

## **Georgia Ensemble Theatre Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Action Plan Enacted October 5, 2020, Updated March 30, 2021**

The mission of Georgia Ensemble Theatre (GET) is to create connections between artists & audiences of all ages. In order to fulfill our mission, it is crucial that we build and maintain equitable relationships with artists & audiences of all races, identities, and backgrounds. We value selfless ensemble collaboration and embrace the “best idea wins” philosophy. We must codify a process to ensure that all voices are heard and all ideas are considered. This Action Plan lays out goals and a pathway toward ensuring that we hear and amplify the voices of groups who have been underrepresented in the pursuit of our mission.

Georgia Ensemble Theater (GET) is an equal opportunity employer and has always provided equal pay for equal work. However, we recognize that, like many other arts organizations, we have a long way to go to achieve true equality to the extent that our productions, staff, audience, and students truly reflect the diverse Metro Atlanta community we serve. Metro Atlanta’s population is 52% white, 34% Black, 11% Hispanic/Latino, 6% Asian (source: Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce). Metro Atlanta’s population includes about 4.5% LBGTQ persons (source: World Population Review). When we look back at our work, while we are proud of its artistic quality, we can’t say that every community could see themselves represented on our stage by the playwrights, directors, artists, or the stories being told. Theatre artists who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC) have been disproportionately underrepresented on stage and behind the scenes at GET.

The events of the summer of 2020 and the new civil rights movement have brought into stark relief how much work we have to do as a nation to repair and build trust in our institutions within the communities of BIPOC Americans. As an arts community and as an institution, we received a sharp wake-up call from the BIPOC Demands for American Theatre/#WeSeeYouWhiteAmericanTheatre movement. A number of local artists have also bravely brought forward specific feedback about where GET has fallen short.

With this feedback in mind, we have worked toward a new Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan. In creating our EDI plan, it was important to us that we don’t just do the minimum. Nor do we want to make slow, small changes. We recognize that the old approach hasn’t worked. We wanted to create an ambitious plan that will include measurable goals.

Because we want to be truly ambitious in creating a theatre that everyone can be a part of and be proud of, some of our goals are aspirational and will take several years to achieve. We will need to partner with the BIPOC community, our artists, our patrons, and the City of Roswell to meet the challenges we will no doubt encounter along the way. We did not want to write a plan of action that would be easily achievable. Frankly, the plan depends on some funding we don’t yet have, and the coronavirus pandemic presents challenges to any effort at planning for the future. Nonetheless, we are committing ourselves to the pursuit of these goals. We promise transparency if we fall short, and transparency in our plan to remedy that.

We believe by enacting these ambitious goals, we are going to have even better-quality performances, reach a larger audience, and be a part of making a more vibrant Atlanta theatre community that everyone can enjoy.

Theatre is for everyone. All audience members should have the chance to see themselves reflected on stage, both in our children’s theatre performances and in our mainstage. Perhaps more importantly, all audience members should have the chance to engage in stories that are different from their own experience. It’s our duty as artists, administrators, and theatre-lovers to reflect a vision for a world where every person, whatever community they identify with, is seen, heard and valued.

We have made mistakes regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion; it is inevitable that we will make other mistakes on our journey. What we can pledge is more transparency around our hiring and casting

practices, a sincere commitment to improvement, and making every effort to connect with all of our communities.

We acknowledge that the Roswell Cultural Arts Center and GET Studio are located on land originally held by the Cherokee and Muscogee peoples.

We extend our sincere thanks to members of our community who have generously shared thoughts or concerns with us. We appreciate all of your thoughts and feedback on this plan and our actions in the future.

Each benchmark contained in this document is a goal. Processes, policies, and incremental goals are held by the staff and board of GET and will be reviewed regularly.

#### ❖ Accountability

- Georgia Ensemble Theatre's Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee will be established by November 30, 2021, and will receive EDI training at the beginning of their first term. The committee will be made up of greater than 50% BIPOC members. This committee will have at least 5 members and will maintain an odd number of members. Membership will include at least one staff representative, at least one board representative, at least one artist or technician representative, at least one teaching artist representative, and at least one patron representative. Members will serve an 18-month term, and terms will overlap in order to aid transfer of knowledge among members. The committee will meet quarterly. Members will be paid a stipend. The committee's responsibilities include:
  - ◆ Management and compliance with this EDI plan
  - ◆ Assisting staff, artists, and board members in their efforts to be anti-racist and anti-discriminatory
  - ◆ Providing a resource/liason for expression of concerns by contract employees and staff
  - ◆ Until the EDI Committee is in place, a volunteer GET staff member will serve as a liaison for expressions of concern, in alternating turns for each quarter.
- GET will invest in consultant-led EDI training for its staff and board.
  - ◆ We will investigate partnerships with other Atlanta arts organizations to allow sharing of costs & resources for this training.
  - ◆ We will encourage and participate in a coalition of Atlanta theatre leadership make anti-racist and anti-discriminatory operations the standard in our community.
- GET leadership will continue participating in discussion groups provided by C4 Atlanta, TCG, and other artistic resources.

#### ❖ Mainstage Programming

- Diversity of voices in the stories being told
  - ◆ By the end of the 2022-23 season, playwrights represented on GET's stage will be representative of the Metro Atlanta Population including BIPOC, LGBTQ, and/or women writers.
  - ◆ Each season's programming will center a variety of stories, reflecting the variety of perspectives in our community.
  - ◆ Plays about BIPOC and LGBTQ experiences will be led by directors who are familiar with the experience represented in the play. Plays about non-BIPOC or LGBTQ experiences may also be led by BIPOC and/or LGBTQ directors, with their experiences and perspectives valued and welcomed.
  - ◆ We will ensure that substantial roles across a season are available to BIPOC performers.

- Play reading committee
  - ◆ Purposes: To discover and recommend to GET artistic leadership plays that will help fulfill the goals of this Action Plan and will be suitable for GET's space, budget, etc. To produce a shortlist of plays to be considered for future production.
  - ◆ Membership: at least one GET staff member, at least one board member, at least two artists and/or representatives of the Atlanta theatre community. This committee may also partner with play development organizations.
  - ◆ There will be 3-5 participants on the committee by December 31, 2021. Of the committee members, at least 60% will be women and/or BIPOC members by December 31, 2022.
  - ◆ Suggestions for plays to be read may be submitted by any stakeholder at GET.
  - ◆ Applications/invitations to the play reading committee will be available in November, 2021.
  - ◆ Guidelines & processes will be in place by the time the committee is established. The committee will be a recommending body, not a decision-making body.
  - ◆ Compensation for committee members will be in-kind.

## ❖ Hiring

- Competitive pay is a crucial issue in attracting the most qualified performers, designers, technicians, & directors. We must help make it possible for excellent artists to earn a living in Atlanta. We will always offer Equal Pay for Equal Work. We will ensure we're offering compensation that is commensurate with or better than other Atlanta-area theatres. We will work with the Atlanta theatre community to explore ways to raise the overall standard of pay.
- Mainstage Casting
  - ◆ A casting director will be in place by December 15, 2021. This is a contract position working with both mainstage and TYA casting. We will specifically seek a casting director to represent the interests of BIPOC artists.
  - ◆ Our goal is that at least 50% of employed actors across a season will be BIPOC performers by the end of the 2022-23 season. (At least 30% by the end of the 2021-22 season.)
  - ◆ All roles, including leads, are open to BIPOC actors (unless specified by the playwright and required by the play).
  - ◆ We will specifically invite diverse representation at all casting calls with the intent that at least 50% of actors we audition across a season will be BIPOC performers by the end of the 2022-23 season. (At least 30% by the end of the 2021-22 season.)
  - ◆ Our goal is that 50% of actors we audition FOR EACH ROLE will be BIPOC (with exceptions when the playwright specifies & requires a character to be of a particular race and/or differences of race are part of the intent of the story) by the end of the 2022-23 season. (At least 30% by the end of the 2021-22 season.)
  - ◆ At least once per year, we will hold open auditions which welcome all artists. Led by the Casting Director, we will seek every possible avenue for publicizing the open call and welcoming actors of all different races & backgrounds. We will accept video auditions for open calls.
  - ◆ Roles that are specified by the playwright as being BIPOC characters will not be filled by non-BIPOC actors. Roles that are specified as being characters of a specific race will not be filled by actors of a different race, unless approved by the rights-holder and acknowledged as part of the story.
- Staff
  - ◆ A hiring consultant who represents the BIPOC community will be in place before the next hiring process is entered. This is a contract/consultant position.

- ◆ We will implement an Open Application policy. Whether any job listing is posted, applicants are welcome to submit a resume & cover letter at any time, using an email address listed on our website.
- ◆ A hiring policy document, detailing our full hiring process, will be produced by the Producing Artistic Director and Department Heads by October 31, 2020. This hiring policy will be approved by the board and will be available to jobseekers at any time so they can review the process.
- ◆ We will seek qualified candidates of all backgrounds, with the goal that 50% of the candidates receiving consideration are BIPOC applicants.
- Other Artists
  - ◆ Our goal is that 50% of directors, designers, & technicians across a season will be BIPOC and/or women by 2023-24. (We expect there to be overlap and will seek out candidates who are BIPOC women).
  - ◆ Our Artistic Leadership and Production Manager will reach out to the hiring consultant as necessary when hiring directors, designers and technical staff.
  - ◆ Our Open Application Policy will apply to artistic & technical positions: candidates may submit their resumes at any time, using an email address listed on our website.
  - ◆ Recognizing that there is a pipeline issue specifically for BIPOC designers and technicians in the Atlanta area, we will work with other theatre-makers to build, maintain, and utilize a thorough database of BIPOC directors, designers, and technicians. We will explore options for hiring design/tech/directing artists who are not based in Atlanta.
  - ◆ As our apprentice/intern program is revived, we will explore ways to add technical apprenticeship opportunities.

## ❖ Education Department

- Apprentice Program
  - ◆ Effective upon resumption of the apprentice/intern program, at least 50% of the members of the apprentice company (including Leitalift intern & stage management apprentice) will be BIPOC artists. Our apprentice company will consistently represent the population of metro Atlanta.
  - ◆ By the 2022-23 season, apprentice workshops will be led by BIPOC teaching artists at least 50% of the time.
  - ◆ The apprentice selection team will include BIPOC representation.
- Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA)
  - ◆ TYA Programming
    - The play reading committee (detailed above) will work with both TYA and mainstage scripts.
    - At least 50% of playwrights represented in the TYA season will be BIPOC, LGBTQ, and/or women writers by the end of the 2021-22 season.
    - Each season's programming will center a variety of stories, reflecting the variety of perspectives in our community.
    - Plays about BIPOC and LGBTQ experiences will be led by directors who are familiar with the experience represented in the play (e.g., Black directors will lead plays about the Black experience, Latin-x directors will lead plays about the Latin-x experience, etc.). Plays about non-BIPOC or LGBTQ experiences may also be led by BIPOC and/or LGBTQ directors, with their experiences and perspectives valued and welcomed.
    - We will ensure that substantial roles across a season are available to BIPOC performers.

- TYA Casting and Hiring
  - ◆ The education department and artistic leadership will re-evaluate the tour model with input from former apprentices and former professional tour actors over the next 6 months.
  - ◆ A casting director will be in place by December 31, 2021. This is a contract position working with both mainstage and TYA casting. We will specifically seek a casting director to represent the interests of BIPOC artists.
  - ◆ 50% of employed actors across a season will be BIPOC performers by 2023.
  - ◆ At least 50% of actors we audition across a season will be BIPOC performers by the end of the 2021-22 season.
  - ◆ 50% of actors we audition FOR EACH ROLE including lead roles will be BIPOC (with exceptions when the playwright specifies & requires a character to be of a particular race and/or differences of race are part of the intent of the story) by the end of the 2022-23 season.
  - ◆ Roles that are specified by the playwright as being BIPOC characters will not be filled by non-BIPOC actors. Roles that are specified as being characters of a specific race will not be filled by actors of a different race, unless approved by the rights-holder and acknowledged as part of the story.
  - ◆ There will be no pre-casting for the next 2 seasons. We will hold open auditions for all professional roles.
  - ◆ At least 50% of directors, designers, & technicians across a season will be BIPOC and/or women by 2023-24. We expect there to be overlap and will seek out candidates for hiring who are BIPOC women. (Intermediary goals: At least 20% by the end of the 2021-22 season. At least 30% by the end of the 2022-23 season.)
  - ◆ Our BIPOC hiring consultant will work with Production Manager & artistic leadership when hiring directors & designers.
  - ◆ Our Open Application Policy will apply to artistic & technical positions: candidates may submit their resumes at any time, using an email address listed on our website.
- Conservatory Classes
  - ◆ Conservatory faculty will be at least 50% BIPOC teaching artists by the end of the 2021-22 season. (At least 25% by the end of the 2020-21 season.)
  - ◆ Financial aid packages available will be better advertised & communicated on every marketing platform where classes are publicized. (Marketing consultant will assist this effort.)
  - ◆ EDI Teaching Artist Forum meetings will continue bimonthly (already ongoing).
  - ◆ The Education Department will produce a vision & EDI Action Plan for their department-specific goals by December 31, 2020.

## ❖ Outreach/Audience Development

- Welcoming atmosphere
  - ◆ We will make it visually clear on our website and (where possible) physically in the lobby and office that BIPOC lives matter to us at GET, and that all are welcome. These visual messages will begin going up as we re-open our doors and our programming.
  - ◆ In our curtain speeches and other forms of communication, we will reinforce the commitment we have to welcoming and valuing everyone, including inviting our audiences to learn about and adopt our values.
- Marketing
  - ◆ Our messaging and visuals will accurately represent the stories we tell and the artists and audiences in our community.

- ◆ We will not over-prefer images of BIPOC actors or students, but neither will BIPOC faces and voices be missing from our messaging.
- ◆ We will use artists' images appropriately to represent GET and the work we do.
- Audience engagement
  - ◆ We will engage a marketing/development consultant by January 31, 2022, with a focus on helping us understand the needs of BIPOC audiences and the best channels to reach them. This may be a contract position or a combined initiative with other theatres in the Atlanta area.
  - ◆ We will work toward deepening our relationships with community outreach partners such as STAR House by 12/31/21.
  - ◆ In our effort to better engage and serve families, we will hire at least one bilingual teaching artist by August 31, 2021.

❖ Board

- Recruitment Committee will prioritize finding candidates who are BIPOC.
  - ◆ Engage more members of the community in the search for board candidates.
- 50% of new board members each year will be BIPOC by 2025
- When a succession committee and/or search committee are established, at least 25% of the committee members will be BIPOC. The committee will include board members and community stakeholders.