



northern
spark

2011

2019

Northern Spark 2011–2019

We Are Here: Resilience, Renewal & Regeneration

Northern Spark is a late-night arts festival in Minnesota—a free, multidisciplinary, multi-venue, multiple partner, night-time event. In early June, tens of thousands of people gather throughout the Twin Cities to explore the city’s great cultural institutions and neighborhoods, play in temporary installations in the streets, and enjoy experimental performances in green spaces and under bridges.

Over the past nine years Northern Spark has become an eagerly anticipated event that contributes powerfully to the image of the Twin Cities as an active, vibrant, diverse community; a place that attracts and retains young talent; a region that loves participatory outdoor and cultural activities.

In 2019 Northern Spark continued as a “new two-nights until 2 am” event and engaged three Twin Cities neighborhoods: Downtown East and the American Indian Cultural Corridor in Minneapolis and historic Rondo in St. Paul. The theme *We Are Here: Resilience, Renewal & Regeneration*, was born from conversations with local residents and Neighborhood Partners and woven together by the 2018–2019 Northern Lights Program Council. *We Are Here* invited artists to claim space and power through their stories of resilience, renewal and regeneration.

Equity, Inclusion and Community

The 2017 festival signaled a shift in how Northern Lights.mn organizes Northern Spark. That year, we introduced a Program Council of artists of color who championed the cultural neighborhoods where the 2017 festival took place and juried the largest open call for that year.

To reflect our commitment to increasing the diversity of artists, partners and audience in our programming, we have made the Program Council an ongoing effort in our work. This rotating group works with Northern Lights.mn to address racial inequities present within our organization and to select artists for participation in Northern Spark.

We also continue to engage community-rooted organizations in the formation of neighborhood nodes for the festival, as a way of increasing racial equity and participation in Northern Lights.mn programming. As we continue these relationships over the next ten years, we look forward to building a model for both a curated and community-created festival.

Northern Spark 2019 Major Supporters

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Northern Spark is produced and presented by Northern Lights.mn

The mission of Northern Lights.mn is to support artists in the creation and presentation of art in the public sphere, focusing on innovative uses of technology to imagine new interactions between audience, artwork and place and explore expanded possibilities for civic engagement.

<http://northern.lights.mn>

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This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.





Northern Spark 2011–2019 By the Numbers

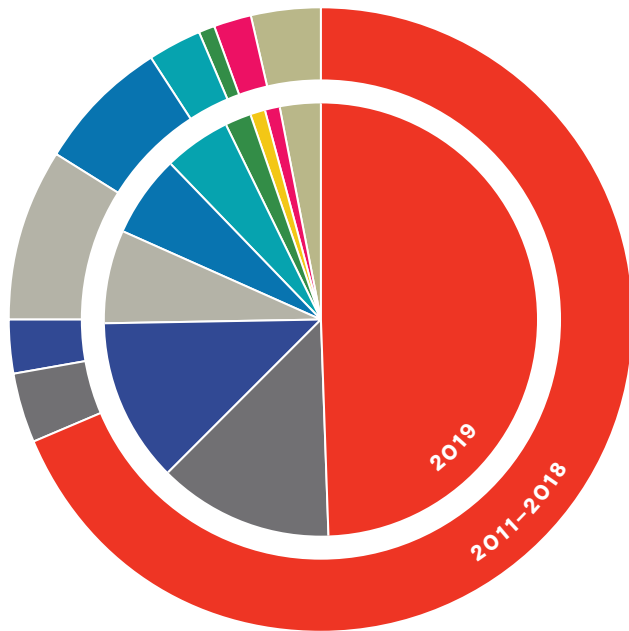
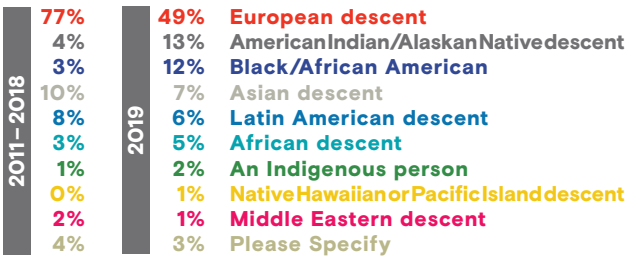
Artist Projects	660
Venues	138
Attendees	324,000
Artists	2,393
Organizational Partners	328
Sponsors	231
Media Impressions	12.8 million
Website visits	629,925
Unique website visitors	413,522
Website page views	1,580,802
Facebook page impressions	4,124,510
Printed maps	119,500

In 2019

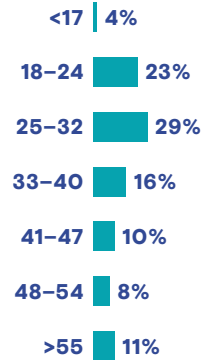
Artist Projects	31
Artists	239
Attendees	20,000
Website views	45,398
Media impressions	5,840,300

Northern Spark 2011–2019 Attendee Demographics

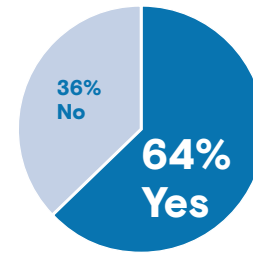
With which group(s) do you self identify?



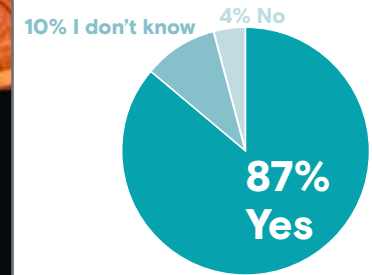
Your age ... ?



Have you attended Northern Spark before?



Are you planning to attend Northern Spark next year?



2019 survey: what festival locations did you attend?

American Indian Cultural Corridor



The Commons



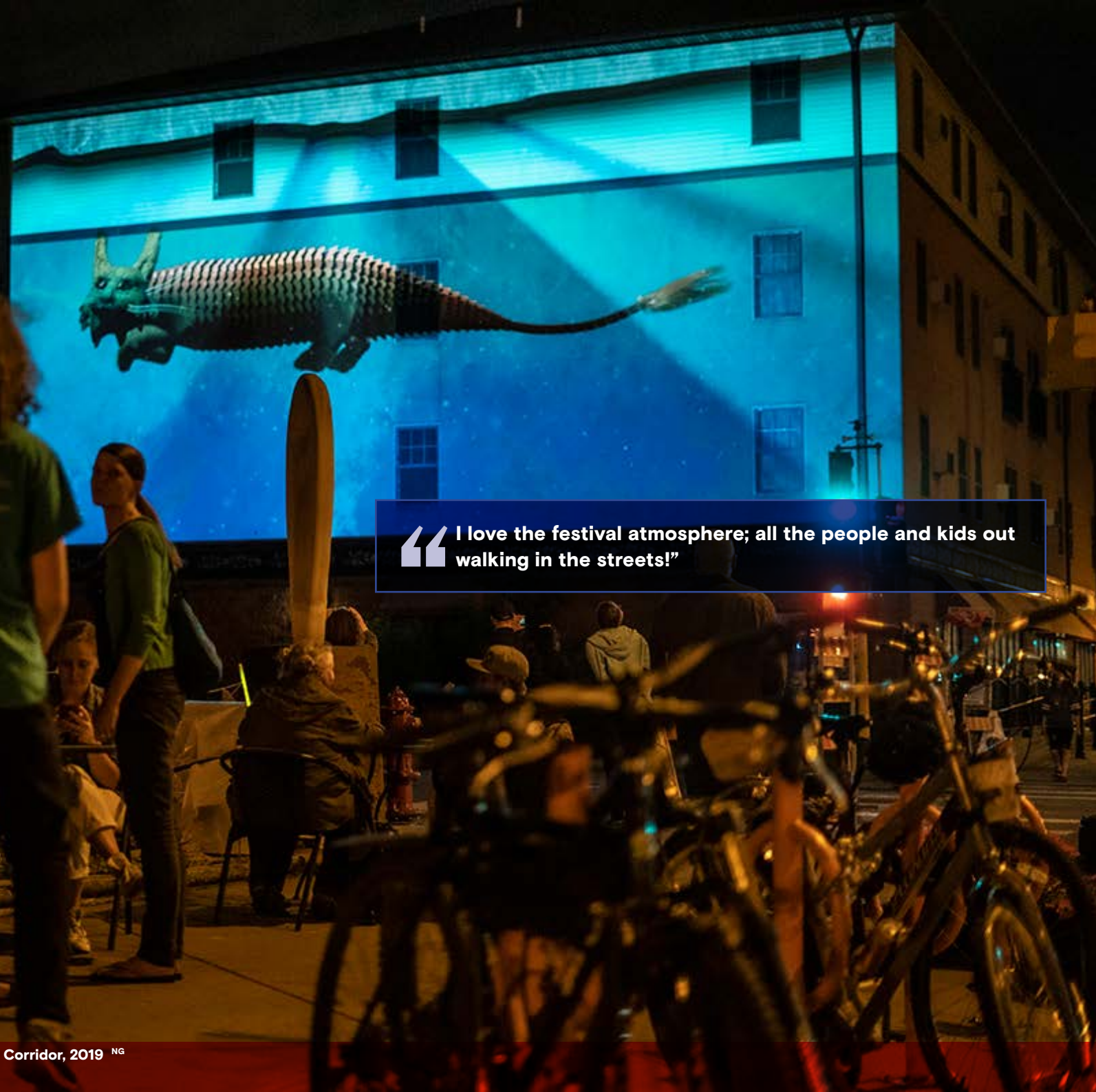
Hallie Q. Brown Center / Rondo




Rondo Community Library



2019



“ I love the festival atmosphere; all the people and kids out walking in the streets!”

A photograph of two men playing trumpets on a stage. The man on the left is wearing glasses and a colorful patterned shirt, playing a purple trumpet. The man on the right is wearing a denim jacket and playing a gold trumpet. The background features a large mural of a city street scene.

“ Just seeing people I never met before come up and do something they never did before and listening to how we all came together to make one sound. It gave me hope and made me feel good that we were there to be a conduit for something positive. On this weekend nothing bad happened in Rondo. It was all good and people from all different places went home with a different view of people from other backgrounds. I guarantee it.”

“ Northern Spark is constant connection.”

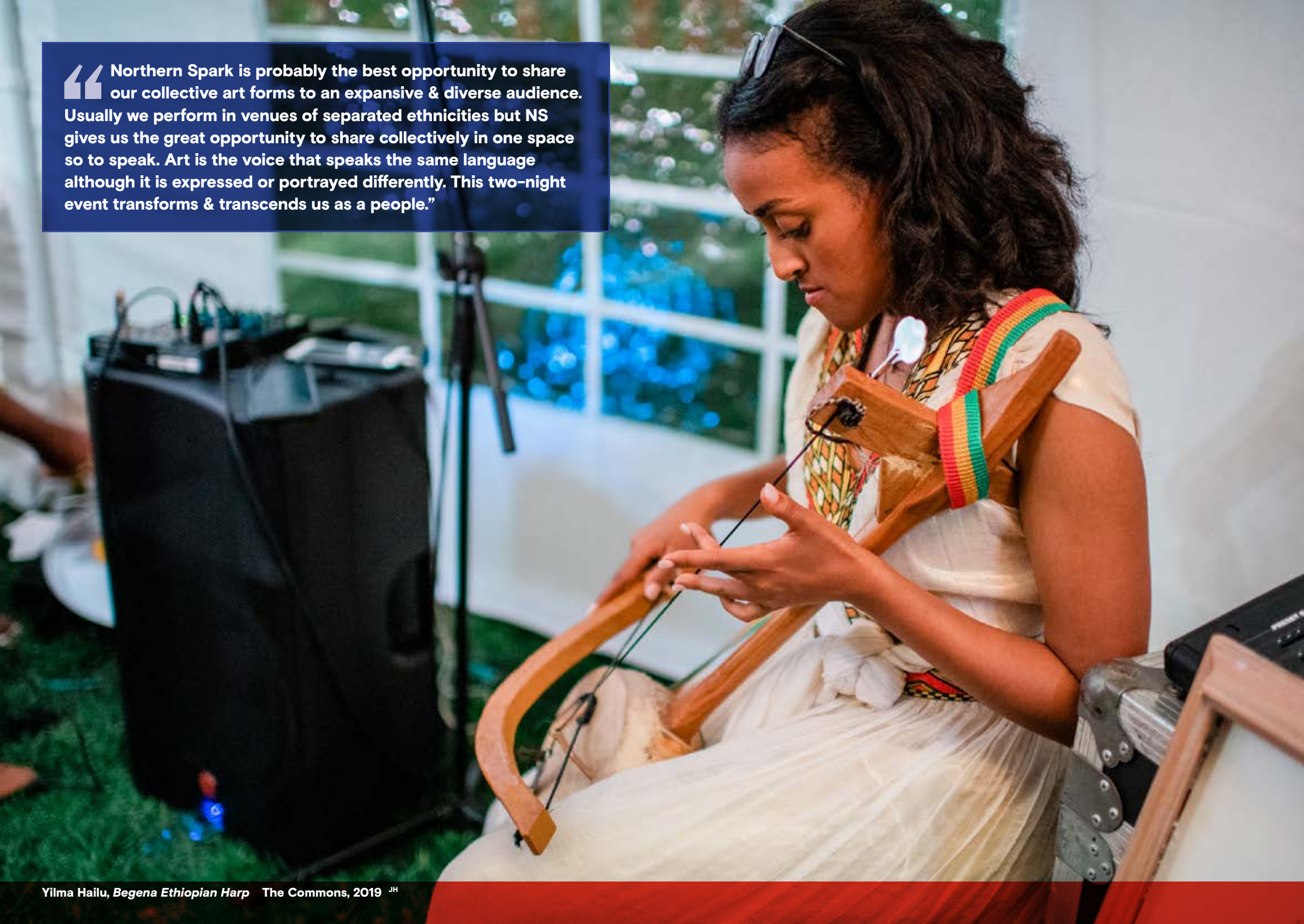




I love the way this event connects people in playful, interactive ways.”



“ Northern Spark is probably the best opportunity to share our collective art forms to an expansive & diverse audience. Usually we perform in venues of separated ethnicities but NS gives us the great opportunity to share collectively in one space so to speak. Art is the voice that speaks the same language although it is expressed or portrayed differently. This two-night event transforms & transcends us as a people.”



“ The energy is ecstatic!
Everyone has SO much energy.”





“ Although I am not Dakota and/or Ojibwe, as a member of the Native community it was amazing to see us reflected even more prominently on Franklin Ave.”



Program Council

Program Council members with Neighborhood Partners

Top row, left to right: Sara Endelew, Jonathan Palmer (Halle Q. Brown Community Center), Pa Na Lor, Donald Thomas, Alex Buffalohead, Sarah Peters (NL staff), Teeko Yang (NL staff)

Bottom row, left to right: Khadija Muse, MaryAnne Quiroz, Aki Shibata, SEE MORE PERSPECTIVE

The 2018-2019 Program Council worked with Northern Lights.mn staff to help make Northern Spark 2019 reflect the communities where it took place. They wove the festival theme together from community and Neighborhood Partner feedback, and designed, promoted and juried the open call for artists for each festival area. The Council's work over 18 months is leading Northern Lights.mn towards more equitable, community-engaged practices.

2018

“ I most like Northern Spark because it encourages us to interact with each other and our surroundings in an entirely different way than what we're used to. Fresh perspective is so necessary for us to reimagine a world that is more fair, sustainable and enjoyable for us all. By showcasing our community's creative resourcefulness, Northern Spark helps to solidify my connection with the city I love most.” —festival goer, Matt Bartholomew



“ I like how diverse the crowd is at Northern Spark.
It’s a really nice display of the city.”



2017



Preston Drum, *Traffic Jam Scene* The Commons, 2017 ^{DH}



“ I liked this year’s focus on how climate change affects various global populations, especially those with diaspora communities in Minnesota.”



“ [Northern Spark is . . .] A free open art installation event in your neighborhood! An amazing, inclusive, culturally diverse night of fun!”

“ We have a lot of power to change things with our choices. Climate change is not just a concern of the middle-class white population. Culture and environmental protection are one and the same. Northern Spark made me more aware of the intersections between climate change and race.”



“ Climate change is not an incomprehensible and sublime force, but a material, knowable, and fightable phenomenon. Art can help transition one’s understanding of it from the former to the latter.”



“ [Northern Spark is . . .] An excellent reminder of the beautiful culture and people this community has to offer.”



2016

“ I thought having a theme knit the night together beautifully, and I loved experiencing many different projects and moments as variations on a theme that, taken together, helped me think more deeply about it. Northern Spark this year provoked far and away more reflecting and connecting than it has in past years for me. I also think that there is significant potential for art to powerfully impact the way that people think about climate change, and that this year’s festival was a beautiful example of that.”

“ Northern Spark is a weirdo contemporary arts event that goes all night. It’s free and its an incomparable cultural event, one that is unique globally just to MPLS. The festival has exposed me and the community to arts that are not only fun and participatory, but also engaging people who would not normally be open to progressive contemporary arts theories and practices. Plus, they had a howling wolf!”



2015



“ Each year it becomes more and more obvious that Northern Spark is essential in our social, cultural life. It’s renewing connections, building pathways, opening spaces and revitalizing our collective self. And the magic happens only through, and out of tremendous work, energy and time devoted to it by everyone involved.”
—Piotr Szyhalski, Northern Spark artist, 2014



2014

“ I have memories of wild melding of all the performances under the Hennepin Ave bridge, which was so magical, and without the rain that grouping would not have happened. I'm in awe of the storms, the audiences who were so eager and the artists who made it work in what ever manner necessary.”

—Soozin Hirschmugl, Northern Spark artist, 2014





West River Parkway, 2014 ^{IH}



MakeSh!t, *Public Acts of Drawing* Minneapolis Convention Center Plaza, 2014 ^{WS}



Amanda Lovelee, Christopher Field, Kyle Waites, and Sarah West, *Balancing Ground* Minneapolis Convention Center Plaza, 2014 COURTESY THE ARTISTS

2013

Welcome to Union Depot
June 9, 2013

“ For me, a lot of the magic of this evening was getting to see the spaces I see every day transformed into an exuberant playground of creativity, joy, community, and celebration. I will carry those happy images and memories with me every day now when I am in Lowertown. 4th Street is no longer just the path I walk down to get to my office, it’s a giant board game! . . . as an artist myself, it was so uplifting to see so many people in one place making art, enjoying art, participating in art, interacting with art, and being art. . . .”



“ The anticipation of Chris Larson’s event was immense. I was one among a growing crowd of thousands, waiting for a flame and for a friend to show up. I wanted to experience this with someone close to me, someone who knew the story behind the burning of the house. Suddenly, without any prior cell phone communication, my friend emerged from the crowd in front of me. Five minutes later, we got we got to experience not only the glow of the successful reincarnation, but the warmth of feeling like our world was in tune with the night.”



Chris Larson, *Celebration/Love/Loss* Union Depot, 2013 ⁰¹



Chris Larson, *Celebration/Love/Loss*, artist's studio COURTESY THE ARTIST



Chris Larson, *Celebration/Love/Loss* ^{DH}



2012

“ The point of this evening is really for us to see things that are familiar and beautiful and striking but different. Looking at ourselves and our place in a unique way.”
—Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak





“ Northern Spark transformed the city of Minneapolis into an all night art playground . . . my favorite parts were swinging in synchrony with 20 strangers in a skyway, playing Capture the flag at midnight in neon face paint, and dancing with strangers in the streets.”



Keetra Dean Dixon, *Swing Hall, Swing All* MCAD, 2012 TOP: JH BOTTOM: DH



David Goldes and Jonathan Bruce Williams, *THE Northern Spark* Main Street SE, 2012 PK



Michael Murnane, *Under Ice* Main Street SE, 2012 PK

2011



“This event has tremendous opportunity to become a signature summer event for Minneapolis, much like the White Nights in St. Petersburg, *Nuit Blanche* in Paris or *Fete des Lumieres* in Lyon. There was fantastic energy on the Stone Arch Bridge—you could tell people were loving the strolling and being outside on such a beautiful night and craving artistic inspiration.”

—Tristan Pollock, *The Line*



Top: Debora Miller, *MURMUR* Stone Arch Bridge, 2011 ^{NL}
Bottom: Janaki Ranpura, *Egg & Sperm Ride :: Hide & Seek* Stone Arch Bridge, 2011 ^{PK}



The Notion Collective, *Station Identification* W Minneapolis-The Foshay, 2011 ^{PK}



Michael Murnane and Andrew Saboe, *Landmark in a River City* Landmark Center, 2011 ^{PH}

Partners 2011–2019

4 Seasons Dance Studio
African Economic Development Solutions
airsweetair gallery
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Alley Cat Cycles
Altered Esthetics
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American Craft Council
American Indian Cultural Corridor
American Swedish Institute
Ananya Dance Theater
Annicha Arts
Art Institutes International MN
Art Shanty Projects
Arts, Culture and Creative Economy
Program of the City of Minneapolis
Artspace
Asian Economic Development Association
Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood
Development Corporation
AZ Gallery
Baaken Museum
Bauhaus
Bedlam Theater
Bell Museum of Natural History
Big Table Studio
Black Dog Cafe
Brave New Workshop
Burnet Gallery
Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters
Can Can Wonderland
Catalyst Arts
Center for Energy and Environment (CEE)
Center for Hmong Art and Talent
Center for Spirituality and Healing
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Cycling Museum of Minnesota
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Douglas Dayton YMCA
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Eyeo Festival
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Forever Young
Franklin Art Works
Gallery13
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Glitch
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Guthrie Theater
Hack Factory
Hallie Q. Brown Community Center
HECUA
Hennepin County Library
Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC)
Hennepin Theater Trust
HiFi Hair and Records
High School for Recording Arts
Highpoint Center for Printmaking
Hmong Museum
innova
Institute for Advanced Study,
University of Minnesota
Intermedia Arts
Juxtaposition Arts
Key 4/4 Kids
Landmark Center and Plaza
Leav
Loft Literary Center
Lowertown Bike Shop
Lunalux
MacPhail Center for Performing Arts
Make It. MSP.
McNally Smith College of Music
Meet Minneapolis
Midtown Greenway Coalition
Migizi Communications
Mill City Museum
MINN Lab
Minneapolis American Indian Center
Minneapolis Art Lending Library (MALL)

Minneapolis Bike Coalition
Minneapolis College of Art and Design
Minneapolis Convention Center
Minneapolis Downtown Improvement District
Minneapolis Institute of Arts
Minneapolis Photography Center
Minnesota Center for Book Arts
Minnesota Children's Museum
Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Building
Minnesota History Center
Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light
Minnesota Museum of American Art
Minnesota Sacred Harp Singers
Mississippi Park Connection
Mizna
MN Orchestra
MN Original and Twin Cities PBS
MN Planetarium Society
MN350.org
martists.org
Model Cities
Motion Poems
Mpls Parks Foundation
MSP Film Society
Museum of Minneapolis
Musicant Group
Nash Gallery
Native American Community Development
Institute
Nautilus Music Theater
Northern Clay Center
Northern Voices Festival
Northrop Auditorium
On Being
Open Book
Open Eye Figure Theater
Ordway Center for Performing Arts
Palace Theater
Penumbra Theater
Printland Press
Public Art Saint Paul
PUNY
Rain Taxi Review of Books
Regis Center for the Arts
Revolver
Rondo Community Library
Saint Paul City Ballet
Saint Paul Public Library
Saint Paul Saints
Schubert Club
Science Museum of Minnesota
Screenprinting on the Cheap
Somali Museum of Minnesota
Soo Visual Arts Center
Springboard for the Arts
St. Cloud State University Art Dept
St. Paul Neighborhood Network
Students for Design Activism
Studio Sendero
Sumunar Indonesian Music and Dance
Sundance Institute
Take Action Minnesota
The Commons
The Loft Literary Center
The Museum of Russian Art
The Soap Factory
The Southern Theater
The Textile Center
The UpTake
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/ Beijing Film Academy
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This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support and Arts Access grants, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.



NORDSTROM



Neighborhood Partners 2017–2019



ARTS, CULTURE AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY
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AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURAL CORRIDOR



Video Highlights

Northern Spark 2019

<https://vimeo.com/northernspark>



Northern Spark 2018

<https://vimeo.com/297152679>



Northern Spark 2017

<https://vimeo.com/233936253>



More videos: <http://vimeo.com/northernspark>

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