



## ***City Theatre Response to the We See You White American Theater Demands***

In response to the [We See You White American Theater Demands](#) (WSYWAT), City Theatre Company is releasing this initial statement detailing our process for the creation of an organizational anti-racism plan and outlining commitments addressing the imperative demands put forth by WSYWAT organizers. We acknowledge our shared participation in a culture of racist and anti-black violence as well as practices in our field and in our organization that must change in order to ensure a more just and equitable future. We stand in solidarity with people working to bring change in greater equity, diversity, inclusion and access here in Pittsburgh, in this country, and around the globe. The Board and staff of City Theatre further commit to working to dismantle the structures of racism and the white supremacist culture that is endemic to the theater industry at large and within our own organization. We fully understand that bold action and public accountability are vital to achieving these goals. In outlining our response, we look to continue a transparent process for transformation beginning by detailing our past, current, and future practices.

First and foremost, we would like to extend our appreciation and gratitude to the writers of the We See You White American Theater demands. This incredibly robust and comprehensive document is a catalyst for conversation and change and a valuable resource to our organization – and the field writ large – as we move the work forward.

### **City Theatre's Vision, Mission & Core Values**

**Vision:** Every day, we work to create the finest mid-sized theatre in America.

**Mission:** to provide an artistic home for the development and production of contemporary plays of substance and ideas that engage and challenge diverse audiences.

**Values:**

**COMMUNITY:** We believe in nurturing and sustaining the multiple communities that grow around live theatre- audiences, artists, and staff. We believe that our work should reflect these communities and that within which we live.

**COLLABORATION:** The heart of theatre is the collaborative process where all voices are valued in the creation of work that is greater than the sum of its parts.

**EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY:** City Theatre will center equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility practices in its programming, organizational culture, and community engagement.

**CREATIVITY:** We believe that the creative spirit is essential to civilization and that stories matter.

### **Our Past**

Throughout its 46-year history, City Theatre has existed in a white supremacist society in a city that has a challenging record of racist practices and culture impacting people of color. As a progressive mid-sized theatre company, we have attempted to address and respond to these societal issues through diversity in casting and programming, though we have fallen short of the goals outlined in

the We See You demands. The leadership of staff and board has been largely white and have failed to match the diversity of our city or the country at large. In spite of good intentions, mistakes have been made and our shortcomings have been noted. We deeply regret the pain, exclusion, and insecurity that this history has caused or amplified for our staff, artists and audiences.

Two years ago, we began to intentionally center Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility in all our practices, adding these principles to our company values. As part of this work, hiring and recruitment practices have been over-hauled; a demographic baseline for artists, board, and staff has been established to guide change in the future; and both staff and board EDIA committees were formed and continue to meet working both internally and with the community for change. In addition, this work has included consultant-led retreats for board and staff, outside organizational assessments, and the hiring of production specific EDI consultants. Most recently, we have started the process to form a coalition of local organizations to work with artEquity on community wide issues in a long-term consultancy.

We have endeavored to be transparent and inclusive with this initial response to the WSYWAT demands and commit to always being so. We developed a process that included weekly interdepartmental breakout groups, followed by full staff meetings to discuss each individual WSYWAT demand, culminating in a growing list of action items. This process was mirrored at the board level via the board EDIA committee, which is now a standing committee whose chair will sit on the board's Executive committee. In addition, we hosted a meeting including furloughed and part time staff as well as frequent artistic collaborators, inviting them to add their voice to this statement.

While our work is ongoing, we recognize that much necessary change lies directly in front of us.

### **The Present**

Over the past seven months, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed an existential threat to the viability of the theater field. Unable to perform indoors, the company has tried to fulfill its mission with reduced staff and on-line programming, as well as operating a live outdoor drive-in venue while the weather permitted. As we prepare for a long winter, our budget is likely to be nearly 40% of what it was before the shutdown. With this uncertainty in mind, the committees of the staff and board have divided the WSYWAT demands into three groups:

- 1) Change we will implement and commit to immediately.
- 2) Change we commit to when greater resources become available.
- 3) Change that requires further internal clarification and study.

As we move forward in these turbulent times, we are guided by our commitments to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility and to the mission and core values of our company. We recognize that living up to these commitments will necessitate significant change at the company within the next five years.

Below is a detailed outline sharing the WSYWAT demands City Theatre will be addressing immediately, as well as an outline for the company's on-going work and process for creating a full anti-racism plan by the target date of June 2021. These steps provide a framework for the task ahead of us and we look forward to engaging in robust discussions with both local and national communities in holding the theater field accountable to the goals and actions stated in this document.

## **Our Immediate Commitments**

### **Cultural Competency**

- Land acknowledgements are currently read at first rehearsals, first technical rehearsal, and major meetings that include board, staff, and guests from outside of the organization. When the theatre reopens, these acknowledgements will be displayed in all public spaces and will include the recognition of BIPOC toil and labor inherent in our history.
- Past artists and collaborators will be invited to provide feedback to the organization anonymously via a voluntary "City Theatre EDIA Survey. This feedback will be used to inform future action items related to an organizational anti-racism plan.
- Staff EDIA training began two years ago at City Theatre at an introductory level. We commit to expanding budget lines to ensure required ongoing EDIA and anti-racism training for staff, board, and volunteers.
- In service of fostering community and transparency, we commit to providing all visiting artists with a staff and board photo directory. In addition, we will create an artist photo directory for each production to be distributed to staff at every level of the organization.
- We will create a welcome video for artists that includes an introduction to our organization, policies, and values. This video will feature staff at all levels of the organization and is intended to ensure not one single voice or person represents City Theatre.
- We will institute an antiracist code of conduct for staff, board, volunteers, and artists.
- City Theatre recognizes that individual response to art can be both personal and cultural in nature. We welcome and celebrate varied forms of expression in response to the work on our stages and commit to educating staff, volunteers, and our audience to eliminate audience policing and ensure a more inclusive experience for all who attend the theater.
- We are actively supporting the creation of a city-wide affinity group for BIPOC employees of Pittsburgh arts organizations, while also offering support to and amplifying existing affinity spaces in Pittsburgh.

### **Working Conditions and Hiring Practices**

- All job descriptions will continue to be reviewed by the staff EDIA committee for language that is free of unconscious or overt bias. Additionally, all job descriptions include published rates of pay or salary range.
- The staff EDIA committee will create an internal resource guide for hiring and onboarding to ensure uniform practice across departments regarding a wider distribution of job postings and new staff orientation.
- We will institute a regular schedule of post-mortems for each individual production to provide both staff and freelance artists the opportunity to share feedback on ways to improve our institutional practices.
- Management will provide opportunities for interdepartmental training and education for employees. Additional time and resources shall be made available for BIPOC employees to ensure equitable access to professional growth opportunities.
- City Theatre commits to diversifying our staff and creating a support system for BIPOC employees working within a predominately white institution.
- We agree to end 10 out of 12s (12-hour days during technical rehearsals) in recognition that the practice can negatively impact families and work/life balance, particularly BIPOC artists and staff.
- We will ensure that all casting processes, whether done internally or via a casting agency, include BIPOC representation. Furthermore, we commit to diversity in casting beyond BIPOC-centered productions.

- We will dedicate the necessary financial support for costume budgets and proper education in styling and consultation of BIPOC hair and makeup. Additionally, we will broaden our community relationships with existing BIPOC salons and barbers.
- We will continue to prioritize marketing budgets to include BIPOC marketing consultants and commit to expanding those partnerships to ensure lasting and meaningful relationships.
- No artist's likeness will be used in marketing materials outside of the season during which they are contracted without their explicit permission.
- We will continue to work with BIPOC organizations and community partners to provide priority access to productions and programs, and to ensure that price is not a barrier for any audience member to City Theatre.
- We will expand our community partner outreach and seek feedback from past and present partners - including continued evaluation of the theater's City Connects program (an initiative that fosters relationships with community organizations based on shared values while connecting art and advocacy through engaged partnerships).
- We commit to seek out impactful and positive partnerships with the local indigenous community.

### **Artistic and Curatorial Practices**

- We will continue to offer diverse programming that reflects a broad spectrum of BIPOC experiences, and ensure these productions are not focused on pain and trauma.
- We will expand our artist pool, while continuing to serve as an artistic home for BIPOC playwrights, directors, and designers. Over the last two years BIPOC artists have comprised roughly 20%-25% of creative teams. Our goal is to increase that percentage to 35% within two years and to expand to at least 50% within five years.
- We commit to expanding our BIPOC designer pool. We affirm our goal of no more homogenous all-white creative teams and the hiring of BIPOC designers for all productions—not just those that are BIPOC centered.
- We will hire directors and/or consultants with cultural context for all BIPOC productions.

### **Transparency, Compensation, Accountability & Boards**

- We will audit the organization's current vendors to determine dollars spent with BIPOC-owned businesses versus white-owned. We commit to identifying and prioritizing BIPOC businesses. Additionally, we will research our sponsors and funders to ensure their giving priorities and investment policies align with City Theatre's mission and core values.
- In addition to publicly sharing our IRS-990 and annual independent audit, we commit to publishing an organizational budget showing how dollars are allocated.
- We agree to publicly publish total dollars earned by white artists in a season versus total dollars earned by BIPOC artists.
- City Theatre agrees to fair compensation for BIPOC artists for appearances at donor events, audience talkbacks, and any other appearance or work that falls outside of their position as detailed in their contract.
- Leadership will adhere to a regular schedule of individual performance reviews that will include an equity lens. These reviews will provide an opportunity for staff and leadership to discuss career growth and share productive feedback.
- City Theatre is committed to a continuous collection of data for seasons past, present, and future to ensure a clear picture of the demographic makeup of our collaborators. Through means of voluntary self-identification, we will implement methods of tracking the ethnic and racial composition of our staff, board, playwrights, directors, designers, actors, stage management, and production crews. We commit to publicly sharing the data for our last three seasons in June of 2021.

- We commit to building inclusivity and transparency in our governance by: creating space for BIPOC community members/artists/collaborators on the board; ensuring that financial means are never a barrier to board service; facilitating on-going interaction between production staff and board members (in regular board meetings and extended retreats); and publishing on our website public affiliations held by current board members.
- We reaffirm our practice to never provide additional influence or “quid-pro-quo” to board members or other donors due to perceived wealth or size of contribution.
- We commit to continuing to diversify the board, including on committees and leadership. Additionally, City Theatre will ensure its board Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility (EDIA) committee receives permanent “standing” status in the organization’s bylaws. In doing so, the committee’s chair will become a member of the board’s Executive Committee.
- We commit to an ongoing collaboration (staff, board members, and artists) to interrogate our mission and core values and determine whether our programmatic activities and budgets are in support of that mission and honor our values. That will include 360 reviews that prioritize participation from BIPOC stakeholders.
- We agree to develop succession plans for our executive leaders after five years of service and are actively considering the resources and expertise needed to support that work.
- We commit to transparency regarding leadership searches. All future search committees will include at least one member of the staff EDIA committee.
- We will seek and welcome questions from the public to our board regarding our commitment to EDI and the dismantling of racist systems and processes in our organization in annual town hall meetings, recordings and transcripts of which will be made available on our website.
- The board commits to ongoing EDI and anti-racism training throughout the year and will prioritize this work as a pre-requisite of service.

### **In Conclusion**

City Theatre’s work to address the demands of the WSYWAT artists and organizers commences with the commitments above. This process has led us to thoroughly investigate our practices, reflect on our stated mission and values, and to assess our available resources. Our next step is the release of a full organizational anti-racism plan, including further details and commitments regarding the demands we have currently categorized as requiring greater resources or further study and discussion. The targeted release for this plan is June of 2021. We at City Theatre commit to consistently interrogating our own practices to ensure we are following through on our word. In order to ensure a transparent process that welcomes public response and accountability, we commit to publishing an annual institutional report addressing our successes and challenges regarding our stated goals and commitments.

### **Signed and Submitted:**

This Response was crafted, reviewed, and agreed to by the City Theatre staff, leadership, and board. It was unanimously authorized for release by the board of directors on November 9, 2020.