



The Coterie Theatre Mid-Year Accountability Report August 2021

Introduction

On February 12, 2021, The Coterie Theatre made the pledge to join other TYA theaters across the country to collectively (both Staff and Board) work through the document [“Anti-Racist & Anti-Opressive Futures for Theatre for Young Audiences: An Interactive Guide.”](#) [Herein, we will refer to this invaluable support as “The Guide”.] With this pledge, we will participate in transparent, semi-annual check-ins to report on the progress we make, to take measurable action and to commit to ongoing engagement in this work. We understand we are accountable to young people, their families, and the worlds we help them imagine.

We would like to acknowledge and express our gratitude for the invaluable work and tools the BIPOC in TYA Advisory Board and contributors have provided TYA theaters. We have relied on and are guided in our journey by this work and community.

Accomplishments this semester:

This is a summary of the work we have undertaken in our first semester as a formal Task Force. While we list these as accomplishments, we do not mean that these are *completed* activities or deliverables. We understand that as we continue on the journey of becoming an ARAO organization, these activities and deliverables will evolve and become iterative. A breakthrough that we made pretty early on in this EDIJ work is that it will neither be a quick or easy process. We will need to get all board and staff involved and really examine ourselves as an organization and individually. Some discussions and conversations will be difficult, but we are committed to the work.

Please note that Coterie staff initiated a self-examination in the immediate wake of George Floyd’s murder in May 2020 and began talking about organizational and programming blind spots last summer. They proceeded sharing their introspection with the Board and shortly after with joining a number of partnering theatres on the virtual world premiere of [A Kids Play about Racism](#), an online theatrical experience for children and families. Adapted from the groundbreaking book and produced in partnership with 41 other Theatres for Young Audiences across the country. Board leadership formalized a joint effort with staff and formed The Coterie EDIJ Task Force in February 2021.



The Coterie Theatre Mid-Year Accountability Report August 2021

The provision of the invaluable collaboration that produced The Guide, as well as guidance learned from the *Listen Learn Lead* series, enabled us to structure our path forward...

- 1. The Coterie Theatre EDIJ Task Force:** Immediately following our formal Pledge to the TYA, we formed a task force that includes Staff and Board representation. As guided by the *Listen, Learn, Lead* video/webinar series, co-developed by the TYA/USA committee, we created an EDIJ Task Force to manage our journey. We believe this is a full organization and board undertaking, but that a task force is invaluable in charting our path and also keeping us all moving forward. We share task force meeting facilitation and work effort leadership, such as for the creation of our Values & Commitment Statements. We are very fortunate to have multiple members with professional experience in EDIJ work in the corporate setting.

Name	Coterie BOD Committee or Organization Department
Amanda Kibler	Staff - Education Director
Scott Hobart	Staff - Resident Technical Director
Jeff Church	Staff - Producing Artistic Director
Joette Pelster	Staff - Executive Director
Jaleeza Owens	Board - Assistant Secretary and Board Engagement
Lori Riddle	Board - Member-At-Large and Finance and Operations
Nicole Jacobs-Silvey	Board - Board Engagement
Lisa Veglahn	Board - Development and Marketing
Andrew Van der Laan	Board - Board President



The Coterie Theatre Mid-Year Accountability Report August 2021

Karen Luchinsky	Board - Board Engagement
-----------------	--------------------------

2. Values Statements and Commitment Statement

We hold ourselves accountable to our community and the TYA community for becoming an AntiRacist and Anti Oppressive theatre, as an organization and as a board. Our formal Commitment has informed our translation of our Mission into supporting Vision Statements. These Statements are shared with the community on our [website](#). We believe these statements

Developing the Values Statement first with the Task Force and then finalizing it with the full board was an important process. It helped us to focus-in on how we see ourselves and our work. This Statement serves as a critical shared foundation for the ongoing EDIJ work, as it reflects values and core guiding principles specific to the Coterie that may have been understood but are now codified.

3. First Steps

We identified our immediate priorities to undertake as a task force. These are posted on our website and are as follows. (The next section reports our First Steps work to-date):

- ï *an examination of the demographics of our community as a way for us to understand who participates in our work, and to take on the challenge of including those who do not*
- ï *an inspection of Board processes, practices, and governing documents through an EDIJ lens*
- ï *changes in personnel hiring practices to be more intentional in reflecting our community*
- ï *a re-examination of our existing programs onstage and off (such as Project Pride, Project Daylight, our Bus Subsidy Program, and more) through an EDIJ lens in order to amp up those programs that are having success in serving diverse audiences*
- ï *a focus on adding new site locations for classes to meet our communities where they are and to serve those communities who have been excluded in the past*
- ï *a reorganization of theatre class scholarships to increase access to all young artists*



The Coterie Theatre Mid-Year Accountability Report August 2021

- ï *an inclusion of land acknowledgements in our public materials to recognize the ground originally inhabited by Indigenous Peoples*
- ï *an increase in partnerships and mentorships as another way of taking on the challenge of including all voices.*

Our Work to-Date (a check-in, in the order listed above):

Review and Discussion of Non-Negotiable Demands (Section ii of The Guide):

The task force reviewed and discussed The Guide by section. We then dedicated a full meeting examining the first to categories of the Demands.

Each member of the EDIJ Task Force found individual portions of the ARAO guide that spoke to them. Sharing those helped others see our organization and our work in a different light and opened up important conversations about how each of us define “our community” and “our stakeholders.”

We will resume the line-by-line assessment of the Demands next quarter and will determine how to document and share our assessments of current standing as well as near term and long-term goals for each.

Demographics: At this time, we are limited by resources to undertake this in a thorough, data supported analysis. We are exploring accessible methods/options, such as rudimentary overlays of zip codes for schools attending for field trips. Some of our programming *(Health Education and Classes) have some accurate demographic information, basically built into the design of the program while understanding the audience make-up is limited to observation. For Mainstage, we are exploring using Greater Kansas City census data to overlay the data we have on the school groups that purchase field tryp “group” seats. Clearly, there are limitations to the reliability of this data. We expect to learn weaknesses only or areas of focus for programming, partnerships, educator outreach and recruiting.

Partnerships: We are very focused on pursuing Partnerships with community organizations to help us extend our Classroom reach into underserved areas. We believe this is the most effective and expedient way to grow into these communities. So far, we have started work with two such organizations, and have found that an added



The Coterie Theatre Mid-Year Accountability Report August 2021

benefit is that these locations provide many other support and learning opportunities for the young audiences/students we hope to reach. The classes we provide in these locations will be offered free of charge, unlike our offerings at other locations. We will seek funding from foundations and corporate sponsors.

Leadership and Staff Diversity: With the pause initiated by COVID, we are trying to find different ways to work on building BIPOC diversity in leadership roles

- ï Begun the process of transfer of leadership of The Coterie's Project Pride Program to leaders in the LGBT community
- ï Teaching artists and assistant directors
- ï **NEXT/FUTURE STEPS:**
 - Ë Post-COVID recruiting for backfilling current vacant Development Director position
 - Ë Revisiting Executive Succession Plan

Board Practices, Procedures and Tools - We will perform a thorough examination of all that we do and how we do it. During this period, we have mapped out our methodology for this comprehensive process:

- ï **EDIJ Lens** - in order to identify weaknesses and prioritize areas for change and improvement, we have drafted a Coterie-specific EdIJ Lens through which to examine our work. This is essentially a list of questions to ask ourselves for each item to ensure each practice upholds and enables us to pursue our Mission and Vision to our fullest ability.
- ï **Board Policies, Procedures and Tools Inventory Template** - This is a spreadsheet that each of our Board committees will complete. It will be a comprehensive list, per committee of the full scope of what the committee does and the tools it uses to do those things. This will ensure we do not omit anything from our inspection.
- ï **NEXT STEPS:**
 - Ë Complete Inventories
 - Ë Prioritize Practices, Procedures, Tools for Improvement



The Coterie Theatre Mid-Year Accountability Report August 2021

	A	B	C
1			
2	Committee Roles and Responsibilities	Priority for Review	Preliminary Assessment and
3	From Board Engagement Roles and Responsibilities document:		
4			
5	BOARD MEMBER SKILLS, EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT		
6	create tools and/or forms for identifying Member skills, experience and developmental goals		
7	administer tracking of skills, experience and interests for purposes of developing board members and determining recruiting priorities		
8			
9	MEMBERSHIP (working with the President):		
10	identify recruiting needs based on skills/experience gaps and attrition	1	
11	recruit new board members	1	
12	on-board/train/orient new directors		
13	manage committee assignments (including gathering skills matrix info)		
14	create/conduct exit interviews for outgoing directors		
15			

Board Recruiting: The Board is focusing on diversifying its demographic make-up, while recruiting members with the skills, experience and networks needed to support the organization. The Board and executive leadership of The Coterie has worked towards this goal as an essential part of informing programming, funding, audience reach, and the other many ways board members contribute for several years. However, it was never articulated as a part of our lens to have the board demographically represent the communities we serve and those we'd like to better serve going forward. We are now more clear that by stating this as a formal goal, has helped us to initiate a candid and thoughtful discussion on expanding our networks and tapping into new networks.

Non-Negotiable Demands: We have reviewed and discussed the first two (of six) sections of the Non-Negotiable Demands listed in Section ii (Pathways to Anti-Racist & Anti-Oppressive Futures) of the TYA's ARAO Guide.



The Coterie Theatre Mid-Year Accountability Report August 2021

Land Acknowledgement:

The Coterie respectfully acknowledges that we are on the traditional, ancestral lands of the Osage Nation. The process of knowing and acknowledging the land we stand on is a way of honoring and expressing gratitude for the ancestral Osage people who were on this land before us.

As advised by kcindiancenter.org, we have incorporated a Land Acknowledgement in all Coterie pre-show announcements. Additionally, we have created a poster display in two areas as a permanent statement in front of our theatre. The artwork from the poster was part of a partnership with native artists, [#honornativeland](https://twitter.com/honornativeland) at usdac.us/nativeland.

Education:

- ï 100% Staff has participated/viewed *Listen, Learn, Lead* Series, as well as several board members
- ï The EDIJ Task Force has collectively reviewed and discussed the TYA ARAO Guide with emphasis on Section ii, Non-Negotiable Demands. We recently decided we would like to continue with the other sections and share our self-assessment for each demand.
- ï Exec Director, Artistic Director and Board President have continued DEI Workshops sponsored by TYA USA, Arts in Color
- ï Sharing Resources with the Black Repertory Theatre of Kansas City (“The Black Rep”) to help share and grow skills
- ï Next Steps:
 - Ë Board Retreat September 2021 - To build a shared foundational understanding and unify around our Commitment. “The Guide” is providing most of our content for break-out group discussion and for individual introspection. (We have other inputs from the *Listen, Learn, Lead* series)
 - Ë Board continuing education and growth - e.g. Listen, Learn, Lead video planned for Fall ‘21