

IRON CROW THEATRE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IRON CROW THEATRE ANNOUNCES NUMEROUS INITIATIVES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND INCREASED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

THE THEATRE IS GRATEFUL FOR ONGOING COMMUNITY FEEDBACK AND SUPPORT AS IT BEGINS ITS 18/19 SEASON OF BECOMING

BALTIMORE, Maryland – August 3, 2018: Today, Iron Crow Theatre announced its upcoming 18/19 Season of Becoming alongside numerous initiatives to better support the theatre in its mission to continue producing award-winning queer theatre here in Baltimore. These initiatives come directly from feedback shared during its recent conversations with members of the local theatre and queer communities. As attempts to undermine LGBTQ+ rights persist around the world and queer spaces continue to disappear both locally and nationwide, queer theatre companies like Iron Crow Theatre, now more than ever, play a vital role in celebrating and elevating the diversity of our city.

“Queer stories must continue to be told here in Baltimore, and I want to help Iron Crow Theatre do so,” said Mr. Ron Legler, President of the Hippodrome Theatre at the France-Merrick Performing Arts Center and chair of Iron Crow Theatre’s new Community Advisory Board. “Iron Crow Theatre is hard at work to ensure that artists are able to continue telling these stories in a safe, professional, and transparent environment. I am confident that the Board of Directors is moving in the right direction, and this new Community Advisory Board will help the theatre continue its great work in our community.”

Comprised of leadership from a diverse array of theatre organizations in Baltimore, the Community Advisory Board will continue to advise and support Iron Crow Theatre as it implements its enhanced and extensive policies and procedures on discrimination and harassment, reporting and resolving concerns, and the use of social media – making certain that Iron Crow Theatre remains a safe and professional space for all. The theatre remains committed to adding partners from the local theatre and queer communities to the new Community Advisory Board over the upcoming season.

Furthermore, Iron Crow Theatre’s Board of Directors is dedicated to diversifying and expanding in order to better address the varied perspectives and concerns of the multifaceted communities that the theatre serves. In advancement of these goals, the theatre is honored to welcome its newest Board member, Dr. Natka Bianchini, a highly celebrated Baltimore-based theatre director and accomplished scholar. Dr. Bianchini is an associate professor of theatre at Loyola University Maryland and was the director of Iron Crow Theatre’s critically-acclaimed production of *Cloud 9* last season. As a member of the Board of Directors, she will act as a community liaison for Iron Crow Theatre; alongside other Board members and volunteer staff, Dr. Bianchini will lead a number of listening and outreach initiatives during the upcoming season, providing increased transparency and opportunities for dialogue.

“*Cloud 9* was a tremendously positive experience for me both personally and professionally,” said Dr. Natka Bianchini, “so when I saw the challenges that Iron Crow Theatre experienced this past spring, I felt I had a decision to make. I could go left, and do nothing, or go right, and try to become a part of the solution. I chose to go right. I am committed to helping this theatre improve and grow. An integral part of that will be listening to and responding to the Baltimore theatre community. As a theatre scholar

WEB

www.ironcrowtheatre.org

PHONE

(443) 637-CROW (2769)

MAIL

P.O. Box 50074 Baltimore, MD 21211

IRON CROW THEATRE

and practitioner, I feel I am uniquely positioned to do just that."

"With this coming season, we want to renew our commitment to the diverse communities we serve and to the invaluable role queer theatre has in our society," said Dr. Frank Golom, President of the Iron Crow Theatre's Board of Directors. "We are determined to strengthen the organizational foundations needed for a safe and inclusive environment for all of our artists, all while maintaining the high standards of creative excellence our productions have become known for. We are incredibly grateful to Dr. Natka Bianchini, Ron Legler, and the entire Community Advisory Board for stepping up, demonstrating professional leadership, and offering their support of Iron Crow Theatre as we continue learning, growing and becoming."

Moreover, starting this season, Iron Crow Theatre is grateful to be partnering with Ms. Shawna Potter, founder and Safer Space coordinator of Hollaback! Baltimore, who will facilitate the theatre's new mandated Safer Space training for all volunteer staff and guest artists involved in every production.

"As Iron Crow continues to hold itself accountable to the community, Hollaback! Baltimore will begin a series of Safer Space trainings for their staff and volunteers," said Potter. "We hope this leads to a more proactive approach against gender-based violence when it happens. They will not be part of our Official Safer Space Program as of yet, but they will receive the same quality and content of trainings we've shared with other venues around Baltimore."

"We are thrilled for this opportunity to work more closely with a grassroots movement to effectively address and end harassment towards all women and LGBTQ people," said Mx. River Hansen, Iron Crow Theatre's Interim Managing Director. "Safer Space trainings are a critical first step, and the theatre is determined to do the work to become part of Hollaback! Baltimore's Official Safer Space Program."

Many of these initiatives come directly from conversations with a variety of community members following events of this past spring, when a volunteer staff member at Iron Crow Theatre accused its Artistic Director, Mr. Sean Elias, of sexual harassment. The internal investigation that immediately followed, under legal consultation from a top 10 U.S. law firm to ensure impartiality and due process, concluded unanimously that sexual harassment did not occur.

"I am heartbroken to learn that anyone would recount their time at Iron Crow Theatre as anything less than the positive experience I've always intended it to be, or that anyone could feel uncomfortable or unsafe," said Elias. "We at Iron Crow Theatre all strongly believe in treating everyone professionally and respectfully, and we remain committed to being better and doing better as we begin a new season."

In support of the initiatives recently announced, the Board of Directors has approved a complete overhaul of the company's reporting structure, and all volunteer administrative staff positions have been redefined. This includes splitting the previous position of Artistic Director/CEO into a dual-leadership model consisting of both an Artistic Director and a new Managing Director, both reporting directly to the Board of Directors. Other new administrative staff positions include a Production Manager, a Marketing/PR Manager, and a Development Manager. The theatre plans to add additional positions in upcoming seasons as it continues to grow.

WEB

www.ironcrowtheatre.org

PHONE

(443) 637-CROW (2769)

MAIL

P.O. Box 50074 Baltimore, MD 21211

IRON CROW THEATRE

Below is a summary of actions taken by Iron Crow Theatre over the past six months as well as its current ongoing initiatives:

1. After a volunteer accused Iron Crow Theatre's Artistic Director of sexual harassment, the Board of Directors launched an immediate investigation and solicited legal consultation from a top 10 U.S. law firm to ensure impartiality and due process. The Board of Directors reviewed hours of documents and transcripts from interviews with members of the community both inside and outside the organization, and then concluded unanimously that sexual harassment did not occur.
2. After the conclusion of the investigation and to inform all ongoing and future initiatives, members of the Board of Directors met privately with a number of local artists and community organizations, including Restorative Response Baltimore, Hollaback! Baltimore, Iron Crow Theatre's Artistic Associates, and others directly impacted by recent events. Several of these meetings have been ongoing.
3. Iron Crow Theatre partnered with Restorative Response Baltimore (RRB) to facilitate a community dialogue in accordance with RRB's guidelines. This event was canceled by RRB when registered participants unaffiliated with Iron Crow Theatre attempted to subvert RRB's conflict resolution process, causing RRB to deem the dialogue unhelpful and potentially harmful.
4. Iron Crow Theatre established a new Community Advisory Board, chaired by Ron Legler, President of the Hippodrome Theatre at the France-Merrick Performing Arts Center.
5. In partnership with its new Community Advisory Board, the Board of Directors established new policies and procedures on discrimination and harassment, reporting and resolving concerns, and the use of social media. All of these procedures will be publicly available online during the new season.
6. In partnership with its new Community Advisory Board, the Board of Directors established its first ever Volunteer Handbook, detailing and compiling all Iron Crow Theatre policies, procedures, expectations and benefits.
7. Iron Crow Theatre's Board of Directors welcomed Dr. Natka Bianchini, a highly celebrated Baltimore-based theatre director and accomplished scholar, as its newest Board member, serving as a community liaison, providing increased transparency and opportunities for dialogue.
8. The Board of Directors overhauled the company's reporting structure and redefined all volunteer administrative staff positions. The previous position of Artistic Director/CEO was split into a dual-leadership model consisting of both an Artistic Director and a new Managing Director, both reporting directly to the Board of Directors.
9. Iron Crow Theatre has partnered with Ms. Shawna Potter, founder and Safer Space coordinator of Hollaback! Baltimore, who will facilitate the theatre's new mandated Safer Space training for all volunteer staff and guest artists prior to every production.
10. Iron Crow Theatre contacted those who were registered for the previously scheduled community dialogue to provide an update on the company's progress and provide a direct line of communication to the community for inquiries, concerns, and/or feedback.

IRON CROW THEATRE

11. Artistic Director Sean Elias has begun participating in ongoing leadership coaching and mentoring, provided by an external executive coach, to foster his continued growth as an organizational leader as well as an accomplished artist.

IRON CROW THEATRE is Baltimore's award-winning queer theatre and produces queer theatre for a queer city, celebrating the renegade and the unorthodox in all of us.

PRESS/MEDIA INQUIRES

pr@ironcrowtheatre.org