



Crowded Fire Theater

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Contact: Leigh Rondon-Davis (510) 816-9169

leighr@crowdedfire.org

Press Page: www.crowdedfire.org/press/

Crowded Fire Theater Announces New Members of Administrative Staff & Shared Leadership Model

San Francisco, CA; August 10, 2023 - Crowded Fire Theater (CFT) a leading force in iconic and socially conscious theater, is proud to unveil its groundbreaking Shared Leadership Model, marking a significant shift in the organization's approach to administration and decision-making. Starting Spring of 2023, CFT no longer has one Artistic Director and Managing Director, and, instead, our staff of seven shares the leadership of the organization with equal pay across all of these positions. This new and revolutionary model is emblematic of this organization's innovative and collaborative culture.

The theater field is undergoing momentous transformation in leadership positions nationwide. Recognizing this opportunity, we seek to disrupt systems of gate-keeping and power-hoarding upheld by people in leadership positions (traditionally white male-held roles) by empowering an incoming generation of historically-marginalized future leaders who are questioning the very structures of those systems.

There is also a rising concern that many organizations are hiring women, LGBTQIA+, and BIPOC identifying leaders without the structural, relational, and financial resources to give said leaders the time to fully step into the role and specific needs of that organization and thrive. It has been an ongoing pathology in our field to expect an individual to come up in an artistic and administrative leadership role without adequate support, requiring nearly double the effort of a full-time job to find their footing. These leaders are often tokenized, expected to take responsibility for the actions of their predecessors, and left holding the labor of repair and rebuilding trust with their wider communities. It is not a sustainable practice, especially as we recover from this pandemic.

For these reasons, and in this moment of opportunity, we at Crowded Fire seek to bring together our strengths of: 1) a collaborative culture, and 2) a strong mentorship/mutual support practice to build a more sustainable and shared leadership structure. This is emerging from an already existing culture of collaboration and trust on staff. Prior hierarchically held Artistic and Managing Director roles are moving into a lateral relationship with our current, year-round staff with deliberate cross-training occurring in areas of artistic producing, financial & administrative management, marketing, and development. Shared leadership roles are paid the same hourly rate of \$25/hour, and we seek to have these roles understood and experienced as equals in agency, especially as it relates to organizationally impactful decision-making. As of April 2023, our shared leadership team has included 7 year-round, permanent staff members.

As part of this shift, we are thrilled to announce the hiring of Nailah Unole Dida-nese'ah Harper-Malveaux rounding out our team. Nailah has a deep history with Crowded Fire starting as an assistant director for Young Jean Lee's CHURCH, to artistically producing and directing SUBVERiTas as a part of the theater's mentorship program. Nailah brings significant local and national artistic experience as well as a deep commitment to community-driven theater to the Crowded Fire team. Her expertise and perspectives will contribute significantly to the organization's continued growth and impact.

In addition to Nailah, the Shared Leadership Team at Crowded Fire consists of:

- Julie McCormick: Leader of Management & Operations (administrative focus on financials, fundraising, ticketing, facilities, and human resources)
- Bethany Herron: Leader of Management & Fundraising (administrative focus on fundraising, supporting financials, ticketing, facilities, and human resources)
- Mina Morita: Leader of Artistic Curation & Strategy (artistic curation and strategic development of the organization, with support of social media)
- Leigh Rondon-Davis: Leader of Artistic Curation & Marketing (artistic and produciorial focus on curating online communications, casting, and audience & donor relations and engagement)
- Nailah Unole Dida-nese'ah Harper-Malveaux: Leader of Artistic Curation & Producing (artistic and produciorial focus on in-person production and creative team management; foundation, audience & donor relations and engagement)
- Caro Asercion: Leader of Artistic Producing (artistic and produciorial focus on literary management and new play development workshops, commissions, and festivals)
- Riley Alyson: Leader of Production & Community: (production, creative team, artistic community support, and technological management, with an administrative focus on process optimization)

The Crowded Fire leadership firmly believes that this innovative model will not only support the sustainability and well-being of its staff in the challenging Bay Area theater landscape but also inspire and cultivate future leaders in the field. By sharing its success, Crowded Fire hopes to encourage other organizations to adopt similar practices and build healthy, equitable, and visionary theater communities.

This model shift also marks the end of Mina Morita's tenure as Artistic Director, and after a period of mentorship and cross training, she will be transitioning off of Crowded Fire's Leadership team at the end of 2023. Mina has served as CFT's Artistic Director for nearly ten years after stepping into the role in 2015. Under Mina's stewardship, Crowded Fire's annual budget more than tripled, and the organization produced new works by renowned playwrights including: Idris Goodwin, Young Jean Lee, Christopher Chen, Dipika Guha, Star Finch, and Christina Anderson. "I am immensely grateful and honored to have stewarded this fearless theater community. We have fostered an environment where artists and audiences alike have nurtured their courage and developed an insatiable appetite for the unknown. I know this flame will continue to burn, bringing together (with care) those who seek to challenge our conventions in order to manifest a more liberated understanding of ourselves." In alignment with the values of this model, Mina's transition will empower a new cohort of leaders to envision and realize the organization's next chapter, building off of the powerful foundation and artistic legacy Mina has set in place.

For more information about Crowded Fire Theater and its Shared Leadership Model, please visit <http://www.crowdedfire.org/shared-leadership/>