable of.

This was Encore's first year, and what we accomplished together is something worth celebrating.

From YPC to Encore

This year marked a significant transition for our organization as we moved from Young Performers Collective into Encore Arts Centre.

The rebrand represented more than a change in name. It reflected our vision for what this organization could become: a full performing arts centre where children and youth can explore musical theatre, acting, music, performance, creativity, confidence, and community.

Encore has grown into a space serving hundreds of young people and families in our community.

We have worked hard to create programming that welcomes students at different ages, stages, and levels of experience. From our youngest performers in Mini Musicals to our older students preparing for more advanced productions, Encore has continued to expand opportunities for young people to find their place on and off the stage.

Our programming has included our musical theatre programs, acting for stage and screen, acting foundations, private music lessons, vocal instruction, piano, guitar, drums, summer camps, and specialized performance opportunities.

The goal has always been the same: create opportunities for young people to grow.

A YEAR ON THE STAGE

Perhaps the most visible part of our first year was the incredible amount of work our students and staff put into producing Wonka and HSM.

The productions were a huge undertaking, with multiple casts and an incredible 19 performances across the two week span. Watching our students step onto that stage after months of rehearsal was one of the highlights of the year.

That production demonstrated something that became a theme throughout our first year:

Encore finds a way to make it happen!!

When something doesn't work, we adapt. When a plan changes, we find another one. When resources are limited, we get creative.

These productions represent the continued growth of our programming and our students. They also allow us to explore themes that are deeply connected to our organization, identity, growth, belonging, transformation, confidence, and discovering who you are.

One of the things I am most proud of is that Encore has become about much more than putting on shows.

Performing arts teaches skills that extend far beyond the stage.

Our students learn how to communicate, collaborate, problem-solve, manage disappointment, take direction, lead, support others, speak confidently, build relationships, persevere, take creative risks, and celebrate other people's successes.

For some students, the stage is where they become comfortable being themselves.

For others, it is where they learn to be brave.

For some, it is the first place they have ever felt truly successful.

That is the impact of what we are building.

BUILDING OUR TEAM

None of this happens without people.

Over the past year, Encore has worked with a talented group of instructors, directors, musicians, volunteers, and community supporters.

We have welcomed and worked alongside educators and artists including Kennedy, Ava, Natalie, Matt, Joel, Bailey, Rowan, Saylor, Henna, Joseph, Rachelle, Isaac, and many others who have contributed to the organization throughout the year.

Every person who has stepped into our studios, classrooms, rehearsal rooms, offices, and productions has helped shape Encore.

As we move forward, one of our priorities must be continuing to build a strong, sustainable team and ensuring that our staff and instructors have the support and resources they need to do their jobs well.

FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Operating an arts organization is extremely expensive.

Rent, insurance, equipment, licensing, production costs, costumes, technology, utilities, staffing, facility maintenance, and programming all come with significant costs.

This year we worked hard to find creative ways to raise money and bring additional resources into Encore but what we raised was peanuts to what we actually need.

However, we are grateful for every bit of funding that comes our way because every donation says:

We believe these kids matter.

THE REALITY OF OUR FACILITY

Our facility has been both an incredible opportunity and one of our greatest operational challenges.

Encore currently operates in approximately 3,078 square feet of commercial space, allowing us to offer multiple programs and create a dedicated home for our students.

However, the cost of maintaining that space has placed significant pressure on the organization.

Our monthly occupancy costs have been approximately \$10,000, creating a substantial financial obligation for a young nonprofit organization.

We have also experienced significant HVAC and ventilation issues within the facility. These issues have required ongoing advocacy, communication with the landlord, contractors, and efforts to determine appropriate solutions and rent relief.

While these challenges have been frustrating, they have also reinforced the importance of having a sustainable facility strategy as Encore continues to grow.

Our goal must be to have a space that is safe, functional, accessible, financially sustainable, and capable of supporting the programs we want to offer.

EQUIPMENT

Throughout the year we have also identified significant equipment needs, including digital keyboards, microphones, microphone cables, drum equipment, guitar and music equipment, amplifiers, speakers, stage lighting, lighting control equipment, updated computers and technology, POS equipment, costumes, and musical theatre production materials.

These are not simply "nice to have" items. They are the infrastructure required to provide high-quality arts education and productions.

One of our priorities moving forward will be developing a stronger capital funding strategy so that equipment purchases do not have to compete with our ability to pay for basic operations.

GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This year has also been a year of learning about what it means to operate as a nonprofit organization.

We have been developing our board structure, policies, financial processes, registration systems, volunteer structures, committees, and organizational procedures while simultaneously running programming and productions.

That is a tremendous amount of work for a first-year organization.

Our first AGM is an important milestone because it represents a transition from simply building the organization to strengthening the systems that will allow Encore to grow sustainably.

As we enter our second year, I believe we need to continue developing an active and engaged Board of Directors, establish strong committees, clarify roles and responsibilities, strengthen financial oversight, and build systems that distribute organizational responsibility across the team. Encore cannot depend on one person to carry every piece of the organization. A sustainable nonprofit requires shared leadership, accountability, and participation. That will be one of our most important areas of growth in Year Two.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERS

Encore exists because people give their time.

Parents, board members, instructors, volunteers, backstage crews, production teams, administrative volunteers, and community supporters have all contributed countless hours.

There have been times this year when the workload has been enormous. Running a nonprofit arts centre voluntarily while also managing a full-time career and family responsibilities has required an extraordinary amount of time and energy. One of my greatest priorities for the coming year is building a stronger volunteer and leadership structure so that the work of Encore is shared among many people rather than concentrated in a few.

If Encore is going to become the organization we envision, we need people who are willing to step forward and say "How can I help?"

OUR STUDENTS ARE THE REASON

At the end of every long day, every production challenge, every budget conversation, every fundraising campaign, every grant application, and every frustrating facility issue, there is one reason we keep going.

The students.

They are the reason Encore exists.

We see students who walk through our doors shy and unsure of themselves and eventually take the stage with confidence.

We see students discover talents they didn't know they had.

We see friendships develop.

We see children find community.
We see young people learn that their voice matters.
And we see students become leaders.
That is the real measure of Encore's first year.
Not the number of shows.
Not the amount of money raised.
Not the number of programs offered.
The measure is the number of young people who left our doors believing a little more strongly in themselves.

LOOKING TOWARD YEAR TWO

As we enter our second year, our focus needs to shift from simply building Encore to building sustainability.

We need to diversify our revenue through grants, sponsorships, donations, fundraising, program revenue, community partnerships, and capital funding.

We need an engaged Board of Directors and active committees that can provide oversight, expertise, fundraising support, and strategic direction.

We need to address our facility challenges and ensure that our long-term space is financially and operationally sustainable.

We want Encore to be a place where more young people can participate regardless of financial, physical, developmental, or other barriers.

We will continue developing our theatre, acting, music, and performance programs while exploring new opportunities for students.

We want to deepen our relationships with schools, Indigenous communities, businesses, arts organizations, and other community partners.

We need to make sure our instructors, staff, volunteers, board members, and families have the support necessary to make Encore successful.

A FINAL THANK YOU

There are too many people who have contributed to Encore this year to name everyone individually.

To our instructors and directors: thank you for giving our students your knowledge, patience, creativity, and passion.

To our volunteers: thank you for giving your time when you didn't have to.

To our parents and families: thank you for trusting us with your children and supporting them through rehearsals, lessons, performances, costumes, schedules, and everything else that comes with performing arts.

To our Board of Directors: thank you for helping build the foundation of this organization.

To our donors and sponsors: thank you for believing that the arts are worth investing in.

To our community partners: thank you for helping Encore become part of the larger community.

And most importantly, to our students:

Thank you for reminding us why we do this.

Rachel Merrick
Executive Director
Encore Arts Centre