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For Immediate Release

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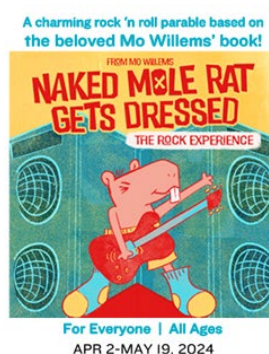
**KANSAS CITY'S THE COTERIE THEATRE ANNOUNCES  
NEW ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP**

***Khalia Davis named Producing Artistic Director***

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**Kansas City, MO** – The Board of Directors of The Coterie Theatre announced today the appointment of **Khalia Davis** as the new producing artistic director, effective Feb. 1, 2024. Davis replaces interim artistic director **Heidi Van** who has led the artistic programming since February following the resignation of **Jeff Church** in December 2022. Davis will partner with Managing Director **Jonathan Thomas**, who joined The Coterie in April 2022 as director of development, and served as interim managing director since November 2022, following the passing of longtime Coterie executive director Joette Pelster, until his appointment as Managing Director in March 2023.

**On Stage at  
THE COTERIE  
THEATRE  
in 2024**



“From our first introduction to Khalia to the everyday interactions, her energy and passion for theatre for young audiences is palpable,” said Theresa Stoker, President of The Coterie’s Board of Directors. “We know she will continue to do exciting and innovative work in the field of theatre for young audiences and we are thrilled to have her co-leading The Coterie. We’ve created an amazing team with Jonathan and Khalia; the two complement each other so well. With their collaboration, and that of the full team, we believe The Coterie’s reputation as a top theatre for reaching across races, genders, and generations, locally and nationally, will flourish.”

## ABOUT KHALIA DAVIS

Khalia Davis (she/her) is a multidisciplinary artist and arts leader who most recently served as the Assistant Director for the Broadway-bound world premiere, *The Hippest Trip: The Soul Train Musical*. As the former Artistic Director of Bay Area Children’s Theatre (BACT), she led the world



premieres of *a kids play about Racism*, which brought together over 40 theater producing partners, including The Coterie, and was viewed on Broadway on Demand nearly 80,000 times during its limited run then became a free resource for educators and their students, and *The Imaginaries: An Immersive Musical*, an original new work that transformed their theater into an accessible playground created by the newly-formed BACT Writer’s Room. The BACT Writer’s Room was a direct response to the lack of opportunities for BIPOC playwrights and composers specializing in TYA projects. During the COVID pandemic when theaters were closed in the Bay Area, she worked in partnership with former Executive Director of BACT, Nina Meehan, to conceive and produce various forms of theatrical digital and audio content for young audiences that activated their creativity and imaginative play,

showcasing the potential for future digital and theatrical collaborations in TYA programming. Ms. Davis directed and devised other new works like the award-nominated world premiere, *She Persisted the Musical*, based on the popular children’s book by Chelsea Clinton, the off-Broadway world premiere of an original adaptation of Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* with New York City Children’s Theatre, and the world premiere *Arthur and Friends Make a Musical!* based on Arthur, the longest-running animated series on PBS with First Stage. Other prominent theaters include: A.C.T., Atlantic Theater Company’s Atlantic for Kids, New York City Children’s Theater, Disney Theatrical Group, Spellbound Theatre and more. As a producer, Ms. Davis has

helped organizations reach hundreds of thousands of young people through interactive “edutainment” with the nationally known Story Pirates, generated new digital pre-school content with Spellbound at Home, and produced children’s media with her personal company, Kids at Heart Productions. Before assuming her role as Artistic Director of Bay Area Children’s Theater in 2020, Ms. Davis served as the Director of Inclusion and Education with Brooklyn Children’s Theatre restructuring their children’s musical theater programming through an anti-racism lens. Proud board member for TYA/USA, Spellbound Theater, and The Story Pirates. Awards: 2019 Emerging Leader Fellowship-TYA/USA, 2019 NYCCT Leader Fellowship, 2021 Corey Medallion Award-Children’s Theatre Foundation of America. BA in Theater Arts from the University of Southern California.  
[www.khaliadavis.com](http://www.khaliadavis.com)

Ms. Davis stated, “I am over the moon with this opportunity to carry on a cherished legacy valued by generations of families and young people here in Kansas City as their new Producing Artistic Director! I was immediately drawn to The Coterie after reading their mission and value statement and seeing that they highlight justice as an important tenant to the work on the stage and in the classroom. I believe art is meant to invite conversation, interrogate perspectives, and ignite imagination. I am energized by The Coterie’s history of embracing new work written and performed by historically marginalized communities and equally passionate about the positive impact of new work development and community collaboration and partnerships.”

“And while I am not from Kansas City originally, witnessing the way the arts community here supports and uplifts one another is reminiscent of living and working professionally in the San Francisco Bay Area theater community,” she continued. “I look forward to working with new colleagues across the arts industry here and working alongside managing director, Jonathan Thomas, to bring more exciting, engaging, and educational arts programming to the families and young people of Kansas City and beyond!”

Managing Director Jonathan Thomas stated, “As we further our mission to bring professional theater to young people and families, as well as serve our community as the premier arts education theater in our region, Khalia stood out as someone who brings exceptional leadership, talent, and experience in those crucial areas. Khalia’s commitment to new work, particularly in the BIPOC playwright and composer community, is an inspiring parallel to our equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice work.”

“It’s hard to know how to begin to describe all the positives Khalia brings. She is a dynamic, caring, and skilled innovator at the forefront of the industry, and she brings a wonderful energy to our region. I am honored to partner with her and look forward to supporting her artistic leadership as we bring life-changing experiences to the families of Kansas City.”

ALJP Consulting led the search process, in partnership with a diverse search committee of stakeholders. Over 90 candidates nationwide applied for the role, and the process incorporated feedback and invited participation from a wide variety of board, staff, resident artists, and other members of The Coterie and Kansas City's arts community.

"Khalia brings an extraordinary combination of experience, vision, care, and energy to The Coterie." says ALJP Consultant Patric Madden, "She's a fantastic choice to carry on the organization's tradition of bold and inclusive storytelling, and we know that The Coterie and the entire field will benefit from her leadership."

ALJP Consulting is a Black woman-owned, mission driven firm specializing in executive search, strategic planning, board coaching and development, facilitation, and other services for nonprofit arts and culture organizations. ALJP was founded in the Summer of 2019 to fill a need for more consulting firms dedicated to reimagining the ecosystem of the industry to address contemporary challenges. The firm strives to create more diverse and inclusive environments for artists, administrators, and patrons. For more information, please visit [aljpc consulting.com](http://aljpc consulting.com).

## **MEDIA**

Visit [www.thecoterie.org](http://www.thecoterie.org) for downloadable media releases. High-resolution photos with ID and photo credits and digital assets available by request.

## **THE COTERIE**

The Coterie Theatre, named "One of the Five Best Theaters for Young Audiences" in the U.S. by *TIME* magazine, provides unique theatre experiences for families and young audiences. The company is nationally recognized for its one-of-a-kind programming that features a year-round season of live plays and musicals on the company's mainstage. Since its founding in 1979 in Kansas City, Missouri, The Coterie has been at the forefront of commissioning new works or adaptations that contribute to the field of theatre for young audiences. More than 50 world or American premieres for all ages have been produced by The Coterie over the last 44 years, including hosting multiple major Broadway composers and lyricists to shape quality musicals for youth and families. The Coterie is interested in intergenerational conversation, and consistently includes teen programming in its season and outreach efforts.

The Coterie offers acting and theatre classes year-round for PreK-12th grades at multiple locations around Kansas City, including an extensive summer program of classes and performance camps. The Coterie's community programming redefines traditional notions of work for young audiences with its unique dramatic writing programs (Young Playwrights' Roundtable), teen LGBTQ work (Project Pride), and preteen and teen mental health workshops (Project Daylight), which are offered to students and schools free of charge.

All these components serve an average of over 75,000 per year through over 350 performances. As a not-for-profit professional theatre company, The Coterie seeks to educate, entertain, and challenge audiences by opening lines of communication between races, genders, and generations. To make a donation, purchase tickets, register for an acting class, or for more information, visit [www.thecoterie.org](http://www.thecoterie.org).

## OUR FUNDERS

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