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ARTISTS REP AND AGE IN THE ARTS PARTNER TO LAUNCH NEW MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

**AGE and ART partner to present PATHWAYS:
A 2-year mentorship and professional development program for
emerging BIPOC gender-diverse theatre artists in Portland**

PORTLAND, OREGON – February 18, 2022 Artists Repertory Theatre (ART) and Advance Gender Equity in the Arts (AGE) proudly partner to present PATHWAYS: A 2-year holistic mentorship and professional development program for emerging BIPOC gender-diverse theatre artists in the Portland area, launching this summer.

Arriving after the success of AGE’s 2021 IGNITE mentorship program, PATHWAYS is co-created and developed by Minita Gandhi (IGNITE Founder) and Melory Mirashrafi (Artistic & Producing Associate, ART). The program uses Gandhi’s collaborative pairing model, comprised of a pairing committee representative of the community it serves and a process that prioritizes the creation and maintenance of an environment where artists have the opportunities and resources to achieve their full potential. “Mentorship is a profound arena to work in because of the powerful and transformative nature of what connection and conversation between two people can offer. As a producing house, ART can provide significant professional development opportunities for artists and greater access to the American theatre,” says Gandhi.

PATHWAYS offers creative enrichment and community building to artists pursuing a professional career in theatre, and builds a “pathway” to professional development grounded in IGNITE’s values of shared experience, cultivation, and expansion. All participants will be paid hourly and equitably for their contributions. Gandhi continues, “IGNITE’s holistic programming model offers the creation of a space that prioritizes the needs and safety of BIPOC gender-diverse artists. To me this is more than just the beginning of a partnership. It’s a commitment to a movement that purposefully invests in intersectional artists whose voices and work need to be cultivated and supported. What is it like to truly commit to investing in an artist? Pathways explores this and will take mentorship programming to the next level.”

“I felt like I had to leave Portland to become a professional artist. The problem wasn’t lack of people or resources – Portland has always had and will always have a rich and varied community of theatre-makers – it was the gatekeeping and systems in place that said to artists of color, to gender-diverse artists, ‘You are not welcome here,’ shared Mirashrafi. The PATHWAYS program is given a deliberately long runway and flexible hours, allowing for true investment in artists as people, and honoring mentorship relationships grounded in shared experience and growth *by and for* BIPOC gender-diverse artists. Year one of the program will focus on mentorship and artistic enrichment, pairing cohort members with local and national theatre leaders, providing professional development, and creating a foundation layer of involvement in ART’s work. Year two will focus on hands-on experience, pairing cohort members in a guided mentor-mentee role on an ART mainstage production, and completing the “pathway” from artistic development to professional work. “PATHWAYS is designed to challenge our current systems – to say, “We have always been here, and we have the time, space, and resources for us to learn and grow together,” emphasized Mirashrafi.

PATHWAYS melds AGE’s mission to “advance equity for artists of marginalized genders through an intersectional lens,” with ART’s goal of reinvesting the theatre with the spirit of a community center for all. Through the curation and prioritization of an affinity space in a theatrical process, an ethos that begins with the safety of our brains, bodies, and stories, and an investigation into and the implementation of pathways to success for and defined by artists of color, PATHWAYS cultivates a space where every participant can flourish regardless of access point. The PATHWAYS program and application process celebrates multiplicity and encourages self-identification.

AGE Founder, Jane Mantiri shares, “AGE was created to change the equity landscape of American theatre. Brava to arts leaders, Melory Mirashrafi and Minita Gandhi, for transforming the power of theatre by reimagining access, mentorship, and professional development for future generations of artists and their communities. AGE is proud to

partner with Artists Repertory Theatre to IGNITE ART and welcome their launch of PATHWAYS.”

ART’s Interim Artistic Director, Luan Schooler, adds, “Artists Rep is thrilled to partner with AGE on this vital program. Supporting local artists is a core value of ART, and PATHWAYS offers urgently needed access and uplift to Portland-area artists who have struggled to be acknowledged. To lose any artist because they feel they have no creative home in Portland is an unknowable loss – each one has a potentially brilliant, irreplaceable artistic vision that could illuminate and enrich Portland. PATHWAYS is an intelligent, concrete, and deeply humane plan for establishing much-needed artistic homes for emerging BIPOC gender-diverse artists.”

The 2022-2024 PATHWAYS application is now open. Submission deadline for interested applicants is May 24, 2022. Applications can be found [website here]. For more information please contact jobs@artistsrep.org.

ABOUT ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

[ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE’S \(Artists Rep or ART\)](#) mission is to produce intimate, provocative theatre and provide a home for a diverse community of artists and audiences to take creative risks. Artists Rep (est. 1982) is Portland’s oldest professional theatre company and has become a significant presence in the U.S. regional theatre with a legacy of world, national, and regional premieres of provocative new work with the highest standards of stagecraft. In 2016, ART became the 72nd member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and is an Associate Member of the National New Play Network (NNPN). Plays developed by ART have subsequently been produced in New York, Chicago, London, and throughout the country. Recognition for ART developed plays includes the Dramatists Guild Foundation Award, the Edgerton New Play Award, NEA Funding, the Mellon Foundation National Playwright Residency Program, American Theatre Magazine’s Most-Produced Plays, and coverage in the New Yorker and the New York Times. In 2021, the Oregon Media Production Association (OMPA) honored Artists Rep with the Creative Innovation Award for the company’s pivot to digital mediums in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. ART recognizes that we are a predominately white organization and operate within systemic racism and oppression, and that silence and neutrality are actions of complicity. We commit ourselves to the work of becoming an anti-racism and anti-oppression organization, and will [work with urgency](#) to end racial inequities in our industry and our culture. To learn more about our organization and programs, please visit <https://artistsrep.org/about/>

ABOUT AGE IN THE ARTS

[Advance Gender Equity in the Arts \(AGE\)](#) is a social justice organization created to bring agency to marginalized genders in theatre. Our mission is to advance the power and visibility of artists of marginalized genders, leading with racial justice. We work through an intersectional lens (that includes but is not limited to race, age, ethnicity, and disability). Our vision is a culture of equity, inclusion, multiculturalism, access, and shared power where all artists of marginalized genders have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

AGE recognizes that unconscious bias is deeply rooted in the fabric of our society. It fuels the systems that limit access, resources, representation, and shared power to persons based on but not limited to gender, age, race,

ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ability status. Equity requires raising awareness of unconscious bias. Equity can only be achieved by making space for underrepresented groups in leadership and challenging the dominant paradigm that determines how we center privilege. Equity demands a cultural paradigm that is not centered on colonial white supremacy and patriarchy.

For AGE, embedded in the definition of equity is the creation and maintenance of environments where all people have opportunities and resources to achieve their full potential. Equity calls for all equitable organizations and systems to engage in introspective exploration and analysis, external review and assessment, and ongoing training, collaboration, and evaluation.

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