

the flea



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
POSITION DESCRIPTION AND SOLICITATION
NOVEMBER 2021

ABOUT THE FLEA

The Flea Theater supports and invests in experimental art by Black, Brown, and queer artists. We provide space, financial support, producing partnership and other resources so that they may develop and share their vision in community with audiences.



Our mission reflects a new way of being, born of tremendous change and restoration. Over many months, we have dedicated our efforts to undoing systems of inequity to build a representative and inventive ground for artists and partners. Moving into 2022, we proudly affirm our new mission and core values, alongside a newly imagined and deeply collaborative institutional model.

Our history, our place in the theater landscape, and our vision forward demand a new executive partner that will shepherd the Flea’s new institutional model with ingenuity and inexorable passion. We are excited to embark up this new phase of the Flea’s growth.

THE EXECUTIVE ROLE

A new Executive Director will lead the Flea’s institutional model and partner with the Artistic Director in bringing its vision to fruition. The Executive Director will be responsible for the institutional identity, sustainability, and strategies that will position the Flea as a contemporary and cutting-edge organization. The Executive Director will activate and refine the new organization model and shape the infrastructure to that purpose.

The Executive Director will join the Artistic Director as chief spokespersons for the Flea, actively cultivating strategic partnerships and external relations that advance the Flea’s position as an economically viable and thriving arts institution. They are expected to build alliances with key decision makers citywide, galvanizing the community, and cultivating new contingents of patrons and benefactors. They will offer a fresh and complimentary perspective on leadership in New York City theater that asserts Black, Brown, and queer artistry. The Executive is expected to fully invest in the organization’s mission, with a deep understanding and comfort with its past, and advocacy for its continued restoration.

The Executive Director will report to the Board of Directors and partner with the Artistic Director in leading all planning and management functions. Senior staff in development, operations, finance, and marketing will report to the Executive Director. Technical production will report to both the Executive Director and Artistic Director.

POSITION REQUIREMENTS

MISSION, VISION & STRATEGY

Integrate the Flea’s mission and core values into every facet of operations and programming, implementing the new operating model while outlining a clear long-term strategy for organizational sustainability.

BOARD RELATIONS & GOVERNANCE

Foster generative relationships with the Board of Directors via productive communications and responsiveness to issues affecting The Flea’s strategic direction and operating health; identify and

cultivate new Board members whose talents and resources will advance the Flea's mission and artistic development.

FUND DEVELOPMENT

Design and lead fundraising strategies in collaboration with the Board of Directors, development staff and consultants; establish and maintain relationships with funders and key individual donors; expand the Flea's core of individual donor prospects, and be entrepreneurial in pursuit of earned income opportunities, including leveraging nontraditional opportunities.

INFRASTRUCTURE & ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT

Build, lead and continually develop a committed team with the expertise and networks to opportunistically realize artistic and operating goals and efficiencies, and ensure organizational financial sustainability through budget design and management.

MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS & BRANDING

Redefine the Flea's brand identity, including a potential name change, and direct all external communications efforts to ensure the Flea clearly articulates its commitment to Black, Brown, and queer artists and committed organizations, ensuring partners and the public awareness of the Flea's new trajectory.

PROGRAMMING

In partnership with artistic leadership, develop both an annual and long-term financial model to support programming plans that address the mission and institutional goals and objectives, and serve as a thought leader and advocate for all Flea and partner programming.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE

The ideal candidate must have dedication to the Flea's mission illuminating Black, Brown, and queer artists in particular and innovative artists in general. They must have a deep knowledge of developing innovative and effective institutional models with a strong understanding of the performing arts sector, particularly theater. They should have the following experience and qualifications:

- A foundation in people-centered institutions, particularly in the arts, humanities and/or cultural sectors; experience leading an innovative or "turnaround" cultural institution
- Success developing and executing major fundraising strategies through all funding segments – individuals, foundations, corporations, and government
- Financial management acumen in budget design and implementation, accounting, and regulatory controls and reporting
- Expertise in developing and implementing a strategic plan that aligns with the mission and combines internal expertise with external resources and support
- Political savvy and comfort with broad-based constituencies including artists, legislators, business and community leaders, and others of influence; the ability to generate excitement that leads to buy-in from diverse sectors
- Outstanding oral and written communications, and negotiation skills

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The ideal candidate will be:

- A persuasive advocate for Black and Brown and queer artists
- Compelled by experimental and non-traditional artistic work, who thinks globally and is able to connect with a broad spectrum of people in meaningful ways
- An inspiring and dedicated leader; able to drive toward a common purpose and who believes that the best idea can come from any seat in the organization
- Entrepreneurial and strategic, with the ability to transform concepts into practice and capitalize on opportunities
- An ethical individual who garners trust and personifies integrity, fostering transparency and accountability, and motivates others in a similar vein
- A bold, risk taker who is able to look for new ways to work with external partners
- A believer in joy and wellbeing in the workplace
- An accessible and gracious figure, has a good sense of people and humor, and a favorite 90s Hip Hip/R&B song

THE FLEA'S VISION

RECKONING AND RESTORATION

In 2020, the Flea faced an unprecedented and exceptional crisis that halted its organizational trajectory. Members of its core of artists spoke about a culture of institutional racism, oppression and exploitation present for many years. A social media mega-storm caused backlash that led to the departure of most of its leadership and very public denigration by many in the theater industry. Toward repairing harm within its constituencies and examining its viability and impact, the Flea engaged in a 15-month long process of restoration and institutional redesign. With a cadre of thought leaders, consulting partners, and funding partners, the Flea fully dedicated itself to reimagining the company as an equitable and artist-focused organization that builds on its history as a leading producer of experimental performance.

Today the Flea works to create a culture where Black, Brown, and queer artists and their audiences can commune, create art on their own terms and live in their full expression and cultural truths. The Flea will support work that is not strictly defined by traditional designations like “off-off-Broadway” or “theater” and encourage artists to be unbound by geography or physical buildings. The Flea also creates opportunities for audiences to deepen their knowledge, practice, and interest in experimental art by Black, Brown, and queer artists.

Building relationships anew, listening and learning, and expounding upon its most salient and enduring ideals, the Flea's core values include:

Human centered – *We invest in people before things. We recognize that people are at the core of our work and will create opportunities that are equitable, fair and promote open access. When making decisions, we will consider everyone's humanity, unique life experiences and circumstances.*

Anti-Racism & Anti-oppression – We actively work to dismantle structures that reinforce systemic racism, and we replace them with structures that empower all of our community members and stakeholders. We are pro-Black, pro-brown, pro-woman/femme, and pro-queer, at a minimum. We acknowledge this list is not exhaustive and embrace the multitude of ever-evolving identities and intersections.

Collaboration – We work together, and we are not siloed. We value when artists, staff and stakeholders participate in the development of the organization. We invite heterogeneity and differences of opinion.

Innovation -- We believe in pushing boundaries and challenging the status quo, on stages and in our operations.

Sustainability – We are accountable for our impact on the environment. We will do our part to sustain our planet for future generations.

Transparency – We communicate clearly and don't speak in coded language. We are honest about what we can and cannot provide, and about how resources are divided. We invite our community to hold us accountable to our expressed values and mission.

A NEW ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL

As of 2021, the Flea's organizational model is dedicated to three program areas: resident companies, artist service programs, and community programs. The Flea will continue to produce theatrical works and couple this focus with providing direct artists and arts organization support.

Resident Companies assembles a three-year, mission-aligned cohort of independent, itinerant companies and/or collectives to build their producing capacity in community. The Flea will be its own producing entity within this cohort of resident companies, with Niegel Smith as its Artistic Director. It will not be bound by three-year term limits and will focus its resources on one major work per year and pursue new presenting and project development for the rest of the season.

Artist Services Programs are a deeply focused investment in the development of individual artists, featuring a Generative Artist (GA) Residency and professional development and space grant opportunities for freelance artists.

Community Programs are in development and are intended to expand to maximize the public benefit of The Flea's most significant material asset- its building. We intend for the building to be activated in a way that allows it to be a hyperlocal space for Community Board meetings, activist organizing, and community events.

Equal employment opportunity and an inclusive and representative staff are fundamental at the Flea Theater where employment and promotional opportunities are based upon individual capabilities and qualifications without regard to race, color, religion, gender, pregnancy, sexual orientation/preference, political position, age, national origin, marital status, citizenship, disability, veteran status, or any other protected characteristic as established under law.

To apply for this position, please forward a resume, portfolio, and cover letter by December 1, 2021, outlining your interests and qualifications via e-mail to: executivesearch@theflea.org