



Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Community Theatre

STUDIO PLAYERS, MONTCLAIR, NJ

Before We Begin

Studio Players has not “fixed diversity.” As our committee member Kenneth LaBoy Vazquez eloquently observed, “Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion is aspirational but not truly achievable.”

Every theatre and every community are different. The single most important thing that any theatre can do is reach out to the communities that you want to include and ask questions.

Let them be your guide.

We at Studio Players know that we still have work to do, but we are proud of the progress that we have made.

Our Mission

Recognizing that Studio Players had avoided the work necessary to increase the diversity of all facets of our organization, The Diversity & Inclusion Committee has convened to identify practical and systemic roadblocks to diversity and to create strategies that will allow us to overcome these challenges through better practices.

We strive to better create an organization to which people from all walks of life feel not only welcomed but invited.

Our Objectives

- ▶ Conduct regular panel discussions with members of our own theatre community and leaders of more diverse arts institutions to learn how to better diversify our organization
- ▶ Work with representatives of diverse local arts organizations to identify issues in messaging and perception that inhibit our desire to diversify
- ▶ Identify ways to partner with these diverse arts organizations in order to build bridges between our organization and the communities that we wish to reach
- ▶ Create strategies—both simple and complex, immediate and long-term—to increase the diversity of our organization and create a space where all people feel invited

Identified Action Areas

1. Relationships

Identify potential partners
and invite them into
the conversation

2. Programming

Examine how our current
show selection and casting
practices encourage or
inhibit diverse representation

3. Outreach

Explore how to better utilize
current and new messaging
channels to reach the commu-
nities that we hope to include

4. Accommodation

Identify methods to better
support volunteers and audience
members who may be neuro-
diverse or have sensory issues

Relationships





“It’s not easy, but start with your friends. It makes the conversation much easier when the trust already exists. I asked my LGBTQ friend, ‘How do you want to be represented?’ instead of just trying to fix it. Ask them, ‘What’s making you feel comfortable and confident.’ Give them the voice and ability to steer it.”

Alicia Whavers

Artistic Director, Unidentified Stages

Relationships

Between July, 2020, and April, 2023, The Diversity & Inclusion Committee held a series of 8 panel-style discussions on Zoom with representatives of arts organizations and communities with whom we wanted to build a relationship. Participants included:

- ▶ A Panel of BIPOC Actors & Directors with Experience at Studio Players
- ▶ Alicia Whavers, Artistic Director, Unidentified Stages, South Orange (SOPAC)
- ▶ Will & Ghana Hylton, Co-Founders, Adrika House Performance Salon, South End, Montclair
- ▶ Maxine Lyle, Artistic Director, Soul Steps Dance Company, Newark
- ▶ Nicole D'Angelo, Performer and Advocate for Neuro-Diverse Artists
- ▶ Greg Cornejo, Artistic Director, Magnet Theatre, Newark & New York
- ▶ Olivia Clavel-Davis, Pierce Vosper Lo, Kim Chatteree, Professional AAPI Theatre Artists
- ▶ Brian Butterfield, Legally Blind & Deaf Community Theatre Performer

Our Discussion Protocols

When speaking to our panelists, we followed specific protocols designed to help our committee members “listen to hear” instead of “listening to respond.” Specific formats and questions were agreed upon with panelists before the discussion. We made all efforts to ensure that panelists felt comfortable and heard. A few protocols that we found useful:

- ▶ All panelists were sent a list of questions prior to the discussion for approval
- ▶ All committee members appeared on camera as the panelists entered, and then turned off their cameras during the discussion (unless the panelists requested otherwise)
- ▶ Only co-chair Elizabeth Quiñones remained on camera as she led the discussion
- ▶ Committee members came back on camera at the end for a less-formal Q & A session
- ▶ During the Q & A session, the panelist reserved the right to skip any question that they didn't feel comfortable answering

Our Conversation Starters

Panelists were asked a series of agreed-upon questions including:

- ▶ What does a truly diverse theatre company look like to you?
- ▶ How do you decide which companies you may or may not be interested in working with?
- ▶ What have your challenges been when working toward diversity in your own organization, and how did you navigate those challenges?
- ▶ What perceptions do you currently hold of Studio Players and how could our organization work to improve those perceptions?
- ▶ What can Studio Players do to help support your organization?

What We Learned

- ▶ Casting BIPOC and neuro-diverse actors is a good start, but including diversity on the board and at every level of programming is a stronger message of what a company stands for
- ▶ BIPOC artists rely heavily on websites for information about companies with which they are unfamiliar. They look for DEI messaging as well as representation on stage and among the plays & playwrights performed
- ▶ While color-blind or color-conscious casting is respected, BIPOC artists also want to see plays & playwrights specifically selected to tell BIPOC stories
- ▶ Sharing of space and social media resources (e.g., allowing groups to rehearse in the space, giving shout-outs to other companies to help advertise their own programming) are significantly helpful to most companies, and these actions demonstrate a desire to build relationships

Programming

STUDIO PLAYERS 2022-2023 is HERE!

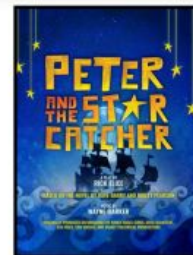


CLUE

By: Jonathan Lynn, Hunter Foster, Sandy Rustin, and Eric Price
Directed by: Alicia Hayes

September 23, 24, 30, October 1, 7, 8 at 8:00pm
September 25, October 2 at 3:00pm

Based on the iconic 1985 Paramount movie which was inspired by the classic Hasbro board game, *Clue* is a hilarious farce-meets-murder mystery. The tale begins at a remote mansion, where six mysterious guests assemble for an unusual dinner party where murder and blackmail are on the menu. *Clue* is the comedy whodunit that will leave both cult fans and newcomers in stitches as they try to figure it all out.



PETER AND THE STARCATCHER

Based on the novel by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson.

Directed by: John A.C. Kennedy

March 17, 18, 24, 25, 31, April 1 at 8:00 pm

March 19, 26 at 3:00 pm

Tony-winning Peter and the Starcatcher upends the century-old story of how a miserable orphan comes to be The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up (a.k.a. Peter Pan). Pirates, orphaned boys, kings, and more are brought to life by a dozen actors portraying more than 100 unforgettable characters where the audience is only limited by their imagination and willingness to believe.

*Adapted for the stage by Rick Elice.



MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET

Adapted from the novel by Valentine Davies

Directed by: Beatriz Esteban-Messina

December 9 & 16 at 7:30pm

December 10 & 17 at 3:00pm and 7:30pm

December 11 & 18 at 3:00pm

Kris Kringle, living in a retirement home, gets a job working as Santa for Macy's. Kris unleashes waves of goodwill with Macy's customers and the commercial world of New York City by referring parents to other stores to find exactly the toy their child has asked for. Seen as deluded and dangerous, Kris is in danger of being shipped off to Bellevue. The stakes couldn't be higher: Kris' freedom and one little girl's belief in Santa.

*Based upon the Twentieth Century Fox motion picture *Miracle on 34th Street*.



THE REAL THING

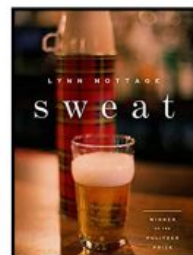
By: Tom Stoppard

Directed by: Tait Ruppert

June 9, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24 at 8:00 pm

June 11, 18 at 3:00 pm

Cue one passionate but never fully satisfying love affair between Henry and Annie. When their affair starts, Henry is already married to Charlotte, and Annie is married to Max. Soon they both divorce their partners and marry each other. Themes of marriage, infidelity, and honesty are played out with a fresh and quick-witted comedic style. The play examines both the pain and passion that love can bring into people's lives.



SWEAT

By: Lynn Nottage

Directed by: Amy Fox

January 27, 28, February 3, 4, 10, 11 at 8:00pm

January 29, February 5 at 3:00pm

Filled with warm humor and tremendous heart, *Sweat* tells the story of a group of friends who have spent their lives sharing drinks, secrets, and laughs while working together on the factory floor. But when layoffs and picket lines begin to chip away at their trust, the friends find themselves pitted against each other in a heart-wrenching fight to stay afloat. Winner of the 2017 Pulitzer Prize.



We also have several benefit performances throughout the year that are individually priced.

MAINSTAGE TICKET PRICES


Adults: \$25

Students/Seniors: \$22

*Group discounts for parties of 20 or more are available. Contact our box office for details at 973-744-9752.

Please note: All ticket sales and Patron donations are non-refundable. Tickets may be exchanged for a different performance of the same show (advance notice required, subject to availability).

Subscribe online at studioplayhouse.org/subscribe or call us at 973-744-9752 and leave a message with a time for a box office member to call you to process your order. Calls will be returned within approx. 48 hrs.



“Boards need to put out better advertising and emphasize that this *will* be alternatively cast. Make it known, make it a priority. I think that will diversify your casts immediately. Then later in the season, do a show by Wilson. Now you can bring them back, but then you’re building community. Then you are making them want to come back.”

Diversity & Inclusion Committee Panel Participant

Programming

What your theatre company produces on stage sends a strong message about the talent and the audiences that you wish to attract. Programming does not only include mainstage shows. Workshops, collaborations, even set builds, are all opportunities to promote diversity. Here is what we learned:

- ▶ BIPOC artists appreciate color-blind and color-conscious casting, but they also want to see programming that includes specifically BIPOC stories and characters
- ▶ Producing shows by BIPOC playwrights for BIPOC performers sends a message that your theatre is dedicated to building relationships and seeking out BIPOC artists
- ▶ Color-blind and color-conscious casting should be the norm, and any director who does not use this approach to casting should be ready to defend in good-faith that choice when proposing a show
- ▶ The only way to prove an openness to color-blind and color-conscious casting is to actively work to make sure that these practices are evident on your stage regularly. (Announcing “all are welcome” is hollow if every cast is still entirely white)
- ▶ Selecting larger shows with a variety of role sizes creates more opportunity for actors of all abilities to participate in your season.

How We Have Responded

Upon reflecting on these points, our Season Planning Committee implemented several changes to ensure that our programming was aligned with our Diversity & Inclusion goals. These changes included:

- ▶ Redesigning our director application to include questions about racial flexibility in casting for each proposed production (including a question in which a potential director must defend a decision not to cast flexibly)
- ▶ Reading plays by writers of color and updating our list of possible titles to consider for future productions
- ▶ Working proactively to include BIPOC playwrights in our season whenever possible
- ▶ Appointing a Head of Diversity to our Board of Managers and giving that person a permanent seat on our Season Planning Committee

Caveats

There are obviously exceptions to these guidelines that must be acknowledged:

- ▶ Plays in which casting some or all characters as a specific race is important to the central theme of the work should not betray the playwright's vision
- ▶ If a theatre is struggling to attract BIPOC artists, it may take some time to build the relationships that will allow for BIPOC-centered stories to be feasible. This may result in focusing on color-blind or color-conscious casting practices as the theatre accumulates a more diverse talent base. However, this challenge must be viewed as an obstacle to overcome, not an excuse to avoid these shows moving forward.

Outreach





“When I look at a website— which I often do— if I see diversity, I feel more comfortable.”

Maxine Lyle
Artistic Director, Soul Steps

Outreach

Our website is an important tool to showcase our dedication to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, but it is not the only tool. Every poster, flyer, and social media post generated by our organization– even the lobby of our performance space– is an opportunity to invite others into our theatre company. A few strategies we are using are:

- ▶ Utilizing the website to highlight not just our accomplishments but our growth
- ▶ Being cognizant of both what is put on our posters and where we hang them in our community
- ▶ Making every effort to represent our organization in our communities by participating in events hosted by other organizations with whom we wish to partner
- ▶ Inviting and featuring diverse organizations on our stage to get communities into our space that may not regularly attend
- ▶ Prominently display our commitment to diversity & inclusion in our space to better welcome everyone who walks through our doors

Our Website

When people want to know if they may be interested in our organization, our website is where they will start their research. As we spoke to our panelists, we inquired as to what they are looking to see, and we worked to make our site more accessible for these purposes. BIPOC people most commonly reported looking for:

- ▶ Representation of diversity in the images posted
- ▶ A dedication to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion highlighted on the website. (Studio now posts annual or semi-annual updates outlining our progress in these areas to demonstrate that our work is ongoing)
- ▶ The productions that have been and will be produced by our organization.
- ▶ Evidence of diversity throughout the organization– from the board to the volunteer base– and not simply on the stage

Our Posters



Our initial efforts began to show quick results: raising participation of BIPOC and neuro-diverse artists to almost 30% in our first post-pandemic season. To further our progress, we began putting headshots of the actors on each poster to better highlight the diversity of our casts.

A panelist also pointed out that she lives in a predominantly BIPOC neighborhood in our town and had never seen advertising for any of our shows (an obvious oversight on our part). We started increasing the print orders for our posters in order to better reach this community

Our Social Media



As local and national tensions rise, Studio Players wants to affirm our commitment to making sure all members of the community feel not only safe and welcome, but explicitly invited and supported in our organization.

Diverse stories and representation can only broaden and deepen our lives and the power of the work we strive to do. We stand committed to condemning racism wherever we see it, to casting people of color in any role that will showcase their talent, to producing works by playwrights of all races, faiths, genders, and sexual orientations, and to inviting all people in our diverse communities to join us in volunteering to express our collective voices and stories.

—
#BLACKLIVESMATTER

Social media is an easy way to spread our vision and put promises into action for our organization. Once that we began our work to diversify and become inclusive, we started using our social media outlets to showcase our work, make public statements in support of diverse communities, and advertise the work of our partner organizations.

While we maintain a focus on promoting our productions, we can also highlight our DEI successes and spread the word that all are welcome at our organization.

Our Physical Space

At Studio Players we strive for an organization
that is as diverse and welcoming
as the community that we call home.

We are dedicated to increasing Diversity & Inclusion
on our board, our stage, our creative teams, behind the scenes,
and among our audience members.

We created our Diversity & Inclusion Committee in June
of 2020 with a mission to build authentic bridges with
BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and Neuro-Diverse artists and organizations
throughout the community to ensure that our theatre is
both inviting and safe
for anyone who walks through our doors.

We still have work to do,
but we are proud of what we have achieved.

To learn more about our Diversity & Inclusion initiatives,
please visit [Studioplayhouse.org](https://studioplayhouse.org)
or use the QR code at the bottom of this poster.



Elizabeth
Quiñones,
Diversity &
Inclusion Chair



E. Dale
Smith-Gallo,
Committee
Co-Chair



Amy
Fox,
Studio Board
President



Danna
Beshak



Laura
Byrne



Beatriz
Esteban-Messina



Alisha
Hayes



Kenneth
LaBoy-Vazquez



Maxine
Lyle



Emily
Miller



Michael
Smith-Gallo



Lonzell
Wilson



In the lobby of Studio Playhouse, we have permanently hung a large poster that highlights our dedication to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion. The poster features a QR code that takes interested guests directly to our DEI page on our website, and that page prominently displays a link to contact the committee directly. Because our committee is comprised of diverse individuals, we also include the names and photos of our members to exemplify our dedication to the inclusion of all voices.

This simple signage is displayed to help people unfamiliar with our organization feel more welcome in our space and invited into the conversation.

A Note on Authenticity

While we want to spread the word, it is also important that an organization not oversell their successes. If a BIPOC artist sees diversity in every picture on the website and then attends two all-white shows at a theatre, it is clear that the theatre is misrepresenting what it has to offer. A few strategies that we use to maintain authenticity:

- ▶ **Owning our mistakes.** We all have blind spots, and we have all made mistakes in these areas in the past. Admit them and express a sincere desire to improve. Honesty builds trust. This is no place for showmanship.
- ▶ **Honest representation of our theatre.** We post annual or semi-annual updates giving real numbers expressing where we currently stand in our efforts, and we strive to ensure that anyone looking at our messaging will enter our space with a clear understanding of what to expect.

Accessibility



Sensory Accessibility Guide for *Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play* Studio Players

Run-time:

Act I	47:00 minutes
Act II	51:00 minutes
Act III	37:00 minutes

*There will be two 10-minute intermissions (one between each act.)



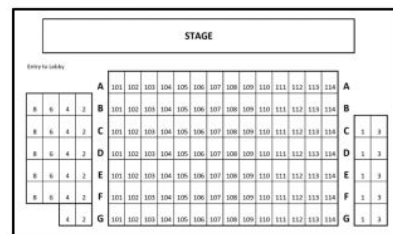
Mandatory Masking Requirement

Even though proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test is required, all audience members are required to wear a facemask that covers their nose and mouth at any time that they are inside the building. Audience members are invited to step outside during the intermission if they need a "mask break."

Available Accommodation:

Noise-cancelling Headphones are available for free check-out at the concessions window in the lobby. Ask an usher if you would like to use a pair during the performance. (All headphones are sanitized after each use.)

Ground Plan of the Theatre:



Plot Synopsis:

Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play is set in three different times using three different forms of theatre to examine the evolution of storytelling and how culture is formed when all is lost. In the first act, five strangers sit around a campfire and try to re-create the "Cape Feare" episode from *The Simpsons* as accurately as possible. A stranger arrives, and we learn that the characters are living in a post-apocalyptic world after the meltdown of all nuclear power facilities.

In Act II, we find the characters 7 years later as they travel the country performing episodes of *The Simpsons* to rowdy (and, at times, violent) audiences.

In Act III, we see how the story of the episode has evolved over 75 years as we witness a full-scale musical that is performed almost as a religious rite.

General Sensory Notes:

Identified sensory stimuli include abrupt visual and auditory cues, gunshots, and the smell of stage smoke.

Act III is an epic musical that involves cymbal crashes, yelling, audience applause and yelling (hopefully!), and stage smoke. While we have tried to identify the most abrupt moments, be aware that this musical is written to be a bold sensory experience throughout. Please let us know if you identify any other moments that you feel should be added to this guide. You may email the theatre or mention it to an usher. As this is a digital guide, it can be updated throughout the run, and we are appreciative of any input that you may have.



Gunshots, Loud Practical and Recorded Sounds



Sudden Light Changes, Strobe Effects (for lightning)



Stage Smoke

Breakdown:

Please Note: The cue lines listed are spoken three lines before the identified sensory stimuli.

Act I:

👁️ **Flash Lights** (Throughout the act, actors use flashlights, and while no moment is directed for the lights to shine on the audience, flashlights may inadvertently shine in someone's eyes at moments.)



Abrupt Yelling after Extended Pause: (CUE: Matt says, "... and all of these pandas run out of Moe's bar like trailing poker chips.")



“One issue is that when you tell a director that you have autism, they begin to speak down to you, which isn’t what we need. Presume confidence. Assume that your actors can do all of it (unless they ask for accommodation). Just be really clear and remember that it’s not the autistic person’s job to teach you about autism.”

Nicole D’Angelo

Performer and Advocate for Neuro-Diverse Artists

Including Neuro-Diverse Performers

Nicole D'Angelo is a neuro-diverse actor and musician who has worked on identifying ways to make theatre more accessible to her community both as performers and as audience members. While neuro-diversity is a spectrum that affects people in different ways, a few general pointers that she has found can make a difference are:

- ▶ Assume that neuro-diverse actors can do anything that their non-neuro-diverse counterparts can do, though they may need more time to accomplish it
- ▶ Enter the rehearsal process with clear deadlines and expectations for each rehearsal
- ▶ Understand that neuro-diversity sometimes comes with communication challenges. Listen for what is meant, not what is said
- ▶ Include time for breaks and one-on-one conversations if an actor needs more support. They are capable of doing the work, but they may process it differently than others

Accommodating Neuro-Diverse Audience Members

Neuro-diverse audience members are often impacted by sensory issues– visual, auditory, and olfactory– that can impact their enjoyment of a show. While full accommodation for some of these issues can be costly, there are some very affordable (or even free) ways to help your audiences evaluate if a show is right for them and enjoy the show once that they have arrived. Two things that Studio Players have done are:

- ▶ Purchasing Sound-Cancelling Headphones that can be checked out by audience members (these are readily available online at very reasonable prices)
- ▶ Developing Sensory Guides for each show

Sensory Guides

Based on a model created by Nicole D'Angelo, Studio Players now develops a sensory guide for each production. A link to this guide is available on the ticketing page to enable audience members to decide if the show will be comfortable for them. QR codes are also posted throughout the lobby that help audience members find the guide on their phone before a show and follow along in real time. A Sensory Guide does the following:

- ▶ Provides general information about the theatre and show including run times, brief plot descriptions, and a seating chart
- ▶ Offers a general list of what stimuli will be present
- ▶ Provides a specific cue-by-cue listing of all visual, auditory, and olfactory stimuli in the production with a cue line for each so that sensitive audience members can prepare for the stimuli.

It is important to note that while this may feel like “giving away the show,” this tool actually allows many to better assess the appropriateness of a show to accommodate their sensory concerns, and since it is available by request, most audience members will not seek out this guide

A Sample Sensory Guide

This was our sensory guide for *Mr. Burns, A Post-Electric Play* by Anne Washburn.



Sensory Accessibility Guide for
Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play
Studio Players

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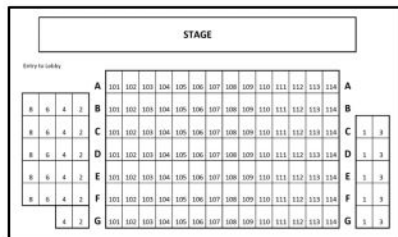
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Abrupt Yelling after Extended Pause: (CUE: Matt says, "... and all of these pandas run out of Moe's bar like trailing poker chips.")

Act II:

Practical Sound: Loud Thunder Drum (CUE: Colleen says, "Side Show Bob, everyone. Side Show Bob, ah, emerging.")

Recorded Sound: Gunshot (CUE: Gibson says, "Maria! Maria! You have the key right?")

Act III:

Practical Sound: Loud Thunder Drum (CUE: Bart says, "Mom! Dad! Lisa! Maggie! This way!")

Smell: Stage Smoke (Cue: The ensemble starts singing the "Wah, wah" sounds as Mr. Burns enters through the top of the houseboat.)

Practical Sounds and Lighting: Loud Thunder Drum, Wind, and Strobe-like Lightning Effects (CUE: The ensemble starts singing the "Wah, wah" sounds as Mr. Burns enters through the top of the houseboat.)

Practical Sound: Possible Audience Applause and Cheering, Unexpected Changes in Actor Volume (CUE: Mr. Burns says, "Let me tell you a little story. It is the story of the Left Hand and the Right Hand...")

Practical Sound: Loud Gong Strike (CUE: Homer sings, "Just remember, little Lisa, everything will be alright...")

Light Cue: Shadow Puppetry Backlight—the window of the boat will be quickly lit by a bright light. (Cue: Edna sings, "Hate knows every story ends on a dark and raging river," and Mr. Burns pulls down the window shade.)

Practical Sounds and Lighting: Loud Thunder Drum, Wind, and Strobe-like Lightning Effects (CUE: The ensemble sings, "They try to rise, they try to fly. The wind fills in their wings, they die.")

Practical Sounds and Lighting (Extended Cue Throughout): Loud Thunder Drum, Wind, and Strobe-like Lightning Effects (CUE: Mr. Burns says, "Another second? Another second or two? There is nothing, dear boy, noting another second can do...")

Practical Sound: Extended Rolling Thunder (CUE: Bart stabs Mr. Burns, and Mr. Burns drops his sword.)

Light Cue: A Gradual Build of Very Bright Light (CUE: Bart sings, "The world is full of everything. I'm a boy who could do anything." This lasts through the end of the show.)

Working with Blind & Deaf Artists

After our initial series of 7 conversations, we were excited (two years later) to have an opportunity to speak with Blind & Deaf performer Brian Butterfield to better understand how we could accommodate these communities.

The terms “blind” and “deaf” do not imply that all vision or hearing is lost. Many Blind and/or Deaf artists are able to hear or see— just at a significantly-reduced level. There are ways to accommodate them in order to invite participation.

- ▶ While it can be costly, hiring sign language interpreters allows for much clearer communication with Deaf artists. If you are unable to afford this (or can only afford it for part of the rehearsal period), it is imperative that one be conscious of things including:
 - ▶ Facing the artist when speaking so that they can read your lips at all times.
 - ▶ Placing the artist in positions on stage where they can clearly see what is being taught. (Putting a Deaf dancer in the back row denies them the opportunity to see the choreography, for example.)
- ▶ Use glow tape liberally backstage. While a sighted person's eyes may adjust to the darkness backstage, people with partial blindness cannot see well in the dark making things like staircases difficult to navigate. Glow tape marking every step or table corner makes backstage much safer for these artists.

Remember that it is not the artist's job to provide their own accommodations. If an artist requests an accommodation, it is the duty of the organization to do all that they can to provide it.

Our Accommodation Form



Congratulations on being a cast member of *The Triangle Factory Fire Project*!

Studio Players and the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee welcome you and thank you in advance for giving your time and talent to our latest production of *Macbitches*. It is our mission to ensure that cast members can be their best selves regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, neurodivergence, and/or familial status. With that mission, we want to lift the burden you may have experienced in the past of worrying that you may be judged for making any reasonable accommodations due any diverse background you may have. At Studio Players, we expect that everyone who commits time at our theatre to treat others with dignity and respect.

In that spirit, we want to ask you a couple of questions so that we can create a safer and more inclusive environment for everyone.

What is your name and what role(s) are you playing?

What are your preferred pronouns?

- ☐ She/her/hers
- ☐ They/them/theirs
- ☐ He/him/his
- ☐ She/her/hers; they/them/theirs
- ☐ He/him/his; they/them/theirs
- ☐ Other: _____

Are there any reasonable accommodations that Studio Players can provide for you?

(For instance, do you have any personal disabilities or preferences that may need to be accommodated?
Please note, Studio Players will work diligently to provide any accommodation that we can achieve within our financial means.)

If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, let your director and/or stage manager know, and they will relay it to the co-chairs of the Diversity Equity & Inclusion Committee. We are driven to keep growing and progressing as a diverse and equitable company, and that can only happen if you feel safe, heard, welcomed, and included.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth S. Quinones & Idris K. Talbott
Co-Chairs of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee at Studio Players
E. Dale Smith-Gallo
President of Studio Players

Studio Players, 14 Alvin Place, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043
Studioplayhouse.org 973-744-9752

Requesting accommodations can also be difficult depending on how comfortable an artist is about advocating for themselves.

With this in mind, DEI Chair Elizabeth Quiñones created this form to be handed out to everyone involved in each production. Participants are then invited to return to form to the specific show producer who notifies the DEI Committee.

The DEI Committee then works to help the production fulfill the requested accommodation.

This simple form signifies that we as an organization support accommodating our artists and removes the onus of “finding the right moment to ask” from the participant.

Lessons Learned (So Far)

- ▶ **Talk to underrepresented communities.** The most important step to achieving our Diversity & Inclusion goals is to include the communities that we want to reach in the conversation
- ▶ **Relationships are more important than messaging.** Strong relationships will provide opportunity for the messaging to take root within the community itself
- ▶ **Authenticity is key.** While we all want to celebrate our successes, we must first admit our failings if we want to grow
- ▶ **Diversity is a process, not a destination.** To see true, meaningful growth an organization must commit to doing meaningful work for seasons to come

Progress Made (So Far)

- ▶ In 2021 Elizabeth Quiñones was appointed “Head of Diversity” on our Board of Managers and holds a permanent position on our Season Planning Committee in that role
- ▶ A second BIPOC artist was added to our Board of Managers, increasing representation in leadership roles
- ▶ Since returning post-pandemic, the number of BIPOC and neuro-divergent artists who attend our auditions has increased significantly
- ▶ In the 2021-2022 season, representation of BIPOC and neuro-divergent artists on our stage jumped measurably to approximately 30%
- ▶ In 2023, Studio Players presented *Sweat* by Lynn Nottage, our first production to require 50% participation of BIPOC artists and had ample turnout of fill the roles

Our Committee

This work would not have been possible without the help of our excellent, honest panelists and the dedication, honesty, and vision of our Diversity & Inclusion Committee.



**Elizabeth
Quiñones,
Head of
Diversity**



**E. Dale
Smith-Gallo,
Committee
Co-Chair**



**Amy
Fox,
Studio Board
President**



**Danna
Boshak**



**Laura
Byrne**



**Beatriz
Esteban-Messina**



**Alisha
Hayes**



**Kenneth
LaBoy-Vazquez**



**Maxine
Lyle**



**Emily
Miller**



**Michael
Smith-Gallo**



**Lonzell
Wilson**

In Memoriam: Elizabeth Sanchez Quiñones



This presentation (and, indeed, the work that created it) would not have been possible without the visionary leadership of Elizabeth Sanchez Quiñones (1987-2025). Her strong belief in representation and DEI, coupled with her giving spirit and wry wit, opened doors and built bridges that we could never have secured without her tireless efforts.

She will be deeply missed.

Her work is continued by DEI Chair Idris Talbott and our entire Board of Managers.

For More Information

Want to know more or get involved in our efforts? Please reach out the Studio Players Diversity & Inclusion Committee here:

<https://studioplayhouse.org/contact-us/>