

Southern Rep Theatre seeks Artistic Director

Artistic Director

Title: Artistic Director

Reports to: Board of Directors

Status: Full Time Permanent/Exempt Position to start in early 2022

Salary: \$60,000

Benefits: Health insurance, paid time off, and professional resources to be discussed and envisioned with the applicant.

We at Southern Rep Theatre seek a new Artistic Director with a bold vision rooted in New Orleans that reaches out into the national landscape of new play development. We are a professional theatre operating under an Equity SPT contract. Our Board is seeking a change-agent. We will fully support an Artistic Director with brave new ideas. We are simultaneously hiring an Artistic Director and Managing Director to work in dynamic partnership with our Board, local advisors and a part-time administrative assistant to envision our future, shape our productions and lead the day-to-day operations of our theater. We need an Artistic Director with a passion for new plays, a deep love for/knowledge of the culture, gifts and challenges of the City of New Orleans, and a commitment to inspire our diverse population. Our new Artistic Director will be an open and engaging leader, receptive to new ideas, opportunities, innovation, and collaboration. They will be committed to anti-racism, diversity, equity and access in alignment with our Comprehensive 3-year Strategic Plan. They will be a fierce leader and collaborative relationship builder who engages with donors, philanthropic supporters, artists, community leaders, and other regional stakeholders across New Orleans. Working in partnership with the Managing Director, our new Artistic Director will lead by sharing power with a collaborative style, creating a climate of respectful inquiry and trust, so that Southern Rep can be an artist-driven, community-centered organization and healthy participant in New Orleans' live-theater ecosystem.

Southern Rep is an organization undergoing profound change. And as a historically white organization, we struggle to fit into and serve the Black community around us. We are proud of our artistic achievements and the ways we have served artists, and we are ready to build on our strengths and evolve into a future that serves all of our community and does not cause harm. We keenly understand the challenges of a two-person (FT) staff leading us through this time of transformation and building back. Our board will support our new leadership by providing a variety of resources, including anti-racism consulting and our own fundraising skills and connections to local donors. We look forward to discussing what other resources our new leaders will need to succeed. More on the specific details of Southern Rep's history below.

We Are Looking for an Artistic Director Who Will:

- **Be a Leader with an Energized, Entrepreneurial Spirit:** Provide visionary, thoughtful leadership with an entrepreneurial spirit that inspires staff, board, audience and community to participate in Southern Rep's vibrant and exciting future.

- **Curate our Season and Champion New Play Development:** Maintain and bolster our reputation as one of the leading theaters for play development in New Orleans and the United States.
- **Be an Anti-Racist Leader:** Advance SRT's anti-racism action plan through thoughtful programmatic vision, responsive governance structures, dynamic staffing, equitable vendor interactions, and intentional audience experiences.
- **Commit to New Play Diversity:** Intentionally seek opportunities for the selection of new plays that expand the voices, perspectives, and ideas that reflect and amplify the racial and cultural diversity and heritage of our city, region and country.
- **Handle Essential Administrative Tasks:** Oversee ongoing artistic programs, Learning and Engagement programs, and staff.
- **Communicate Clearly and Honestly with our Board:** Keep them informed and knowledgeable about the artistic and financial impact of all activities at Southern Rep. programs.
- **Participate in our financial well-being:** Work closely with the Managing Director who will lead our fundraising efforts, including cultivating corporate/individual donors and creating earned income and dynamic ticketing strategies.
- **Participate in our Marketing / Public Profile:** Work closely with our Managing Director who will take the lead on our marketing and communication strategies.
- **Participate in cultural and community activities:** Ensure Southern Rep's presence as a collaborator and partner in New Orleans.
- **Be an Advocate:** For artists, arts education, and arts access throughout the community and New Orleans.

You're a Great Fit for this Job If:

You have artistic experience with a theater, expertise in the fields of new play development and dramaturgy, knowledge of theater artists, and a demonstrated commitment to advancing local artists.

You show a commitment to inclusive storytelling as a means of building community and encouraging mutual understanding and empathy.

You have a track record of artistic leadership, decision making, fundraising, and audience growth.

You possess a deep appreciation for a substantive, meaningful experience of understanding and working in communities and making collaborative changes built on relationships and partnerships.

In your past work you have shown specific commitments and actions to advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and access.

More About Our Theater: Founded in 1986 by Rosamary O'Neill, Southern Rep became known for producing stimulating new American plays delivered with consistently high production values. One subscriber said "*SRT carries the torch for innovative theater here*".

Our commitment to new plays continued under the Artistic Leadership of Ryan Rilette and then Aimée Hayes. Examples include the 4 X 4 program which would support 4 local playwrights each year in writing and sharing short new plays, ambitious collaborative projects such as the regional premiere of Taylor Mac's **The Lilly's Revenge**, produced by 4 local companies under Southern Rep's leadership and establishing awards such as the Ruby Prize, which honored an emerging Black female playwright each year. While these programs/programming stood out in a city with few resources to support theater/new work, most of the writers and actors involved were white, and our audience remained largely white. During this time we also lost our lease on our space and became itinerant, with our audiences following us from space to space.

By 2018, we had a budget of \$1 million, a full-time of 13 and produced 4-5 mainstage plays per year. Working with Alembic Development, we designed a theater space inside the former St. Rose de Lima church on Bayou Road in the historically Black neighborhood of Treme. We hoped that the move would provide a long-term venue for us to expand programming. Instead, the move surfaced fundamental questions both about SRT's sustainability as well as how it can support and serve the community.

Our financial capacity was overmatched by the needs of the new space. In addition, we were careless with our relationship building in our new neighborhood, and did not do the slow, necessary work of discovering what our neighbors needed and wanted from a community theater.

As these issues were coming to a head, COVID-19 forced the theater into hibernation. Aimée Hayes departed the theater after a transition process, and we began facing our financial issues, and irresponsible missteps with the neighborhood we had tried to call home. We moved out of the church, which will now become a home to Black-led performance companies who have never had a home. We began a strategic planning process with a consultant that helped us see how we failed to build the infrastructure (marketing, fundraising, governance) necessary for a sustainable theater. We hired an interim Executive Director, Sam Sweet to work with Interim Artistic Director Sacha Grandoit, to launch the plan and begin repairing and rebuilding our relationship with the neighborhood. Sam listened to Black residents and members of the Black Arts community and crafted a Statement on Harm, Repair, and Healing as well as an action plan to become an Anti-Racist Theater. With the support of COVID Relief funding, we have planned and will mount a 21-22 season.

Hiring our new Artistic Director and Managing Director is the next step in our time of reckoning, transition and re-imagining our theater.

To Apply: We invite you to email your resume and a cover letter (no more than 2 pages, please) telling us about your interest in the position and how your skills match what we have described above to adsearch@southernrep.com. No phone calls please. We would like our new Artistic Director to start in early 2022.

Southern Rep welcomes inquiries, nominations, and applications from people of all backgrounds, cultures and communities. We encourage BIPOC leaders to apply.