



## **A YEAR IN REVIEW: JULY 2021—JUNE 2022**

WBUR is working with our community to increase our impact on Boston and the world. Through CitySpace at the Lavine Broadcast Center, WBUR brings the public together to help break down barriers. Just like our on-air content, CitySpace programming is varied and multidimensional.

This past year, WBUR CitySpace continued to monitor COVID trends and state requirements with respect to vaccines and masking. Fall of 2021 saw full capacity events; early 2022 then again saw half-capacity. Now, WBUR has successfully and firmly landed in a place where all events are in person at full capacity and all non-concert events also are live-streamed.



Guests applaud while watching “Tell me more: Misty Copeland and the ballerinas of the 152nd Street Black Ballet legacy” on December 1, 2021. (Liz Linder for WBUR)

**WBUR CitySpace is a public “town hall” for intellectual inquiry and civic conversation — focusing on the key issues our region faces.**

The preliminary mayoral debate on September 9 is just one example. The five major Boston mayoral hopefuls — John Barros, Andrea Campbell, Annissa Essaibi George, Kim Janey and Michelle Wu — gathered in CitySpace to square off on how they would handle the ongoing pandemic, the opioid crisis, city schools and the lack of affordable housing. While we did not allow audiences in the building at this point in the year, more than 2,600 people tuned in to watch the debate live. This event was our biggest virtual audience to date, and the number does not include the many more listening on the radio, those watching via our partners, or the people who gathered outside in the rain, watching through the glass from Comm Ave. under umbrellas!



Before the Sept. 14 primary election in 2021, five of the mayoral candidates faced one another in a live debate at CitySpace. (Jesse Costa/WBUR)

We carried the debate live on our air and on [wbur.org](http://wbur.org). Two of our partners, The Boston Globe and WCVB Channel 5, simulcast the debate on their sites, and the third, John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at UMass Boston, held a watch party. The debate was covered widely across the Boston media.

We hosted individual town halls with Essaibi George and Wu after the primaries so that the community could get to know them better and have the opportunity to ask deeper questions.

As we look to the gubernatorial race this fall, we partnered with The Environmental League

of Massachusetts (ELM) in April to host a lively and engaging candidate forum on energy and the environment, with State Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz and Attorney General Maura Healey — both Democrats are vying to be the next governor of Massachusetts. (We invited the leading Republican candidates too, but they opted not to participate.) In their online story on the forum, Miriam Wasser and Roberto Scalse opened with a perfect summary — “plenty of agreement, with flashes of future campaign clashes.”

Earlier in the spring, WBUR quickly responded to current events by putting together a town hall-style forum to address the unfolding crisis in Ukraine. *Radio Boston* host Tiziana Dearing was joined by international politics experts to discuss what was at stake at home and abroad as Russia intensified its attacks on Ukrainian cities. This type of public service journalism is what CitySpace provides to our community: greater understanding and context as well as the opportunity to engage more deeply with the world around us.

**CitySpace brings the public face-to-face with authors, artists, educators, and a wide range of cultural icons.**

These events included a conversation with world-renowned chef Jacques Pépin, a discussion about psychoactive plants with author Michael Pollan and the return of WBUR’s *The ARTery 25*.

The *ARTery 25* in September was a celebration of more than two dozen emerging artists of color who are influencing Boston’s cultural scene. The event was the culmination of a weeklong multiplatform editorial series from WBUR’s arts and culture team, with dynamic performances and presentations that showcased a wide range of talented creators, from dancers and DJs to designers. And the artists’ work often transcended traditional labels — mixed media, multimedia and transdisciplinary. The goal, as Managing Editor Maria Garcia told the audience, was “to celebrate expression in its many forms, to connect with each other.”



The 2021 *ARTery 25* artists, live in CitySpace on Sept. 23, 2021. (Liz Linder for WBUR)



Misty Copeland with fellow ballerinas Lydia Abarca-Mitchell, Sheila Rohan, Gayle McKinney Griffith, Karlya Shelton-Benjamin in CitySpace on Dec. 1, 2021. (Liz Linder for WBUR)

The significance of those connections echoed in another CitySpace conversation in December, when Misty Copeland, the first Black female principal dancer with the prestigious American Ballet Theatre, joined four other trailblazing ballerinas whose careers crystallized at the Dance Theatre of Harlem in the 1970s. This event was an installment of “Tell Me More!” — a monthly series that paired fascinating leaders in their respective fields for conversations about their journeys, inspirations and life lessons.

Pépin’s visit was part of the popular “Curated Cuisine” series. “Curated Cuisine” is a monthly series where renowned chefs, both local and national, share their food philosophy, their career journeys, and what they learned during the pandemic. Local restaurateurs Biplaw Rai and Kwasi Kwaa joined guests in March. Their new restaurant, Comfort Kitchen, celebrates the flavors and ingredients of the African diaspora and is set to open in Boston later this year.

Additional cultural icons include “The Good Place” creator Michael Schur, who joined us for his second sold-out show at CitySpace in conversation with Lydia Moland, professor of philosophy at Colby College. They discussed his new book, “How To Be Perfect: The Correct Answer to Every Moral Question.” 2020 Booker Prize Winner Douglas Stuart also joined CitySpace to discuss his second novel, “Young Mungo,” a vivid portrayal of working-class life and a deeply moving and highly suspenseful story of the dangerous first love of two young men.



A child dances in the aisle at CitySpace during the Podcast Playdate on April 23, 2022.  
(Liz Linder for WBUR)

**WBUR CitySpace serves new and diverse audiences, contributing to the cultural vitality of Boston.**

And this includes children and their families! The Mega Awesome Super Huge Wicked Fun Podcast Playdate was a two-day festival in April that packed CitySpace with kids and families who soaked up live performances from their favorite podcasts — WBUR’s *Circle Round*, APM’s *Brains On!*, Vermont Public Radio’s *But Why* and Gimlet’s *Story Pirates*. The kidcasters explored topics like the magic of how our brains work, a day in the life of farm animals, the lessons of folk tales from around the world and the joy of kids’ comedy sketches. Families drove all the way from Washington, D.C. for the experience. We’re already planning out next year’s festival.

A new two-part pilot series launched this summer, too. WBUR’s Youth Takeover empowers high school and college students through conversations and deep exploration of issues specific to today’s youth culture, as led by young people themselves. A 12-station cohort is conducting youth programs as part of the Next Gen Public Media Accelerator through the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop; WBUR is the only one working with youth to develop events.

The first event took place in June, after the deadly shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, TX. An urgent appeal for gun control measures has again entered the national spotlight and often missing from the conversation are the voices of students. The discussion at CitySpace featured youth voices from Boston and was led by CitySpace student moderator Dawry Ruiz. They addressed the current school climate in Boston and what it is like

to live through an unprecedented time while expected to learn and organize. This event was virtual and viewers included local school classes and groups. The next event, scheduled for July, will be hybrid.

A grant from the National Endowment for the Arts has helped WBUR reach additional people the radio waves haven't historically drawn in. Their support has funded the CitySpace series "Ones to Watch: Boston's Emerging Artists." The eight-part series features artists across an array of genres: dance, music, performance art, poetry and film. The events have attracted a younger and more racially and economically diverse crowd, one that is more closely aligned with the population of Boston and one that is so far less familiar with WBUR's programming.

These events have included performances by Fabiola Mendez, the first student to graduate from Berklee College of Music with the Puerto Rican cuatro as a principal instrument; Porsha Olayiwola, poet laureate for the City of Boston; MASARY, a public and performing arts collective whose work resides at the intersection of sound and light expressions; and Veronica Robles, mariachi singer and founder of the first female mariachi band in Boston.

Similarly, "Sound On," highlights rising local musicians. Reporter Amelia Mason and arts and culture team contributors profile emerging local musicians on-air, online and onstage with live performances at CitySpace. "Sound On" artists run the gamut from fresh faces new on the scene and experiencing a meteoric rise, to tried-and-true musicians who've been around for decades and are creating their most resonant work to date. On June 9, Mason emceed an installment featuring Squirrel Flower. Rolling Stone recently named lead singer Ella Williams an "artist you need to know."



*From top to bottom: "Ones To Watch: Shattering the glass ceiling with mariachi singer Veronica Robles" on March 24, 2022; Alisa Amador, winner of NPR's Tiny Desk Concert competition, performs at the WBUR Gala on May 25; the Fabiola Mendez Trio kicks off the first night of the three-night gala series on May 24. (Liz Linder for WBUR)*

WBUR reporters continue to recognize CitySpace as a valuable tool in their journalistic toolbox. Darryl C. Murphy, WBUR *Consider This* host, pitched and moderated his first event with author Dan Charnas about the hip-hop genius J Dilla. The subject and event merited a Boston Globe feature by James Sullivan. And Charnas, a BU alum, praised the whole experience saying “It was the best run, most careful [event] production I’ve ever experienced.”

**CitySpace strengthens our community by fostering collaboration through partnership with local arts, cultural, community and academic organizations.**

This year, the Independent Film Festival Boston (IFF) returned in person after three years — and screened at CitySpace for the first time. WBUR was a lead partner in the film series. IFF Boston brings directors, actors, producers, sponsors and attendees together in an interactive environment, a mission that resonates deeply with that of WBUR and CitySpace. As part of the May festival, reporter Deborah Becker interviewed Tia Lessin and Emma Pildes, directors of the documentary, “The Janes,” the story of a group of unlikely outlaws who built an underground service for women seeking safe, affordable, illegal abortions in Chicago in the 1970s.



Deb Becker moderated a conversation as part of the Independent Film Festival on May 3. (Candice Springer for WBUR)

WBUR is also a longtime media partner of The Boston Book Festival, and this year was no different. The festival celebrates the power of words to stimulate, agitate, unite, delight and inspire by holding year-round events culminating in the annual, free festival — a mission that aligns closely to the work of WBUR and CitySpace specifically.

Call to Mind, American Public Media’s mental health content initiative, partnered with WETA’s Well Beings Tour to bring critical local conversations about youth mental health to cities nationwide — and WBUR CitySpace was proud to co-produce this final stop on the tour.

*Here & Now* co-host Scott Tong moderated a discussion about understanding and navigating the mental health gaps in community college. Guests included U.S. Surgeon General

Dr. Vivek Murthy, board-certified psychiatrist and associate professor at Harvard Medical School Dr. Alexander Tsai, and director of social services at Amarillo College Jordan Herrera.

Other frequent community collaborations included Boston University Programs in Food and Wine, The Boston Globe, Brookline Booksmith, Porter Square Books, The Moth, Rosie's Place, Science Friday and WCVB. The Environmental League of Massachusetts, KUOW and New York Historical Society were new collaborators this year.

This year, WBUR strengthened its community by more deeply engaging members through CitySpace. For the first time, we hosted member-exclusive events. The first, in October, celebrated and explored Bob Oakes' 30-year career as host of WBUR *Morning Edition*; in February, Meghna Chakrabarti illuminated her career journey. A gift of any amount throughout the course of the year makes the donor a WBUR member, meaning these events are accessible to the wider community.

**CitySpace is an extension of WBUR's high-quality journalism — live, engaging and on-stage.**

For example, WBUR is committed to making environmental issues a larger part of people's conversation, helping listeners connect seemingly disparate issues such as climate change, public health, energy, ecology and infrastructure. CitySpace has helped to make this possible.

As part of our Earth Week coverage in April, environmental reporter Miriam Wasser hosted a conversation about the promises and pitfalls of offshore wind in New England. In June, environmental correspondent Barbara Moran hosted a conversation exploring the importance of local food, an extension of the new WBUR environmental pop-up newsletter, Cooked. The event was co-produced with Grist, a nonprofit, independent media organization dedicated to telling stories of climate solutions and a just future. Funding for both environmental events was provided in part by the Devonshire Foundation.



Miriam Wasser discusses offshore wind with guests (from left to right): Mass. State Rep. Liz Miranda; policy lead for the Black Economic Council of Mass. Darien Johnson; Mass liaison for Vineyard Wind Dana Rebeiro. (Jesse Costa/WBUR)



WBUR national shows also take advantage of the opportunities CitySpace provides. Hosts bring their content to life in new ways, engaging directly with listeners in person in Boston. When *Here & Now* launched its newest narrative audio series “The Great Wager,” about President Nixon’s 1972 diplomatic trip to meet Mao Zedong, co-host Scott Tong and former New York Times Beijing Bureau Chief Jane Perlez explored the artistic fruits of diplomatic history in CitySpace.

They were joined virtually by Peter Sellars, director of the Metropolitan Opera’s “Nixon in China” (2011), and in person by novelist Gish Jen, whose new short story collection “Thank you, Mr. Nixon” probes the way the opening of China has affected the lives of ordinary people. The group discussed the political impact of Nixon’s historic visit and the imaginative and creative journeys it inspired. This event was supported in part by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation.

*On Point* has taken to the stage, too. This past fall, host Meghna Chakrabarti and senior editor Dorey Scheimer invited audience members behind the scenes of their series “The Prime Effect.” The series explored the ways Amazon is changing the way we live, work and shop and Tim Bray, former vice president and distinguished engineer at Amazon Web Services who resigned last summer over the firing of Amazon employee activists, joined the two in CitySpace. In May, Chakrabarti hosted a conversation focused on the future of human and animal interaction with artificial intelligence and robots to coincide with *On Point*’s four-part series exploring how AI and machine learning may revolutionize the healthcare industry.



2021 Nobel Peace Prize winner and journalist Maria Ressa traveled from the Philippines to discuss the threats to independent journalism around the world with Meghna Chakrabarti and guests of the 2022 WBUR Gala. This year was the first WBUR gala in CitySpace at the Lavine Broadcast Center. (Liz Linder for WBUR)

## **CitySpace plays a critical role in WBUR's future.**

In the next year, CitySpace will continue to develop events and series that resonate with our community — with a special focus on conversations around timely topics that will excite our growing audience and make them eager to engage with WBUR.

CitySpace's new "Phenomenal Women" series, moderated by host Tiziana Dearing, spotlights women leaders in a variety of fields — most of which have been historically dominated by men.

Dearing is the consummate and ideal interlocutor for this series and *Radio Boston* has already showcased the first two events on its airwaves. Beginning in October, CitySpace will host one of these events each month. So far, the focus has been on women in science. The CitySpace team will branch out and invite women who have risen to the top of their professions — from athletes coaching major league sports to journalists transforming newsrooms, to artists reclaiming women's voices — to share their stories.

Another new series and focus in the upcoming year is "Remarkable Science." In this monthly series, Meghna Chakrabarti will take questions from the public and dive deep with researchers, scientists and innovators. WBUR will take advantage of the rich knowledge and expertise within the Boston scientific community to offer audiences access to the people and information behind the advances in this technological hub. Potential guests and topic ideas for future events include local Rhodes Scientists; conversations about the longevity of human life with Harvard researchers and authors; discussions around CRISPR advancements; and developments in curing HIV. We want people to attend "Remarkable Science" events because they know the topics affect their day-to-day lives and they want to learn more.

The WBUR podcast team has a variety of new projects planned for the upcoming year, almost all of which will include an event to bring the content to life and allow the community to more deeply engage. One fun example is a choose-your-own adventure storytelling event with a disaster movie twist. The CitySpace audience will be tasked with making decisions to stop a potential climate event, similar to the unique choose-your-own adventure podcast slated to premiere this fall, "Great Job, Everyone."

Other planned events are debates around upcoming local primaries and elections, including the state attorney general race and the race for lieutenant governor. CitySpace also will build off the success of this year's environmental events by developing a three-part series for Earth Week in April 2023. The events planned will include one program aimed at children.

Senior producer Steven Davy will continue to work closely as WBUR newsroom liaison to produce events for local newsroom projects and coverage — similar to the April event with senior investigative editor-reporter Christine Willmsen and the WBUR Investigations team. They pulled back the curtain on their investigation into civil asset forfeiture and what's happening on Beacon Hill to address the shortfalls of the system. Both the investigative series and the event were supported by the Pulitzer Center.

## THANK YOU

CitySpace at The Lavine Broadcast Center is the embodiment of WBUR's mission to inform, challenge and enrich the human experience. CitySpace is inspiration, learning, provocative ideas and challenging conversations that enhance all of our lives. WBUR is committed to creating widespread awareness about the critical issues that we face and the overall success of CitySpace is reflected in a public that is better informed.

This is only possible with your support. Thank you for your belief and your partnership.

