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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Sacred Fools Announces New Board Member, Re-imagined Advisory Council and Expanded EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) Initiatives



Los Angeles, CA (December 3, 2020) – During the Covid-19 shutdown, the Sacred Fools Theater Company is taking the opportunity for self-reflection in order to create and foster change both within the Fools community and beyond. To those ends, there have been three recent and noteworthy developments: the addition of a new Board member, a re-imagined Advisory Council and expanded EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) initiatives.

“The strength of Sacred Fools has always been that we are a company-run group of artists working together to bring our creative visions to life,” says Co-Artistic Director Marc Antonio Pritchett. “Pre-pandemic, we were too overwhelmed with productions to properly troubleshoot systemic issues, always trying to patch things up on the fly. The past several months have finally given us the downtime to take a hard look at our entire structure and change it for the better.”



New Board Member Detra Payne

Sacred Fools is excited and honored to announce the addition of Detra Payne, an original founding member of the company who has been acting professionally and teaching acting for decades, to the Board of Directors.

"I am honored to be back with my Sacred Fools family," says Payne. "Almost 25 years ago we founded this theatre company as a way to give local actors and artists a space and place to perform without having to necessarily pay dues as a member. As part of the LA theatre scene I always felt we were looked at as if a mixture of classically trained theatre artist and the unrecognized talented, unapologetic theatre kids, which I think is exactly what we were."

Payne just joined the faculty at Northwestern University where she will be teaching acting and most recently was an Assistant Professor of Instruction at the University of Texas, Arlington. There, she taught cross-disciplinary courses in Women's and Gender Studies, including Gender and the Performing Arts and Women in Theatre.

Payne has acted in New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, Memphis and in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area. She earned her MFA from the Actor's Studio Drama School, a division of The New School, where she studied the Method technique of acting formulated by Lee Strasberg. Her B.A. is from the University of Washington, and while there she was a member of the first class to be taught the Suzuki Method, created by world renowned theatre artist Tadashi Suzuki. Payne is also trained in the Meisner Technique through the Joann Baron/DW Brown Studio in Los Angeles.

Payne has produced and directed a number of theatrical productions and has worked films and in television in front of and behind the camera as a production and talent coordinator. Her written work has been published in Theatre Journal and Studies in Theatre and Performance. While at the UT, Arlington, she was the MavLab Play Coordinator, overseeing the production of plays directed by students and faculty alike. For the last few years she had also been the developer, organizer and advisor for the Heal the Divide On and Off Campus Initiative, leading students in the creation, development and performance of original plays about issues concerning them and their community. Early in her career she also worked as a personal assistant to actresses Lela Rochon and Sheryl Lee Ralph, and as the Executive Assistant for the Tavis Smiley Foundation.



Payne is a member of SAG-AFTRA; The Association for Theatre in Higher Education; Board Member-at-Large for Black Theatre Association; member of the National Alliance of Acting Teachers.

In terms of the direction small theatre is currently headed in Los Angeles, Payne sees the company as a leader of what is possible regardless of union restrictions. "Sacred Fools is here for the actors who want to work on their craft, it is here to open doors for actors of all types, writers of all types, directors of all types," she says. "If you want to be a member, come and get active, bring your ideas, your creativity and come get to work, our figurative doors in this moment, are open specifically for you. No matter your gender identity, racial identity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation or political affiliation, Sacred Fools is here for you and that is how it should be when making art. I look forward to watching the art that Sacred Fools continues to create and celebrate for the next 25 years and beyond."

About the Sacred Fools Advisory Council

In another move designed to strengthen Sacred Fools' commitment to expanding the depth and breadth of community wisdom, the current "Advisory Board" has been dissolved in order to be renamed the "Advisory Council." This new body will soon be relaunched with a clearer mission and more robust mandate. The plan is to create a panel of experts and passionate advocates for theater and related arts in general, and for our Sacred Fools in particular.

The council is intended to be a permanent, evolving entity that will be empowered and encouraged to:

- Consider and offer recommendations, as requested, on company matters.
- Suggest and connect outside resources to the company membership, staff or productions.
- Generate discussions on topics of their own initiative.

The Council's first and most immediate mission goals are to:

- Advise our institution on community outreach, diversity and inclusion initiatives and practices, thus providing additional support to all member-led Committees, including Artistic Directors, EDI, Casting, and Community Outreach.



- Make recommendations and referrals to our Board of Directors regarding expanding its membership to better represent a variety of expertise and lived experience so that it might better serve our community.

About the Sacred Fools' Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives

Within the company's already active Equity, Diversity and Inclusion program, the organization has launched or is partnering in several ambitious initiatives.

- *Sharing The Spotlight* employs social media, in partnership with other like-minded companies, to raise the visibility of underserved artists in our community. It will also serve as the online platform through which we will share our other initiatives with the community at large.
- *#BIPOCACCESS* is tasked with collecting testimonials from BIPOC artists detailing how intimate theatre has impacted their careers. These testimonials will be vital in demonstrating just how important intimate theatre is to our communities.
- Our upcoming initiative, *The Peer Review*, is tasked with providing access to unbiased critical review to the underserved artists of our community. By creating a new and improved option from the ground up we strive to provide a proof of concept that traditional sources can emulate.

Sacred Fools is looking forward not just to a return to the status quo that existed prior to the pandemic, but to come out of the literally "dark" time with renewed energy, readiness to create both art and opportunities, and the purpose of expanding the reach of those opportunities to better reflect the city and world we live in.

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Sacred Fools Theater Company, the resident theater company of The Broadwater, 1078 Lillian Way (Santa Monica Blvd. and Lillian Way) on Theater Row, is a non-profit, ensemble-run theater company founded in 1997, committed to the development of new plays and projects that challenge traditional expectations of the theatrical experience. For more information about any of our programming or the company itself, contact us at publicity@sacredfools.org and visit www.sacredfools.org.

For information regarding The Broadwater, please visit www.thebroadwaterla.com

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