

MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS FOR THE ARTS

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POSITION PROFILE
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
THEATREWORKS SILICON VALLEY
PALO ALTO, CA

BACKGROUND

TheatreWorks was founded in 1970 by San Francisco Bay Area native Robert Kelley, known to all as “Kelley,” as a theatre arts workshop for teenage and college students. In its early days, TheatreWorks was itinerant, making use of warehouses, basements, and parking garages for its performance stages. Even from the beginning, new and original work has been part of the organizational DNA. In its first three years, the company produced 13 wholly original works for the stage, thanks to a charter from the City of Palo Alto – a relationship that remains important to this day. The company soon became known for two other distinctive qualities: its high production values and reflecting the demographic diversity of the community through casting choices on the stage. Throughout the years, TheatreWorks has sought a balance of plays, musicals, and shows with music.

By the late 1980s, as the annual operating budget grew past \$1 million, TheatreWorks established itself as a major regional theatre, including signing its first AEA contract. TheatreWorks' commitment to diversity and innovation continued. The productions featured plays and musicals about minority experiences and cultures, from *The Great White Hope* and *Eubie* to *Pacific Overtures* and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. In addition to such shows, non-traditional casting of traditional works and roles drew Asian and Latino as well as African-American performers from the Bay Area and beyond. As the budget grew, so too did TheatreWorks' determination to introduce Silicon Valley audiences to material not previously seen on Bay Area stages, including the work of emerging playwrights from around the country. The company established a Stage II series, where smaller productions of such works were produced in parallel with the company's main stage season.

When the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts (MVCPA) opened in 1991, it became a “home company” and TheatreWorks began producing five main stage productions there each season as well as three shows at the Lucie Stern Theatre in Palo Alto. The 1990s also saw the launch of TheatreWorks' award-winning education program.

In the early 2000s, the company focused even more energy on the discovery of new voices and the development of new works. TheatreWorks launched its [*New Works Initiative*](#), featuring an annual Writers' Retreat and New Works Festival, developmental workshops and readings, commissions of new work, and main stage world premieres. The *New Works Initiative* is now central to TheatreWorks' mission and stature. In 2005 TheatreWorks became a member of LORT (League of Resident Theatres).

In 2006, Executive Director Phil Santora joined the company, bringing years of award-winning experience in regional theatre management and development. Phil has been instrumental in

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growing the company, including the *New Works Initiative*, in both size and stature. He has taken a leadership role in LORT while forging relationships between TheatreWorks and other regional theatres. Given the company's growth and impact across the region, the company officially adopted the name TheatreWorks Silicon Valley (TWSV).

Leadership and Transition

As noted above, Robert Kelley founded TheatreWorks and has served as its only Artistic Director over the ensuing 49 years. He will retire at the conclusion of the 2019-20 season having completed a remarkable 50-year tenure.

Phil Santora has served as TWSV's Executive Director for the past twelve seasons. Full bios on Robert Kelley and Phil Santora may be found here: <https://theatreworks.org/about-us/>

TWSV is governed by an active and engaged 28-member Board of Trustees. Both the Artistic Director and Executive Director hold positions on the Board.

Current Venues

As TWSV celebrates its 49th season, it is one of California's largest theatre companies, with 40 permanent staff members, a 28-member Board of Trustees, more than 8000 subscribers, and an annual budget of around \$9 million. It is a LORT B and C theatre currently composed of an eight-production subscription season. TWSV presents in the following venues:

- The Lucie Stern Theatre, a 400-seat proscenium venue in Palo Alto, is the company's historic home. Three productions are staged there annually, in addition to the New Works Festival of contemporary work in development, which is presented each summer.
- The Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, a 650-seat proscenium venue in Mountain View serves as home for five productions annually.
- The Lohman Theatre in Los Altos Hills, a 210-seat thrust theatre is a third venue for TWSV, which allows experimentation with occasional non-subscription productions.

TWSV is a primary tenant in Palo Alto and has recently secured a three-year contract with the city. The company is working with Mountain View city management to finalize a favorable long-term contract at MVCPA. The company leases approximately 58,000 square feet of space for its offices, costume shop, and rehearsal halls in Redwood City and scenic/props shops in Newark, CA.

Opportunities and Challenges

The next Artistic Director will join an organization with a remarkable foundation and credibility based on its hard-earned artistic bona fides. Among the opportunities are the following:

- Expanding and enhancing its original programming, high production quality, and diverse storytelling and casting.
- Leveraging the institution's position as an arts leader in Silicon Valley and continuing to assert the importance of performing arts to the communities of the region.
- Furthering TWSV's leadership in new work development and exploring the potential for expanded / new partnerships.
- Building on its highly successful education and community engagement efforts to even more fully reach into its many communities and inspire a new generation of theatregoers.

- Programming in a way that will build on the diversity and innovation of the Silicon Valley residents.

Along with these opportunities, there are notable challenges that the next AD must embrace:

- Creating programming that expands audience while continuing to delight and inspire current subscriber base.
- Nurturing the audience through the transition of artistic leadership.
- Responding to the organization's needs around performance space and artist housing in an increasingly expensive real estate market.
- Continuing to deliver important storytelling and high production values within the constraints of a regional theater budget.
- Ensuring that all voices in the community are represented through the art and in the organization.
- Maintaining the company's positive operating status.
- Participating in deficit-management strategies. The company has closed the past five seasons with balanced budgets and recently retired \$1.8 million in deficits. TWSV leadership team will need to make a determination on how and when to retire the remaining \$1.5 million in long-term, accumulated deficits.
- Building the TWSV brand while exploring a possible permanent home.

More information can be found on TWSV's website: <https://theatreworks.org>

The Future

The next Artistic Director will join TWSV at a pivotal time in its history. While the 2019-20 season will celebrate the many accomplishments of TWSV and Kelley, the Board and staff are looking forward to the next phase of TWSV's organizational life. The following principles from the current strategic plan will guide the company:

- **New Works, Music and Musical Theatre, and Education.** These elements are core to the company's programming and identity.
- **Inspired Celebration of the Human Spirit.** Viewed over time, our work reflects the positive possibilities of the human experience, focusing on our potential, our resilience, and our reliance on one another.
- **Excellence.** At the center of our work, we value artistic excellence. It permeates all we endeavor to do.
- **Diversity in our Storytelling and Programming.** We will continue our deep commitment to diversity on our stage and among our artists. We strive to create room for diverse voices in our organization, populate our staff and board in a manner that more fully represents Silicon Valley, and ensure that obstacles to inclusion, diversity, and equity are addressed and removed.
- **Personal Connection.** TWSV, first and foremost, is a welcoming and collaborative environment. There is a sense of personal connection, affiliation, and ownership among members of the TWSV community. The essence of this personal connection is a deep-rooted belief that everyone involved in TheatreWorks is valued and is, at some level, responsible for and proud of the creation of its art.

Position and Responsibilities

The Artistic Director and Executive Director will continue to operate as co-equal partners, with both reporting to the Board through its Chair.

Programmatic Leadership – the Artistic Director will be expected to...

- Guide the company's artistic vision and choice of plays, musicals, and other programs in ways that recognize the company's distinguished history and its interest in making theatre even more relevant to today's audiences; choose creative teams for the productions; and assure high standards of excellence.
- Establish and maintain strong relationships with upcoming and established playwrights, directors, actors, and designers ensuring that TWSV is a current and dynamic presence in American theatre.
- Broaden TWSV's impact in Silicon Valley and the region.
- Ensure programming, casting, and staffing choices reflect the increasingly diverse and young population of the region.
- Support the creation of relevant and diverse community engagement and education programs.
- To consider all ways that will energize even larger audiences to take part in the many aspects of the theatre's work.

Organizational Leadership – the Artistic Director will be expected to...

- Inspire and manage the reporting staff, modeling TWSV's culture of respect and collaboration.
- Assure that members of the Board of Trustees have the information and motivation to effectively govern and represent the organization.
- Embody TWSV's mission and values, and to encourage and require others to do the same.
- Help develop a vision for the theatre that recognizes the importance of its mission and excites the artists, Board, and Staff of TWSV.
- Become the public face and spokesperson of the organization including taking part in fundraising efforts.

Qualifications

TWSV is a collaborative and welcoming workplace that values creativity, initiative, and teamwork. The ideal candidate would not only have demonstrated professional experience but also would be a strong fit with the values of the organization. Key factors that will be explored with candidates include the following:

Professional Experience

- Demonstrated capacity to articulate and deliver a strong aesthetic and overall vision that inspires others.
- A known breadth of interests to explore a full range of the theatre canon while also demonstrating a keen commitment to musicals and new work. TWSV remains committed to presenting a balanced season of plays, musicals, and new works and will seek candidates who have backgrounds that can support this balance of productions.
- Proven leadership, demonstrating a grasp of how artistic choice and the operational, financial, and producing elements of the theatre must work together.
- A demonstrated commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

- While there is a bias toward someone who is an accomplished stage director with significant achievement in the theatre world, the Search Committee is open to candidates of other backgrounds.
- Prior experience in an organizational leadership role or oversight of important projects would be preferable.
- Demonstrable background in building effective and productive staff teams through creating and maintaining a positive working culture.

Personal Qualities and Values

- Delight at the prospect of fulfilling TWSV's mission and values, including a demonstrable belief in new work as well as in professional theatre producing.
- A desire to engage with the breadth of TWSV's diverse communities with a curiosity about their lives and stories.
- The interest and the capability to build relationships with the greater TheatreWorks community.
- Strong problem-solving skills; collaborative and open to change.
- A blend of warmth, humility, humor, grit, and tenacity.

Start Date

The Search Committee will make its final decision by end of calendar year 2019. The start date for full time employment will be in the first half of 2020. Depending on the timing of the decision, the 2020-21 season may be planned, at least in part, by Robert Kelley and his team, although the possibility may exist for the new Artistic Director to influence that season. The intention is to provide the new leader with an extended period of engagement with the staff, Board, shops, theatres, audiences, and communities before preparing the following season.

Procedure to Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are encouraged to submit a cover letter, resume, and professional references to the consulting firm retained to conduct the search. All materials will be held in strict confidence. The letter of no more than 1½ pages (single-spaced) should describe why this post and theatre is attractive to the applicant and what about them and their work makes them a potentially strong contributor as a leader of TWSV. Application materials should be sent electronically – Word or .pdf only, please – with the applicant's name included as part of each file name, through this link: <https://tinyurl.com/TWSV-AD>

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TWSV encourages applications from candidates of all gender identities and from candidates of color.

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