

Persephone Theatre Community Update - July 31, 2020

It's been six weeks since our board of directors released [our statement and commitments](#) to ensure Persephone is an equitable, diverse, inclusive, and anti-oppressive space for all staff, artists, and stakeholders. We wanted to check in with you all and let you know where we're at in that work, and what work still lies ahead.

This is an outline of how those commitments are being addressed in three key phases. Detailed actions within these phases will be shared in the weeks ahead, for community input and engagement.

### **Phase One: Improve Immediate Workplace Needs — Internal Staff Review and Revision of Policies**

We know that a transparent and trusting core operating team is vital for being a healthy employer, and is the foundation for ensuring right relations in the community. So we've started there.

Since June, our board and leadership team has internally investigated systemic issues that have caused harm and/or challenges to our staff. We will continue holding staff town hall meetings to actively solicit staff input on past experiences in order to correct the theatre's course in a healthy way.

Our board of directors has also prioritized urgent HR issues, including revising previous workplace policies and creating new ones, to uphold the following four of our eight commitments:

- *Develop and publicly publish policies on Anti-Discrimination, and Whistleblowing*
- *Review Persephone Theatre's current policies to remove colonial and oppressive policies and practices*
- *Create and implement an Anti-Oppression Respectful Workspace Statement to be shared at every first rehearsal which will provide direction on actions to take if any form of discrimination, racism, or oppression occurs*
- *Review and revise our code of conduct to be more inclusive and publicly accessible*

Employees at Persephone have been given these policy documents for their feedback, and in a few weeks we will publish these drafts online as part of Phase 2, below. Once we have feedback on these important policies in August, we will incorporate whatever changes we can and provide them to the board for review and adoption, followed by implementation by the theatre starting in the fall.

### **Phase 2: Staff Training in Anti-Oppressive Practices + Community Conversations and Feedback**

In July, we began contracting individual specialists in anti-oppressive and inclusion practices who will now be providing staff training in Cultural Intelligence; Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; as well as Anti-Racism Work and Anti-Oppression Work. This is to uphold our commitment to *require Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression training for all Persephone staff, board members, and members of every production*

*staged by Persephone*. Training will now begin with staff and board, and will be implemented with production members once Persephone resumes producing live events.

With the urgent, internal work underway, we are now inviting input from the community, and hosting a number of virtual town halls.

Late-August: REVISED WORKPLACE POLICIES POSTED AND SHARED ONLINE FOR COMMUNITY FEEDBACK  
When we distribute those documents, they will include a note from our Board's HR Committee Chair about where to send your feedback.

August 20-26: SAVE THE DATES — VIRTUAL, COMMUNITY TOWN HALLS

These are a series of open and transparent conversations about your experiences and needs so that we can better support you in the future. Anyone can engage in one or all of these meetings. The RSVP lists will be openly published so that all participants are fully aware of who is in those conversations. More details to come in mid-August.

### **Phase 3: Review Strategic Framework and Leadership Profiles**

Once we have these detailed conversations with our staff, artists, and community, we can address those needs in our strategic and staffing framework (including Artistic Leadership).

**We know that this piece is vital, and sets the tone for all future actions, so it needs to not be rushed or come before speaking with the community.**

These are our commitments as part of Phase 3:

- *Review and revise all executive-level job profiles before every new recruitment*
- *Review and revise our Strategic Framework, including our Mission, Vision and Values to accurately reflect our commitment to Anti-Racism*
- *Evaluate and increase BIPOC and diverse representation across all levels of the organization.*

| We anticipate sharing details of our work in Phase 3 starting in the fall.