



A YEAR IN REVIEW: JULY 2022-JUNE 2023

CitySpace at The Lavine Broadcast Center is the embodiment of WBUR’s mission to produce high-quality journalism and enriching experiences that foster understanding, connection and community. WBUR events bring people inside the journalism with luminaries from Boston and beyond. CitySpace is WBUR on stage.

In many ways, this past year was the most impressive yet for CitySpace and WBUR’s live programs. With almost 100 events hosted by WBUR in CitySpace at The Lavine Broadcast Center covering a wide variety of topics — from politics to climate change to gun control, with some music and food thrown in — CitySpace programming is hitting its stride.



Darryl C. Murphy, host of WBUR’s daily podcast, *The Common*, opens up a sold-out show in CitySpace. (WBUR Staff)

CitySpace plays a critical role in bringing WBUR’s journalism to life, helping different members of our community understand the most important stories of the day

The past year was the first full year with CitySpace’s senior producer, Steven Davy. As the COVID-19 pandemic waned in 2021 and CitySpace opened up for live events again, director Amy Macdonald saw the need for an experienced journalist to produce WBUR content for the stage. Davy works closely with Macdonald and assistant director Candice Springer to conceive, produce and deliver the rich and exciting lineup of editorial programs. Additionally, he attends the daily WBUR newsroom meetings and WBUR editors are growing to see CitySpace as an outreach of their journalism.

WBUR hosts and reporters serve as the moderators for the majority of CitySpace events. A future goal is to provide opportunities for additional editorial staff to moderate, enabling them to grow their skills in this area. Darryl C. Murphy, the host of WBUR’s local daily news podcast *The Common*, is quickly becoming a fan favorite. Murphy debuted at CitySpace with a member-exclusive podcast kick-off event in August 2022, and his close partnership with CitySpace has continued — assistant director Candice Springer is featured monthly on *The Common* [to highlight upcoming CitySpace events and community happenings](#).

Here & Now, WBUR and NPR’s midday news magazine program, is also a strong collaborator with CitySpace. Conversations with *Here & Now* hosts on the CitySpace stage are edited and prepared for broadcast, which greatly expands the reach of the venue. *Here & Now* is the fourth most-listened-to public radio show in the country, reaching approximately 4.6 million people on 477 public radio stations nationwide each week. On-demand segments from the daily broadcast are downloaded an average of 2.2 million times per month.

Former child star [Jennette McCurdy’s sold-out conversation with host Robin Young in October 2022 about her memoir, “I’m Glad My Mom Died,”](#) was the most downloaded segment of the year for *Here & Now*. The event also attracted a much younger audience from most WBUR programs, introducing this group to CitySpace and WBUR programming.



Robin Young interviews Jennette McCurdy at CitySpace. (Liz Linder for WBUR)

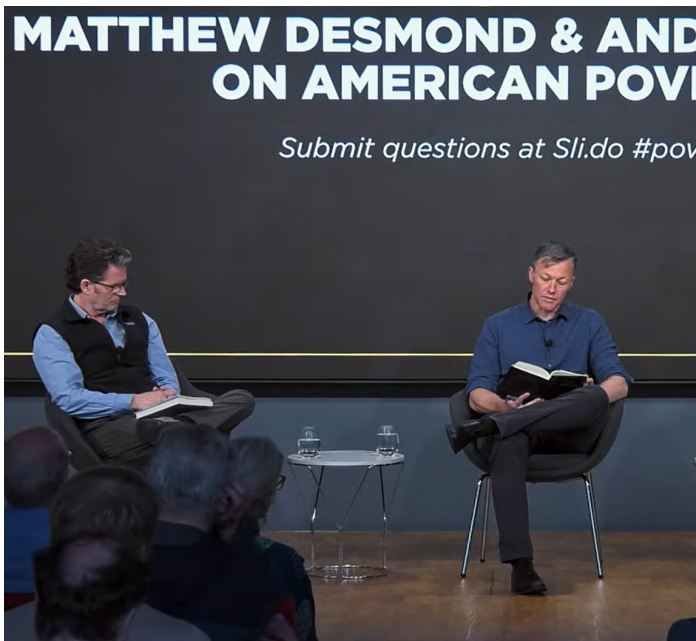


David Hogg and Anthony Brooks discuss gun control at CitySpace. (WBUR Staff)

This past year's wide-ranging topics meant WBUR CitySpace had something for everyone. From breaking news to digging into timely topics to discovering new voices, WBUR live programming has proven varied, relevant and unique. In addition to the other programs mentioned in this report, some highlights include:

- [A conversation with gun control activist David Hogg](#)
- [The Longest Race: Olympian Kara Goucher on her new memoir](#)
- [Democracy under threat: Brian Stelter on the news industry's future](#)
- [Screaming on the Inside: New York Times reporter Jessica Grose with professor and author Emily Oster on the unsustainability of American motherhood](#)

WBUR content produced into live events includes the annual celebration of [The Makers: 15 artists of color leaving an imprint on Massachusetts](#), which took place in September. [The 10th anniversary of WBUR's ideas and opinion page, Cognescenti](#), was also recognized in CitySpace. Since 2012, *Cognescenti* has evolved into a resource where people find ideas, connection, advice and humanity on local and national issues. The special evening featured readings, performances and video from *Cognescenti* contributors and other community leaders. Both events are natural extensions of WBUR's journalism and are strengthening the WBUR brand with their presence in CitySpace.



From left to right: Andre Dubus III and Matthew Desmond on American poverty; journalist Maggie Haberman. (WBUR Staff)

Strategic programming decisions resulted in many sold-out shows this year

The strong audience turnout highlights the hunger for wide-ranging conversations that go deep, provide context and teach something new.

- In September, *Here & Now* host Robin Young interviewed [NPR's Nina Totenberg about her nearly fifty-year friendship with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg](#).
- In October, [journalist Maggie Haberman shared insights into her many years covering the 45th president](#) with Young through a conversation about her book, "The Confidence Man."
- More recently, Young moderated [a sold-out conversation with authors Matthew Desmond and Andre Dubus III](#). Both of their books offer compassionate portrayals of what it is like to experience poverty — in essence, fictional and non-fictional mirror images of the same topic.

These events, focused on big names in journalism, politics and academia, are topics and discussions for which many listeners and readers depend on WBUR. At the same time, sold-out success also came to CitySpace with topics and speakers that attracted brand-new audiences to WBUR.

- Our own host Jack Lepiarz, who recently left his journalism career to join the circus (yes, it's true), performed his now world-famous whip show under the pseudonym "Jacques Ze Whipper" to back-to-back crowds in January. Lepiarz' fame grew after his appearance in this past season of "America's Got Talent."
- In March, CitySpace turned into a dance hall! As the host of *iCon Salsa!*, WBUR's late night Saturday show, José Massó has brought the sound of salsa music and Latin jazz

to Greater Boston for 48 years. Massó introduced the show to CitySpace with a salsa dance lesson followed by a conversation moderated by WBUR reporter Simón Ríos, and more dancing and live music. Tapas were provided by local Cambridge restaurant, La Fabrica Central.

By experimenting with a variety of events, all of which create community and connection — in addition to informing and inspiring — WBUR is able to more deeply engage with the public and fulfill its mission through CitySpace.

WBUR is focused on creating and expanding event series that resonate with our community

The “Curated Cuisine” series has quickly become a favorite and continues to grow in local and national reputation. The monthly events examine all things food, from the chefs cooking to the writers reviewing the recipes. WBUR audiences meet the people shaping the industry before enjoying a tasting inspired by the conversation. Chefs [Jacques Pépin](#), [Tiffani Faison](#) and [Ming Tsai](#) each spoke to a full house. The Tsai event inspired additional commentary in the community about harmful work environments within the restaurant industry, [with coverage in The Boston Globe](#) and viral social media clips. The ensuing controversy, in addition to the [breaking news about toxic work environments in Barbara Lynch’s restaurants](#), helped inform the WBUR event, [“A Reckoning in Restaurants: Combating Toxic Culture in the Food Service Industry.”](#) Looking forward, CitySpace will continue to respond to timely news of relevance to the community.



Janelle Nanos (business enterprise reporter, Boston Globe), Irene Li (co-founder, Mei Mei Dumplings), Hannah Selinger (James Beard Award-nominated writer), Hassel Aviles (Executive Director, Not 9 to 5), with Robin Young. (WBUR Staff)

Tiziana Dearing, host of *Radio Boston*, WBUR's one-hour daily public affairs show, often excerpts her on-stage conversations for broadcast, in addition to using the full one-hour conversation during holiday periods when the live broadcast is on a break. This year included the "Phenomenal Women" series, which invited women who have risen to the top of their professions to share their stories — from scientists researching how our brains work to artists reclaiming women's voices. In October and November 2022, Dearing interviewed [entrepreneur Deborah Torres from Shark Tank fame](#) and [dancer and choreographer Ayodele Casel](#). CitySpace hopes to reprise a special "Phenomenal Women" series during Women's History Month in 2024.

CitySpace also produced three events in its "Remarkable Science" series this year. In "Remarkable Science," *On Point* host Meghna Chakrabarti dives into discussions with researchers, scientists and innovators to offer audiences access to what's behind the scientific advances in our region — world-renowned as a hub of science and technology. The two December events focused on [longevity](#) and [aging](#), and *On Point* used the series to provide unique podcast-only content to its listeners. *On Point* is WBUR's most-downloaded and listened-to podcast, with over 1.5M downloads each month —another example of how CitySpace programming reaches far beyond the audience in the room.

The "Sound On" series, which highlights local up-and-coming artists, continued this year with [the sold-out concert featuring the 2022 NPR Tiny Desk winner, Alisa Amador](#), and the recent June music festival headlined by singer-songwriter Miranda Rae. Rae's rich and adventurous vocal range led to a Boston Music Award for R&B Artist of the Year in 2020 and an invitation to perform at the Boston Calling music festival in 2022.

CitySpace expanded "Sound On" with "Sound On Global," and audiences have requested its return. The spinoff featured instrumental artists exploring music from around the world, such as folk tales from South America to compositions by indigenous tribes. April's event ["Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol with George Lernis and A Far Cry present "A Gentleman of Istanbul"](#) was one of the most popular in this series.

Through CitySpace, WBUR meets audiences — particularly younger audiences — where they are with live events

In April 2023, WBUR programmed a week's worth of events tied to Earth Day, which also coincided with Massachusetts public schools' vacation week. These events included a Science Fair for families in partnership with [Science Friday](#); an ambitious and fun "Choose Your Own Adventure" climate disaster event hosted by WBUR Podcasts; and a Climate Hope concert with music, videos and testimonials from climate activists.

WBUR's Children's Podcast Festival returned in April 2023 to build upon its previous success. Five top-rated children's podcasts performed live, including WBUR's *Circle Round*. The event quickly sold out and families have let us know that they're eager for more of this type of programming.

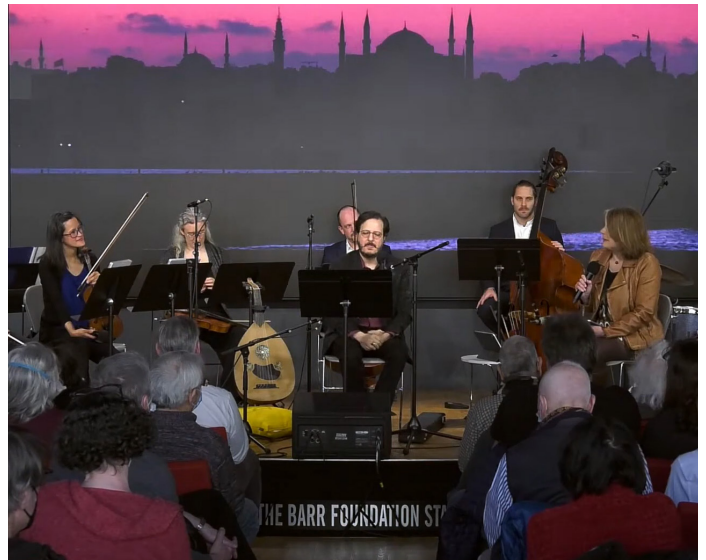
[Circle Round](#) on its own has inspired additional CitySpace events as the podcast gains traction with book publications and the recent launch of the Circle Round Kids Club. With three CitySpace book launch events under its belt and the popularity of the podcast festival, the success at CitySpace has inspired the Circle Round team to take the show on the road. Events in Los Angeles and Washington D.C. have already been met with rave reviews, with more to come.

A new monthly series showcases top performing podcast hosts recording live shows. In June 2023, WBUR was the first stop for “Vibe Check” on its (also first!) live tour. “Vibe Check,” a weekly podcast hosted by Sam Sanders (journalist and host of Vulture’s “Into It”), Saeed Jones (poet and essayist, “How We Fight For Our Lives,” “Alive at the End of the World”) and Zach Stafford (journalist and Tony Award-winning producer, “A Strange Loop”) was named one of the top podcasts of 2022 by the New York Times. A full house listened to Jones and Stafford dissect entertainment, politics and everything in between through a Black, queer lens. [The series continues with “Mortified” live in August.](#) CitySpace’s excellent acoustics and technical capabilities enable recording with a live audience without sacrificing audio quality — making this series an easy ‘yes’ for many podcast hosts.

Partnerships are critical to the fulfillment of WBUR’s public service mission

Partnerships bolster WBUR’s editorial muscle and subject matter expertise, enabling us to reach new audiences, expand the impact of our work and better serve the community.

In August 2022, WBUR partnered with WCVB Channel 5 and The Boston Globe to host five live debates in the primary races for lieutenant



From top to bottom: “A Gentleman of Istanbul,” a collaboration with composer Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol and Boston’s self-conducted chamber orchestra A Far Cry; a child poses in front of Circle Round artwork; a full house watching performers at the Children’s Podcast Festival. (Jess Basile for WBUR)

CRATIC PRIMARY D



Andrea Campbell, Shannon Liss-Riordan and Quentin Palfrey on stage for the Democratic primary attorney general debate. (WBUR Staff)

governor, secretary of state, attorney general and auditor. The debates featured candidates from both parties in the primary races for lieutenant governor, in addition to the Democratic candidates in primary races for the other three roles. [The attorney general debate](#) as well as the [Republican](#) and [Democratic](#) lieutenant governor debates were held at WBUR’s CitySpace. The debates were livestreamed on WBUR.org, WCVB.com, BostonGlobe.com, and New England Public Media websites.

[The Huntington Theatre collaborated with WBUR in June 2023 to produce an important conversation on “The Lehman Legacy.”](#) The sold-out event featured local scholars discussing the Lehman Brothers’ 163-year history: from a dry goods store to an infamous investment firm. The conversation explored the effects of modern capitalism and the social and historical forces that surround this epic American story. The collaboration — inspired by The Huntington Theatre’s production of the 2022 Tony Award Winner for Best Play, “The Lehman Trilogy” — shows how powerful these community connections can be.

In addition to the partnerships mentioned previously, Brookline Booksmith, an independent local book store, is the primary bookseller for CitySpace author events. Boston University also remains a strong collaborator. The BU Food & Wine Program supports “Curated Cuisine” by preparing tastings from the featured chef’s cookbook or restaurant, and CitySpace is the Presenting Partner of BU’s annual Power of Narrative Conference. This year’s opening night program, [“Listen Up: NPR Embedded’s “Capital Gazette” with Kelly McEvers and Chris Benderev,”](#) was held in CitySpace. WBUR is proud to be one of two local hosts for the rotating The Moth StorySLAM series, and these monthly events consistently sell out. Local community organizations including Facing History and Ourselves, Neighborhood Villages, Cambridge Science Festival, and Rosie’s Place enable us to engage with new audiences in new ways.

CitySpace plays a critical role in WBUR's future

WBUR has one of the strongest local newsrooms in the country and is a leader in the public media system. While other newsrooms have pulled back, we have doubled-down on our journalism. At the same time, WBUR understands that our public service journalism must evolve and respond to the changing needs of the community. As a result of your insight and early support, CitySpace helps make this possible.

With cutting-edge conversations, adventurous performances and innovative ideas, CitySpace gives those in our community the opportunity to find common ground, gather new perspectives and put names and faces to the voices they've come to trust on air and online.

WBUR seeks to be the most trusted and beloved source for local news in Boston and beyond. CitySpace plays a crucial role. Thank you for supporting this valuable community resource.



Steven Davy, CitySpace senior producer, calls the 2023 WBUR gala from the booth.
(Liz Linder for WBUR)