



TRANSCENDENCE THEATRE COMPANY

BELONGING CHARTER

Mission Statement

Transcendence Theatre Company's mission is to create extraordinary experiences that inspire all to cherish life and live it to the fullest.

We believe that life is a work of art. We are passionate about being free to transcend usual limits as we serve and uplift our community, with a focus on Performing Arts, Arts Education, and Community Engagement. Our work is rooted in inspiring individuals and communities to dream freely, to reach ever more of their potential, and, in so doing, make a profound difference in the world.

Values

Our commitment to these four values is at the heart of everything we do:

LIFE IS ART: We commit to creating extraordinary experiences onstage and off

COMMUNITY: We commit to joyfully inspiring our community and beyond

BELONGING: We commit to cultivating a culture of belonging, without a sense of otherness as we practice Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility & Unity

FIDUCIARY RESPONSIBILITY: We commit to wise use of all resources entrusted to us

Statement of Intent

We aim to inspire creativity, empower all voices, and strengthen bonds between people of all backgrounds and identities. In this pursuit we will continue and expand our efforts to foster actions that bring more diversity, equity, and inclusion to our organization. We acknowledge that along our journey, our culture and the world around us is constantly evolving. We will inevitably make mistakes, and apologize for past actions that may have directly or indirectly perpetuated practices that were unknowingly either hurtful or continued barriers that limited the opportunities of any groups or specific individuals. We accept the reality of our potential fallibility, and will seek to create an environment that through education and open communication will correct any missteps expeditiously and create a learning organization that will continuously improve.

Similarly, this charter should be viewed as a living document that we may modify based on periodic review and as internal or external considerations cause revised perspective.

We believe that art in all forms, and theater specifically, has the power to be transformative, examine multiple facets of life, and educate artists and audiences. Storytelling from multiple perspectives enhances the beauty and power of the form itself and amplifies the experience for everyone involved. Achieving these goals requires the rejection of oppressive practices, systems and behaviors while simultaneously encouraging collaboration, community building, hope, strength, and compassion. We seek to create an organization that goes beyond merely the acceptance of diversity but embraces differences as a means to create more powerfully and foster a sense of belonging.

At the most basic level we will operate along the inspiration espoused in various forms from several different philosophies but most commonly known as “The Golden Rule”: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. More specifically, the guiding goals for Transcendence as we move forward in creating an inclusive environment are:

- Actively acknowledging and examining all potentially discriminatory or other practices that create fundamental barriers for members of any group
- Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion ideas, values, and policies that eliminate unnecessary limits on any people during the education, production, promotion, and experience of theater
- Working towards proactively eliminating discrimination in all forms that may have even the appearance of establishing unfair obstacles
- Establishing an environment where each person senses that their contributions and ideas are respected and valued, and that they belong in the position they are performing
- Hiring will be based on multiple criteria that goes beyond aptitude for the particular position including life experience and attitude. Board members will be invited based on ability to positively influence the organization rather than potential to provide financial support
- Seeking at a minimum that our main stakeholders including full-time and part-time staff, seasonal artists and staff, along with our volunteers and audiences, reflect the composition of our local community while striving where possible to exceed these goals

Inclusion Principles

The following principles set out the everyday behaviors that foster a healthy, inclusive culture at Transcendence Theatre Company:

- Treating each other with respect and actively listening to one another
- Being genuinely open to feedback and examining our own behaviors
- Amplifying colleagues when their voices are not heard

- Being consciously aware of bias and its impact on our decision making, ensuring we question it in others, too
- Challenging offensive and inappropriate behaviors, through informal and open dialog with colleagues and, if necessary, through relevant Human Resource (HR) policies and processes
- Understanding that we all play a role in creating and sustaining an inclusive environment

Approach

Transcendence Theatre Company began as a nonprofit with foundational ideas rooted in the desire for inclusion, diversity, and belonging. The very use of the word “transcendence” was to connote the core value of community interacting with the theatre company to create a unique experience. During the 2019-20 season it became evident that our actions in this regard needed to become more explicit and formalized to assure we achieved the full non-discriminatory culture that we sought and believed we could be.

In the months since the decision to become more formal and transparent, Transcendence has undertaken a number of steps. An outside organization was engaged to facilitate workshops for our Board, leadership team, and staff, focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion awareness and education. These workshops will continue in the future and be expanded especially as we bring on seasonal performing artists and staff. Working with our outside partner we have begun a review of all HR functions, including employee relations as well as people and workplace culture practices within the company to provide recommendations to the Board of Directors for implementation as early as possible. An internal climate and culture survey has been conducted and will be repeated at least annually. We will perform listening groups and conduct an after-the-season survey so that seasonal artists and staff have opportunities for communication and suggestions during or after their work is completed.

The Transcendence Board of Directors is pursuing its own concurrent set of actions. The Board has adopted recruitment policies and processes that have already begun to enhance the diversity of the Board. We have committed that the Board will reflect the demographics and values of the community we serve with specific attention to racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, and other identifiers. The number of Board members has been increased and by the end of 2021 will reach the maximum number of nine currently allowed in our Bylaws. All of the incremental Board members added this year will be independent non-management, therefore reaching a composition of six independent Board members to three management members by the end of 2021. The positions of Chairman and President of the board will now only be filled by independent non-management board members and that realignment has already occurred.

The board will take an active role in managing the overall direction and fulfillment of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, led by the board President in assuring an on-going commitment

to the goals established. A major component of this is the establishment of a Belonging Planning Council. This council will be organized with a steering committee and at least three permanent subcommittees that will each be focused on one of our core stakeholders: (1) Full, Part-time, and Seasonal members of the company, (2) Artistic and Education functions, and (3) Audiences and the general community. All of the steering and subcommittees will be staffed with a combination of Transcendence board and leadership team members, permanent and seasonal staff members, our HR partner team, and elements of our patron, audience, and/or community members. The council will provide direction and a structure of accountability in order to help move Transcendence forward. The subcommittees will collaboratively create recommendations on diversity, equity, and inclusion actions to be completed which will be submitted to the steering committee for approval and then the leadership team for final approval and implementation. Each subcommittee will provide support on implementing actions approved in their areas and maintaining updates to the roadmap of activity.

As previously stated, this charter is established with the idea that it may be updated over time as our experience and learning influences our processes into the future. However, we believe it establishes a strong and actionable framework that can provide immediate benefits and improvements. This charter has been shared with all existing staff and will be posted at Transcendence training facilities and venues. We are committed to the goals presented here and will be transparent with our accomplishments, lapses, and on-going activities.