

# LORT Diversity Initiative

May 2014

Practically since its inception in 1965, LORT's members have shared a concern that our theatres, our artists, our boards, our audiences and our staffs should reflect the rich diversity of this country. Throughout the years, efforts have been made by individual theatres to change the gender, racial and ethnic balance of our theatres and yet the goal of a truly diverse field continues to elude us. Now, LORT has adopted a set of actions that, for the first time, brings all 72 LORT Theatres together to change the way we recruit staff and especially organizational leadership.

We recognize, as a management association, a special obligation to address the serious underrepresentation of people of color and women at the highest ranks of leadership and people of color throughout our organizations. While seeking diversity in all of its forms across our organizations, we have resolved to make demonstrable strides in these areas first.

At its essence, theatre is universal and specific, similar and diverse but above all, collaborative. We strive every night to bring a group of people together for a communal experience, whereby artists meet audience. Each artist and each audience brings his or her own unique background to that experience, and the experience is fullest when the backgrounds are the most diverse and unique. We believe we will create the best possible theatre when we have the most diversity of thought, background and experience represented through and through.

To further these aims, LORT established a Diversity Task Force in the fall of 2012 and charged it with recommending actionable courses to lead to greater diversity in our staffs. The task force undertook a process that involved analysis of demographic information of our staffs, soliciting advice from experts from other professions, interviews with professionals in our field and input from the full LORT membership. From this process, the task force identified multiple categories of ideas that could lead to change: guiding principles, recruitment, mentorship, training, workplace, hiring, industry partners and resources needed.

LORT has a proud and hard-earned reputation for celebrating diversity, leading our communities through the most pressing social issues of our time, creating work that has helped evolve our communities towards greater tolerance and greater acceptance. There is a moral imperative to address whatever barriers are in place for women and people of color, with particular emphasis on the highest levels, where the lack of such diversity is acutely felt and greater diversity would be most impactful. We wish to address these barriers directly, publicly and transparently.

### **Statement of Principles**

LORT Theatres are committed to increasing racial and ethnic diversity across our staffs, and gender, racial and ethnic diversity in our executive leadership. We are engaging in collective action in the areas of LORT Diversity Structure, Hiring, Recruitment and Mentorship/Sponsorship as we believe this multi-faceted approach is the best way for LORT to work together to make progress on this issue.

### **Strategies**

We have identified the following strategies to activate our core principles of diversity. Some strategies call for collective action, others for action by individual theatres. In the case of individual theatres, these recommended strategies are intended as tools for each theatre to implement as it sees fit or to make its own choices about how it will participate. In some cases, collective action may be appropriate not just for all of LORT, but among subsets of LORT Theatres, perhaps organized by size, mission or regional proximity. In all cases, these recommended strategies have been created to assist and support all LORT theatres in our collective goal of increased diversity.

### **LORT Diversity Structure**

Leadership and coordination of LORT's Diversity Initiative will be assigned to an elected Vice President of LORT who will work with a group of members to:

- Liaise with industry organizations and partners such as TCG, SDC, AEA, TDF, The Broadway League, IA, URTA, ATPAM and others, including executive search firms, on this topic.
- Ensure that the topic of diversity is on every meeting agenda. Agenda items may include speakers to provide training and education on related subjects or analysis and reporting on LORT's progress.

- Oversee the development and monitoring of the recruitment effort. Coordinate sharing of activities, successes and challenges with the membership to further learning and progress.
- Review recruitment and hiring efforts and report to the membership regularly.
- Engage LORT members in the various initiatives and as appropriate to help other member Theatres or boards seeking advice and counsel as they fulfill their goals of diversity.
- Continue to evolve LORT's efforts to improve diversity whether through formal consultants or other methods.
- Keep LORT on track to examine all areas of diversity over the long-term.

## **Hiring**

If we are to effect change, it is essential for candidates of color, who are still statistically underrepresented throughout LORT Theatres, and women, who are underrepresented at the highest levels of our organizations, to be seen by the boards and leaders who are engaged in hiring. To that end:

- LORT Theatres will assemble a diverse and qualified slate of candidates to be considered for each executive search and will aspire to this in all other searches as well.
- LORT will regularly review and measure progress in this area.

## **Recruitment**

LORT has identified active recruitment of new talent as an important step in ensuring that our Theatres continue to attract a next generation of artists, administrators, artisans and technicians. This is especially necessary if we are to attract a generation that represents the gender, racial and ethnic diversity of this country. To that end, LORT will establish a Recruitment Subcommittee to support and encourage the following and/or other efforts that the Subcommittee may identify:

- Engage in individual and collective efforts to inform graduate and undergraduate students, with a particular emphasis on students of color, about career opportunities in our Theatres.
- Develop an annual plan that coordinates recruitment visits on behalf of LORT.
- Welcome interested theatre management students to attend all or portions of LORT Meetings in their local communities.
- Create a brochure and video highlighting career opportunities in our Theatres that every LORT Theatre can share with high school students attending their Theatre and also on their website.
- Create a best-practices manual on diversity recruiting to assist member Theatres in effectively searching underrepresented populations in their own communities.

- Other efforts identified by the Subcommittee.

### **Mentorship/Sponsorship**

Interviews conducted with successful arts leaders, and particularly women and leaders of color, consistently point to the pivotal role played by mentors in their professional development. To that end, LORT will establish a Mentorship/Sponsorship Subcommittee to support and encourage the following and/or other efforts that the Subcommittee may identify:

- Establish a mentorship program with the specific intention of preparing women and managers of color for leadership positions in theatres.
- Work with other organizations, such as TCG, the Urban League, SDC, AEA, arts management graduate and undergraduate training programs and others with the express purpose of preparing candidates for leadership positions within our Theatres.
- Other efforts identified by the Subcommittee.