



Crowded Fire Theater

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**CROWDED FIRE THEATER ANNOUNCES
EVOLVING SHARED LEADERSHIP MODEL AND LEADER
TRANSITIONS**

San Francisco, CA; April 30, 2026 - Crowded Fire Theater (CFT), a vital home for fierce new plays, embraces the evolution of their Shared Leadership Model. After three years of experimenting with a Shared Leadership Team that included five to seven leaders, CFT announces a transition to a smaller leadership cohort of three Co-Executive Directors: Riley Alyson, Nailah Harper-Malveaux, and Julie McCormick. Each Co-Executive Director will share responsibility for organizational health and purpose-driven strategy, while also leading in their distinct spheres:

Co-Executive Director, Riley Alyson, leads on production management and creates systems that support people in doing their best work.

Co-Executive Director, Nailah Harper-Malveaux, shapes the artistic vision and facilitates the integrity of our artistic practice.

Co-Executive Director, Julie McCormick, manages the organization's finance and fundraising strategies.

Crowded Fire remains committed to collective leadership rooted in distributed responsibility and shared stewardship. At the heart of CFT's practice is the insistence to build collective power, not just among the leadership team, but also with the artists and audiences.

In Spring 2023, CFT began this new and revolutionary model in order to disrupt systems of gate-keeping and to empower an incoming generation of BIPOC and historically marginalized leaders through mentorship, peer-learning and institutional support. This shift was emblematic of the organization's longstanding culture of innovation, collaboration, and equity. Over the past three years, CFT has learned that effective shared leadership is not only about structure, but also about culture, practice, and accountability.

This organizational restructuring comes at a time of great introspection in the field around the role of arts organizations during national upheaval. CFT has learned what the Bay Area theater ecology needs and believes they will be able to better serve the artistic community with a smaller, more nimble team. As the world changes and the needs of CFT's artists shift, the leadership structures will continue to evolve.

Co-Executive Directors Alyson, Harper-Malveaux, and McCormick in a joint statement said, "We are thrilled to be embarking on this adventure together! For nearly 30 years, Crowded Fire has been the fertile ground for artists to nurture their courage and make radical transformative

theater that bridges the local and national theater ecologies. In this next phase of Crowded Fire, we will continue this legacy of creating rigorous and resonant programming that is deeply embedded in the needs of our local arts community. We are honored to tend this soil, so that the next generation of artist-activists have a home to play, risk, and practice in community."

This work is not possible without the community of artists, audiences and co-conspirators that share our values and shape our work. Our board continues to provide wise counsel and enduring support. Board President Karina Gutiérrez said, "Crowded Fire Theater's commitment to artistic risks extends beyond its courageous productions and is reflected in the organizational structures that sustain its mission. This new structural recalibration emanates from our unwavering commitment to equity, transparency, and accountability, and provides our Co-Executive Directors with more well-defined roles and responsibilities to better mentor, support, and grow our local artistic ecosystem. I am confident this thoughtful transition will deepen the company's artistic impact, locally and nationally. The Co-Executive Directors, who all began as Crowded Fire artists and have played a role in shaping this new era of shared leadership, are poised to lead Crowded Fire with compassion, creativity, and vision."

Crowded Fire celebrates all of the leaders who have shaped this community and made it possible for CFT to take big swings, develop fierce and confronting new work, and center care in all that the theater creates. With its 30th anniversary on the horizon in 2027, CFT looks forward to sharing its learnings, honoring its artistic legacy and collaborators, and shaping a dynamic future.

About Crowded Fire:

Founded in 1997, Crowded Fire Theater (CFT) is nationally recognized for its development of a diverse and inclusive canon of new plays, while annually supporting approximately 100 local, primarily BIPOC artists. In addition to two mainstage shows, we offer a robust new play development program through The Matchbox Commissioning and Development Program. Matchbox actively supports the creation of high-quality contemporary theater through commissions, in-house workshops, and an annual free public reading series. We cultivate long-term relationships with playwrights, producing much of the work we commission and develop. Under the umbrella of this program, we develop four-to-six plays a year through Commissions; R&D Lab; Matchbox Reading Series; Production Workshops; Matchbox Productions; and a Playwright-in-Residence. Additional artistic support programs ebb and flow as needs change – recent programming has included Making Good Trouble, a collaborative antiracist train-the-trainers program; the Ignite Fund, supporting the development of local designers and technicians; and a Resident Artist Mentorship and Internship Programs. Crowded Fire is a member of The Future of American Theatre Cohort alongside Cleveland Public Theatre (OH), Company One (MA), Mosaic Theater Company (DC), and Perseverance Theatre (AK).