2017-2020 Strategic Plan

Sybil Shearer Studio
A new legacy at Ragdale

Expanded Ragdale in Schools Program
Serving teachers and students

Introducing 2018 Fellows
For 120 years, Ragdale has been a place of retreat and imagination: a site where creative people have found opportunities to embrace the present moment and room for quiet contemplation. Where they have become infused with energy drawn from the rich archive of our eclectic campus. And where they have poised themselves, time and time again, for breakthroughs in the development of startling new work. In our strategic planning efforts this year, we considered the incredible interplay of past, present, and future that inhabits the Ragdale legacy and property. We were inspired by generations of Shaw family members, many of whom were and are artists, educators, and social activists. We ultimately agreed that Ragdale is and has always been a place of social and artistic progress, endowed with the legacies of visionaries, and designed to be, like the arts, dynamic and ever-changing. We believe that Ragdale’s founders would be proud of the achievements shared in this newsletter—most particularly the maintenance of that delicate balance between preservation and progress, all in support of a more benevolent, inclusive, and inspirational world. Thank you to all who have played a role in this vital work.

Jeffrey Meeuwsen, Executive Director

2017 Artists-in-Residence

This year we’ll serve 186 creative practitioners from the U.S., France, England, Canada, Singapore, and Japan with 18- and 25-day residencies. We supported Ragdale artists with $48,000 in grants and stipends and featured them in 64 public and school programs.

Disciplines represented include: Journalists, Visual Artists, Sound Artists, Fiction Writers, Nonfiction Writers, Screenwriters, Poets, Audio Producers, Musicians, Composers, Playwrights, Theater Directors, Architects, Landscape Architects, Filmmakers, Designers, Playwrights, Actors, Dance Makers, Curators, Scholars, and Arts Administrators.

Arts Education for All

The Ragdale in Schools and High School Arts Week programs continue to thrive, reaching new students and teachers with free workshops, peer networking, and career opportunities. In 2017 Ragdale enriched:

645 students
40 schools
2017-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

After celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Ragdale Foundation in 2016, the Ragdale board and staff spent 2017 working with the Pratt Richards Group to establish vision and priorities for the next 3 to 5 years.

The programs and opportunities shared in this newsletter reflect the goals established by our new strategic plan, including:

- Increasing financial support for artists
- Advancing underrepresented artists
- Creating a fully accessible, inclusive campus
- Enhancing garden spaces to nurture artists and to better support the culinary program
- Encouraging and inspiring teachers and students in Lake and Cook counties
- Preserving and enhancing the historic campus to meet evolving needs—e.g., property modifications for enhanced accessibility and equality of experience; addition of collaborative spaces and a dedicated dance studio; technological improvements; etc.
- Producing high quality, artist-centric, original programs that foster new connections between artists and the community

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Alpert/Ragdale Fellowship

With the support of the Herb Alpert Foundation, the William and Solange Brown Fellowship for New Musical Composition, and the INSIDE1260 Giving Society, we are pleased to be offering not one, but three fellowships in 2018 for risk-taking mid-career composers—all with full residency and stipend. Talented recipients: David Rempis, Courtney Bryan, and Valerie Coleman

French Heritage Society & Chicago Botanic Garden

Now in its fourth year, our alliance gave landscape designer Cédric Réolon from École Nationale Supérieure de Paysage residency at Ragdale and an internship at the Chicago Botanic Garden. During his stay, Cédric developed conceptual drawings for a refreshed Ragdale herb and vegetable garden.

On the Cover

The 2017 cohort of audio producers enjoys their Third Coast Radio Residency; a partnership with the Third Coast International Audio Festival
I’ve always wanted to be a writer.

At 18, I attended Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan majoring in English and Communication Arts. One Saturday morning after completing my freshman year, I awoke with pains in my legs and abdomen and within an hour, I was completely paralyzed from the waist down. Three years later, I received my degree with honors. Using a wheelchair for my mobility didn’t end my desire to write. However, interview and photo shoot locations were often inaccessible.

Switching directions, I completed a doctoral degree in psychology from Wayne State University. I realized during graduate school that my communication skills were complimentary to psychology.

In 1987, my husband and I bought a historic Victorian home in Traverse City, Michigan. For thirty years, I’ve taught psychology at colleges and universities (including the University of Nice, France), been a therapist, consultant, and an extremely involved community activist. Occasionally, I’ve published an article or two. One about my experiences in Nice appeared in the Riviera Reporter.

Remarkably, in 2008, I was asked to write a monthly health-and-disability column for the Traverse City Record Eagle. One hundred Sunday columns later, I’m still writing “Adapted in TC.” In 2012, I attended the one-week Writers’ Retreat at Interlochen Center for the Arts. In 2014, my Interlochen genre teacher was Chicago novelist Christine Sneed. In 2017, she encouraged me to apply for the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation Creative Access Fellowship at Ragdale, for artists living with spinal cord injuries. Christine, a Ragdale supporter, said “Ragdale is the place where I first began to see myself as a writer, not only as a person who occasionally wrote.”

In the spring of 2017, I learned I was a Ragdale fellow in session 11. My goals for the residency included beginning a memoir, writing a 10-minute screenplay, and creating a collage book of my columns. Upon my arrival, Chef Linda said from her studio (kitchen): “Everyone has the right to create their art. Everyone. The arts are important.” This was the kindest of welcomes. During my residency, I never had to defend my artistic process or work.

I especially connected with visual artist Melissa Jay Craig. Melissa is deaf and said, “I love knowing who I’m here with; I find out through their work.” As an alum, Melissa helped me navigate Ragdale. She often walked the entire property, including during the first snowfall, and videotaped areas that were difficult for me to explore in my wheelchair.

When my husband dropped me off at Ragdale, he said “Be you.” And I was. I brainstormed with staff about collaborations with the schools; reached out to disability-friendly Lake Forest businesses and government; met visiting author Ruth Ozeki; presented my work at the Supper Club event; reconnected in Lake Forest with Ragdale and Interlochen alumni; read other new work in an open salon; shared lots of area disability contacts and resources with Ragdale; and created a buddy information system for new residents with disabilities.

I’m honored to have lived in the accessible Chandler Studio that Phoebe Turner and Penny and Peter West helped make possible. The space is a good initial effort at making Ragdale a fully inclusive, technologically savvy campus with a highly trained staff and board. Ragdale residents who have disabilities still need many things, however—including but not limited to: a restroom on the main floor of the Ragdale House, exterior ADA-compliant ramps to all of the buildings, year-round traversable paths throughout the property, and a universally accessible van.

Creating a big, full life for myself has been my most creative act.

What am I? I’m a writer.

SUSAN ODGERS is a writer, professor, and consulting psychologist. She has been twice recognized with the prestigious Thomas Rumble Doctoral Fellowship at Wayne State University. A paraplegic from a stroke, Susan has used a manual wheelchair for the past 41 years. Since 2008, she’s written a monthly newspaper column about disability and health issues for the award-winning Traverse City Record Eagle. She served for 17 years on the board of Michigan Protection and Advocacy Services, Inc. In 2010, she was recognized as Traverse City’s Humanitarian of the Year, and since 2015 has served on the Traverse City Human Rights Commission. Susan’s active community service also includes board work for Michigan Writers, Blu Front Media, Real People Media, the Traverse City Chamber of Commerce’s leadership programs, the Munson Hospital, and the United Way Allocation Team, among others. She is co-founder of Poets Meet Musicians and a consultant to the Traverse City Film Festival.
The Legacy of a Preeminent Dancemaker Comes to Ragdale

In partnership with the Morrison-Shearer Foundation, we are pleased to be considering the development of a nationally significant and fully accessible new dance studio. The studio will be designed by Woodhouse Tinucci Architects, with the synergistic influence of both the original Sybil Shearer Studio in Northbrook and the existing architecture and grounds of Ragdale. The studio will host solo artists or small collaborative groups and be one of few “research and development” spaces in the U.S. dedicated to new dancemaking within a residency setting.

The Sybil Shearer Studio will join Ragdale’s campus of eclectic buildings and structures, many designed and assembled by renowned Arts and Crafts architect Howard Van Doren Shaw. The existing Ragdale buildings vary in scale and style, but most are clad in wood, have covered porches, and offer views of the surrounding garden and prairie landscape via large windows. The proposed design for the new Shearer Studio incorporates this vernacular, featuring clad wood siding with a natural finish, two covered porches, large windows, and a thoughtful relationship with the garden.

Sybil Shearer (1912-2005)
A Leading Pioneer of Modern Dance, Shearer has been described as provocative, an original, a maverick, a poet of movement, and a near legendary figure. In 1979, New York critic Walter Terry called her “one of the world’s foremost modern dancers.” This assessment was confirmed in 2015 by noted dance historian David Vaughan.
ACCESS TO BEAUTY

The new Sybil Shearer Studio will be Ragdale’s second fully accessible studio. As such, we’re studying a potential companion project to improve the Ragdale garden and pathways, for the first time making the 120-year old campus welcoming for artists and visitors who use wheelchairs. The layout would be inspired by Howard Van Doren Shaw’s original vision, including the family’s walled garden, arbor, cutting, and production gardens. The refreshed landscape would also better highlight iconic Shaw sculpture and artifacts.

J’Sun Howard is a Chattanooga native and a Chicago-based dancemaker and poet. A 2014 Chicago Dancemaker’s Forum Lab Artist awardee, his choreography has appeared at local venues including Links Hall, Northwestern University, Sonotheque, Lincoln Square Theatre, Insight Arts/Center for New Possibilities, Epiphany Church, Rumble Arts, and Defibrillator Performance Art Gallery. His literary work can be read in the journals: Calamus Journal, the Shade Journal, Chicago IRL, Inkwell, Danspace’s Constellations and Influences, Garland Court Review, Storyglossia, 3rd Language, and Manifold, The Body.
“Our daughters participated in High School Arts Week this year and it was transformational. Thank you for your amazing community programs.”

Juliann Larimer
After a lauded 18-month pilot program that studied and responded to the needs of local schools, we are pleased to be developing a year-long, 4-part series of educational services to nurture both teachers and students.

The expanded **Ragdale in Schools** program will make the most of Ragdale’s vast creative network of art and design professionals as well as our historic 5-acre campus to provide an engaging retreat and “arts lab” for teachers and students. We will match outstanding creative professionals with the needs of schools to provide tools for healthy self-expression, community engagement, cultural exchange, and career development. This free program will be available to all regional schools, with an emphasis on underserved communities in Lake County.

We will begin each program season by nurturing teachers at Ragdale, reducing stress and burnout, and fostering new levels of creative inspiration. These educators will then become our partners for the academic year, through a series of on-campus and off-campus educational programs designed to propel creative youth to new levels of achievement.

The new, 4-part Ragdale in Schools program will partner with 10 teachers (from 10 schools) per year and serve up to 4,000 students.

We thank the funders of Ragdale in Schools including the Gorter Family Foundation, the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, the Heizer Foundation, the Butler Family Foundation, the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation, the Harold M. and Adeline S. Morrison Family Foundation, the Plansoen Foundation, the Palmer Foundation, the Grainger Foundation, the Peter Horton Charitable Remainder Annuity Trust, and more than 60 households in Ragdale’s INSIDE1260 giving society. PLEASE JOIN THEM IN ADVANCING OUR SCHOOLS.

**PART 1: 2-DAY RETREAT FOR TEACHERS**
- Interactive sessions with Ragdale artists/fellows
- Goal-setting for the year
- Personal and creative refresh
- Teachers will develop a diverse new support network (“class of 2018”). A resource website will offer classroom resources and encourage ongoing sharing of goals, growth, and new work.

**PART 2: TEACHERS RETURN WITH STUDENTS**
- Up to 1,000 students will be served in Part 2 (ten 1/2-day visits, one for each class)
- Focus: mindful, multisensory observation; creativity; and collaboration. Workshops for students will provide an open-air arts laboratory inspired by Ragdale artists and directly connected to the natural environment.

**PART 3: SCHOOL VISITS & EDUCATORS’ GUIDES**
- 30 Fellowships and 30 School Visits: 30 artists’ fellowships will be awarded including residency of up to 25 days at Ragdale and a stipend of at least $500. During or after residency, fellows will be matched with the needs of local classrooms and featured in school programs as well as free, downloadable educators’ guides and videos.
- 3,000+ students may be served in Part 3.

**PART 4: TEACHERS RETURN TO RAGDALE FOR A SECOND 2-DAY RETREAT**
- Facilitated discussion about lessons learned and best practices from the year’s work; goals; and changes across time.
- Interactive sessions with Ragdale artists/fellows
- Personal and creative refresh
Ragdale in Schools features workshops, presentations, videos, studio visits, curricula, and creative role modeling not typically offered in traditional classrooms. In 2018, the following fellows and their work will serve as the basis for multipart school partnerships. Each fellow will benefit from a residency of up to 25 days and a cash stipend. Thanks to our INSIDE1260 giving society and other generous donors, these programs are provided without cost to the artists, students, or schools.

**RAGDALE IN SCHOOLS FELLOWS**

**MICHELLE BOWDLER**
Bowdler’s work has been published in The New York Times and recognized with the 2017 Barbara Deming Memorial Award for nonfiction. She is a public health professional who writes on addiction and violence prevention.

**SHARON BRIDGFORTH**
Bridgforth collaborates with actors, dancers, singers, and audiences live during performances, as a composer of moving soundscapes. She is a Doris Duke Performing Artist and a 2016 Creative Capital awardee.

**JAMEL BRINKLEY**
Brinkley graduated from the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, was the Provost’s Visiting Writer in Fiction at the University of Iowa, and is the current Carol Houck Smith Fiction Fellow at the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing.

**COURTNEY BRYAN**
Courtney’s music ranges from solo works to large ensembles, film scores, and collaborations with a wide range of artists. Her musical genres include jazz, experimental music, and traditional gospel, spirituals, and hymns.

**MARIE CASIMIR**
Casimir is a Haitian–American performer, writer, arts producer, and instructor. Her work straddles the multiple cultures, languages, and memories that exist within the body.

**VALERIE COLEMAN**
Valerie is among the world’s most played living composers. Her work is highly regarded, having made deeply relevant contributions to modern music and ranging from flute sonatas to orchestral and chamber works to scherzos.

**JAMIE FIGUEROA**
A graduate of The Institute of American Indian Arts, Figueroa publishes across several genres including fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry. Her collaborative community work facilitates an engagement with underrepresented voices.

**NICOLE GOODWIN**
Alice Hayes Fellowship
One of the first homeless veterans of the Iraq War, Goodwin’s work Desert Flowers was selected for performance by the Women’s Playwriting International Conference. She is the 2013–2014 Queer Art Mentorship Literary Fellow.

**MICHELE MIYARES HOLLANDS**
Schumann Fellowship
Hollands lives and works in Havana, Cuba. She graduated from ISDI (Instituto Superior de Diseño) in 2002 and is an Art Director of the cultural magazine La Gaceta de Cuba.

**MIAH JEFFRA**
Jeffra is a writer based in San Francisco and editor of the queer literary collaborative, Foglifter Press. Their work ranges in theme from psychogeography and urban studies to gender structures to mythmaking and ritual.

**JULIA CLAIBORNE JOHNSON**
Hannah Judy Gretz Fellowship
Julia’s first novel, Be Frank with Me, was an IndieNext Pick and was selected as one of six finalists for Best Debut of 2016 by the American Booksellers Association.
SAMANTHA LIBBY
A human rights activist with a focus in freedom of expression, theater, and war, Samantha has won awards including the Raphael Smith Memorial Prize for Global Understanding and the Baroness Winchester Prize for Human Rights.

TAMARA MC
MC is an applied linguist who focuses on issues related to language, culture, identity, race, gender, community and class in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe.

JOSHUA RASHAAD MCFADDEN
McFadden’s photography deals with police brutality and the murders of African-American men and women. He was named one of the top emerging talents in the world by LensCulture in 2015.

RUBY HANSEN MURRAY
Murray is a writer and photographer whose work appears in World Literature Today, The Rumpus, As/Us, Apogee and Yellow Medicine Review. She holds an MFA from the Institute of American Indian Arts.

DAVID ISHAYA OSU
A native of Nigeria, Osu’s poetry appears in journals such as Chiron Review, New Coin Poetry, CutBank, Vinyl, and Transition. Osu is currently the poetry editor at Panorama: The Journal of Intelligent Travel.

YASIN KAKANDE
Prairie Fellowship
Kakande has been a Middle East journalist for more than a decade, a TEDGlobal Fellow, served as news producer for City 7 TV in Dubai, and as a features writer for the Khaleej Times.

JUNE LEE
Lee’s sculptural work focuses on societal conditions such as bystander effect and mass psychology. Originally from Korea, she attended The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Cranbrook Academy.

C. RUSSELL PRICE
Price is a genderqueer Appalachian punk poet originally from Virginia now living in Chicago. They are currently at work on a full-length collection of poetry exploring the queer apocalypse.

DAVID REMPIS
Rempis is a Chicago–based saxophonist and composer. After a year at the University of Ghana, he burst onto the music scene with the jazz group, The Vandermark Five. He regularly tours the U.S. and Europe.

BARAK ADÉ SOLEIL
Chicago Dancemakers Forum Lab Artists Fellowship
Barak hybridizes dance, theatre, and performance art, expanding upon traditions from the African diaspora, disability and queer culture, and postmodern forms.

JANET THIELKE
Thielke’s stories have appeared in several journals and anthologies. She is a James C. McCreight Fiction Fellow at the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing and an Olive B. O’Connor Fellow in fiction at Colgate University.

KEITH WILSON
Wilson is a game designer, Affrilachian Poet, Cave Canem fellow, and graduate of the Callaloo Creative Writing Workshop. Keith’s published poetry includes Generation Oz and Kindermeal.
To best serve the evolving needs of artists working collaboratively, we continue to expand our Themed Residency program which offers group residencies for shared projects.

THIRD COAST RADIO RESIDENCY
“Through the residency I fell deeper in love with the possibility of radio. It felt like a big, warm hug from the radio world saying ‘Hey! Your experience isn’t fully represented yet but, we got your back.’”


In partnership with Third Coast Audio International Audio Festival, nine audio producers came together in April for a radio residency. During their week away from the demands and deadlines of everyday life, each Resident made progress on their own audio project, while sharing expertise and sonic camaraderie with one another. Mentor Nishat Kurwa (Youth Radio, Vox Media) was on-site all the while, offering one-one-one guidance and editing sessions.

UV THEATER PROJECT
Three up-tempo, immersive performances of Anton Chekhov’s timeless classic, The Cherry Orchard, were the culmination of the UV Theater Project’s summer residency. This work presented a unique theatrical experience staged throughout the Ragdale grounds.

PLATEFUL COMPANY
At the completion of their week-long residency, Plateful Company presented A Place Called Plenty, an original, interactive, dinner party musical. They used the Ragdale House to develop recipes, music, and performances.
The fifth annual Ragdale Ring competition and performance series presented original programming throughout the year. In addition to use by school groups, High School Arts Week, and Rags to Witches, the Ragdale Ring featured the following artist-curated programs:

**VISUAL SCORES/SONIC LANDSCAPES**
A program of film, music, and poetry featuring the Chicago Modern Orchestra Project Chamber Ensemble.
Curated by Renee Baker

**SILK ROAD QUARTET**
An enchanting musical journey through story and song featuring Ronnie Malley, Jennie Oh-Brown, Carlo Basile, and Bob Garrett. Directed by Anna C. Bahow
Curated by Jamil Khoury and Malik Gillani, Silk Road Rising

**COMPOSING THE MOMENT: DANCED IMPROVISATION**
Improvising dance artists from post-modern dance to urban street forms take the stage.
Curated by Ginger Farley, Chicago Dancemakers Forum

**A PERSEPHONE PAGEANT**
An interactive pageant for the whole family celebrating the myth of Persephone and featuring music, movement and visual elements.
Curated by Tria Smith

The “Props and Drops” themed residency brought together visual and theater artists with a shared goal of ensuring that RAGS TO WITCHES was uniquely artist-made. Highlights included an original play, sculpture that transformed the facade of the Ragdale House into a cat, creepy family portraits of imagined Shaw family members, a cemetery inspired by Shaw family pets, and a candy shop in the style of a Botanica with Dia de los Muertos altar.
Moving to Green Bay Road in Lake Forest allowed me to become more familiar with the Ragdale community firsthand. The more I participated in events, the more I knew I wanted to be deeply involved with this nest of creativity less than a mile up the road. My connectivity grew after a truly inspiring trip to Cuba, where I encountered a thriving contemporary arts movement, composed of a resilient, tight-knit group of artists. Inspired to bring new talent and fresh ideas to our region, I am sponsoring a residency fellowship at Ragdale for an emerging Latin American artist, to take place in 2018.

Vibrant new works are being produced every day at Ragdale. Becoming a member of the INSIDE1260 Giving Society is the finest way I know to show my appreciation for the visual arts and my enthusiasm for Ragdale. I want to encourage other patrons to do the same, to tap into the dynamic energy of this nationally-renowned arts center in our collective backyard.

Helen Degen Cohen was a writer, poet, professor at Roosevelt University, and one of the founders of the poetry journal, Rhino. She also nurtured a passion for Ragdale. In a 1982 letter requesting her third residency, she said, “Ragdale’s luscious gardens beat April in Paris” and “Ragdale brings me closer to herself.” It was this deep love that led Helen to include Ragdale in her will. Along with her legacy gift, Helen left us many precious documents from Ragdale’s early years including newsletters, newspaper clippings, notes on residents, journals, and photo albums. We are sincerely grateful for this gift, and for Helen’s leadership in giving. Her legacy gift will help Ragdale to thrive and be available for generations of artists to come. We join Helen’s family in inviting you to consider including Ragdale in your planned giving.

“We had been looking for a place that could bring our family together. Finding this creative and inspiring place called Ragdale has helped us to feel a part of the community. Now we truly feel like we are home.”

Mark-Hans, Amy, Alexa, and Jacqueline Richer

NEW MEMBERS OF INSIDE1260
To learn more about INSIDE1260, contact Laura Kramer at 847.234.1063 ext. 24 or laura@ragdale.org. Sign up by completing the enclosed pledge envelope or give online by clicking the “Donate” button at ragdale.org.
NICK NUSBAUMER, RAGDALE INTERN

“I have certainly bought into the magic of Ragdale. Being immersed in this environment with creative and administrative professionals really emphasized my passion for the arts. I got to meet and mingle with prolific artists from all over the world and was privy to their in-house readings and resident dinners. Witnessing first-hand the residents’ sheer appreciation for the time and space allowed at Ragdale made me very proud of the contributions, no matter how minute, I made to their experience. I consider myself more than lucky to have had such an opportunity that granted me hands-on experience with creative people I aspire to follow in my own life.”

Thank you to more than 135 volunteers, sponsors, and artists who made our 2017 programs and events so successful!

ART CONSERVATION

We are grateful to the following businesses and individuals who generously gave their expertise in 2017 to research, catalogue, and conserve artwork and objects from Ragdale’s collection: DPR Art Rescue, LLC, Parma Conservation, Margo Rothschild, and Ann Merritt.
As we close 2017, we express our sincere gratitude to our talented staff, trustees, and curatorial board members—with special thanks to trustees Sally McDonald, Phoebe Turner, and Roberta Haebler who will be moving to new roles within the organization.
JUNE 9
JULY 14
AUGUST 18
SEPTEMBER 22
Public Tours at 10am

SAVE THESE 2018 DATES

APRIL 1
Application Deadline for
High School Arts Week

JULY 23-27
High School Arts Week

APRIL 27
Novel Affair School Day

APRIL 28
Novel Affair
Reception and Dinners

JANUARY 19
APRIL 6
JUNE 28
SEPTEMBER 5
Tea & Talk with Ragdale artists

OCTOBER 21
Rags to Witches