



**A Statement from Mosaic Theater Company  
Managing Director, Serge Seiden  
November 18, 2020**

Friends,

I am pleased to provide you with this update on the ongoing work by the incredible Mosaic team. Every other Sunday we have a Family Zoom call with three generations of cousins. At some point in the conversation someone inevitably asks with a concerned look: how's the theater going? How many of you have experienced something like that over the last 8 months?

Here's what I tell them, and what I am eager to share with you:

Of course, this is a challenging time, to say the least. We can't make live productions, audiences can't attend theater, and we don't know how long this will go on!

But this is also a once in a century opportunity for our industry to take a hard look at ourselves and to move forward, in a truly inclusive and fearless way. Mosaic is poised to be a leader in the field and in this time because we were forged with just this moment in mind. Our mission is a reflection of the values of these times.

The way I see it, the forced "time out" we are all in right now has done three things:

1. The pandemic has created a "time-out" in an industry that thrived on scarcity, urgency, and desperation:

A) scarce financial resources and intense competition for audiences,

B) impossible deadlines to produce more for less, and

C) an ever-eager pipeline of fresh recruits -- all combined to create a very unhealthy work environment.

2. This "time out" has given us an opportunity to evaluate our internal structures. The theater is steeped in the centuries old myth of the singular mostly male artist of genius. But this "visionary with vast power model" has been problematic.

3. The "time out" has also created time for Black, Indigenous and People of Color artists in the industry to speak their truth - to share the ways in which the theater is full of inequities. Like every other aspect of American culture - the theater is struggling to come to terms with systemic racism.

4. So the "pause" we are in is an opportunity to rebuild better. And that is truly thrilling.



Mosaic Team (Top Row: Serge Seiden, Psalmayene 24, Alexandra Cantalupo, Angelisa Gillyard, Chris Banks, Chris Wren, Deborah Hanselman, Chelsea Radigan. Bottom Row: Aria Velz, Lina Khawaldah, Laley Lippard, Michael Cottrell, Dina Soltan, April E. Carter, Maria Benzie, Mel Prather)

Starting in early July the staff has been engaged in exciting restructuring. Department Heads have all become students of The Management Center. We have instituted several new management techniques as a result: one on one weekly meetings with direct reports, standard protocols for weekly staff and Department Head meetings, and perhaps most importantly a decision-making, consensus building set of cross departmental Matrix meetings. We've also recently engaged non-Profit HR to consult on formalizing our innovations and professionalizing employee relations. We are also researching alternative theater models for further innovation.

We are innovating our organization with extraordinary results. The staff have demonstrated resilience in the face of budget cuts and developed necessary new skills. They've overcome obstacles and demonstrated their own genius. Morale, engagement, rigor and joy are strong, in spite of this horrific pandemic.

We have created a "Programming Matrix" group to begin to chip away at the myth of the singular, mostly male, mostly white "artist of genius" myth. Our Programming Matrix has been meeting weekly for the past five months to harness the collective power of our team in thinking through Mosaic decisions. A key innovation we're exploring is what we're calling "values-based decision making." That is: we are trying to acknowledge and prioritize the many and sometimes competing values at play in our decisions. This transparency builds trust and the ability to make decisions with maximum buy-in.

In short, we are building a new culture based in collaboration - one of the essential components of great theater art. By thinking about collaboration as inclusion and equity - we will strengthen our bonds with artists, improve partnerships, make more consistently impactful art and attract more patrons.

Meanwhile, the BIPOC Demands for White American Theater have provoked Board and Staff into the most challenging discussions we've ever had. The staff has been engaged with Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access for years. Mosaic's mission, its name and important policies - like no minimum Board gifts - demonstrated what we were about from the beginning.

Our participation in the Weissberg Foundation Diversity in Theater Cohort for 3 ½ years caused the staff to interrogate internal practices and create our first systems of accountability toward achieving a Mosaic that “walked the walk.”

The Demands emerging in this “pause” have created a space for even further growth toward a more equitable theater culture. I have been challenged, chagrined, but more often delighted by the discussions we’ve been having at our regular Thursday morning We See You meetings. Mosaic can become an exemplar in the field if we continue on this path.

Finally, as Bill mentioned above, - there is serendipity here - Mosaic was lucky enough to be included in the Arts Innovation and Management program led by Michael Kaiser. Together, the Board and staff of Mosaic is beginning a six month Strategic Planning project that will continue to shape the bright and shared future of Mosaic.

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Serge Seiden".

Serge Seiden  
Managing Director and Producer