



## **A Noise Within's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement**

The following document details A Noise Within's plans to expand inclusion and variety of perspective in a multitude of ways at our theatre as well as our values for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). ANW's Diversity & Inclusion Task Force (established in 2018, taking over for the Executive Committee, which has overseen the effort since 2014) is responsible for monitoring the company's progress at its monthly meetings. Updates will be provided to the Board of Directors at each of its meetings as needed and a comprehensive annual report will be made to the Board of Directors at the annual meeting in September or November of each year.

### **OUR VISION**

A Noise Within performs and promotes classic theatre as an essential means *for our community* to confront the universal human experience, expand personal awareness and challenge individual perspectives.

We define our community expansively to include everyone within reach of A Noise Within.

### **ARTISTS**

A Noise Within will heavily weight the value and impact of having a culturally representative group of artists on stage and off. Artistic Directors will hire directors, and will assist directors in hiring their creative teams and casts with the perspective that A Noise Within wishes to become and remain relevant and accessible to the community of Greater Los Angeles. It is the prerogative of the Artistic Directors as leaders of the theatre to ensure the artistic integrity and independence of each individual show considering the core values (including diversity, equity, and inclusion) of the company, and therefore ANW commits itself to:

- Community-representative casting;
- Partnering with demographically specific theatre companies in order to meet and get to know their artists, expanding the pools of talent and enhancing our mutual success;
- and being present where discussions of theatrical diversity are happening to absorb new knowledge, to contribute to the conversation, and to encourage action

### **RESIDENT ARTISTS & RA READINGS**

We will recruit resident artists with a variety of backgrounds so that audiences – especially student audiences – may have the opportunity to see themselves on stage. The Resident Artists are committed to promoting the equity and inclusion goals of ANW.

RA Readings are principally cast using RAs first, and then filling other roles with non-RAs. Until the Resident Artistry becomes more diverse, ANW will heighten opportunities for RAs to meet

and cast members of underrepresented groups in Readings to broaden inclusive participation in the Readings.

Update: in July 2019 ANW Residents Artists hosted their second RA Reading Festival with an express purpose of inviting more perspectives into ANW's creative space. In addition to the 4 readings led by RAs, the company invited 3 theatre companies of color to participate in the Festival. A broader variety of stories were shared during the Festival and a more diverse audience was attracted and welcomed than has historically been seen at RA Readings. All artists were compensated for their participation.

### **BOARD DEVELOPMENT/GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

A Noise Within is committed to having its Board reflect the vast range of diversity within ANW's community.

A Noise Within's newly formed (Fall 2019) Governance Committee's responsibilities include:

- Continually recruit, identify and interview Board candidates that meet the identified criteria for election to the Board including providing a diversity of skills, perspectives, and backgrounds for inclusive and equitable representation. Offer nominations to the Board of Directors.

It is also a collective responsibility of the Board to recruit candidates of diverse backgrounds and experiences according to ANW's 2019-2024 Board-approved Strategic Plan.

### **ANW'S DIVERSITY & INCLUSION TASK FORCE**

#### **Community Value**

Classic theatre should be an inclusive endeavor, engaging our broadest community – representative of Southern California in every way – with universal stories.

#### **D&I Task Force Mission:**

The purpose of the D&I Task Force is to expand upon ANW's core mission to enrich its community, by building a more diverse and inclusive organization and audience, and establishing a theater community that represents, reflects, and celebrates the rich human diversity of our Southern California home.

#### **Activities**

- To identify, prioritize, and respond to issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) including representation, access, and education involving A Noise Within
- To listen to issues about EDI at ANW and suggest appropriate training workshops and other activities to surface conversations around those issues

- Could involve planning agenda topics for meetings of the full company (including RAs, board members, and staff)

### **Procedures**

- Meets monthly (for time being) for 90 minutes
- Members include: 2-3 board members; 2-3 staff members, and 2-3 resident artists; one member of ANW's executive leadership (ADs and MD) will be present at each meeting
- Members are asked to serve for at least one full season, July through June

### **Meeting Agreements**

#### **“to encourage candor and build trust”**

- Share responsibility for including all voices in the discussion
- Listen respectfully without interrupting
- Body language and tone are just as important as words
- Challenge ideas, not people
- In this space, we are committed to learning and debating
- Respect people's expertise on their own experiences
- Don't expect people to speak for their race, class, gender, etc.
- Sharing of confidential information will be prefaced as going “in the Vault” not to be discussed outside of the D&I TF without prior approval

*\*thanks to Oregon Shakespeare Festival as we used a lot of their wording to guide the formation of this group*

### **ANW'S STUDENT EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Due to the strength of ANW's long-standing and mission-critical education program, our student audience has always been – and will continue to be – representative of the ethnic diversity of Greater Los Angeles. A Noise Within will offer at least 3,000 full-scholarships and many additional partial scholarships for participation in our Education Program to students at high-need schools (many of which serve predominantly underserved populations) each season.

A Noise Within will offer a partially or fully subsidized ticket to the vast variety of students (currently 19,000 per year in 2019/20 in middle school, high school, college; public, private, parochial, and homeschooled) in the Greater Los Angeles area so they may experience the thrill of live theatre before graduating. With an increased investment in staffing the Education Department, ANW will expand its research of and outreach to Title I schools, high-need schools, and schools with diverse populations in Greater Los Angeles.

A crucial aspect of expanding equity and inclusion in our Education Program is that students can see themselves and their stories reflected from the stage. The improvements we are making in non-traditional and community-reflective casting in our mainstage and RA reading productions will directly improve the impact and relatability of these stories for our student audiences.

## **AUDIENCES**

A Noise Within is dedicated to finding a connection between our community and the great plays of our culture.

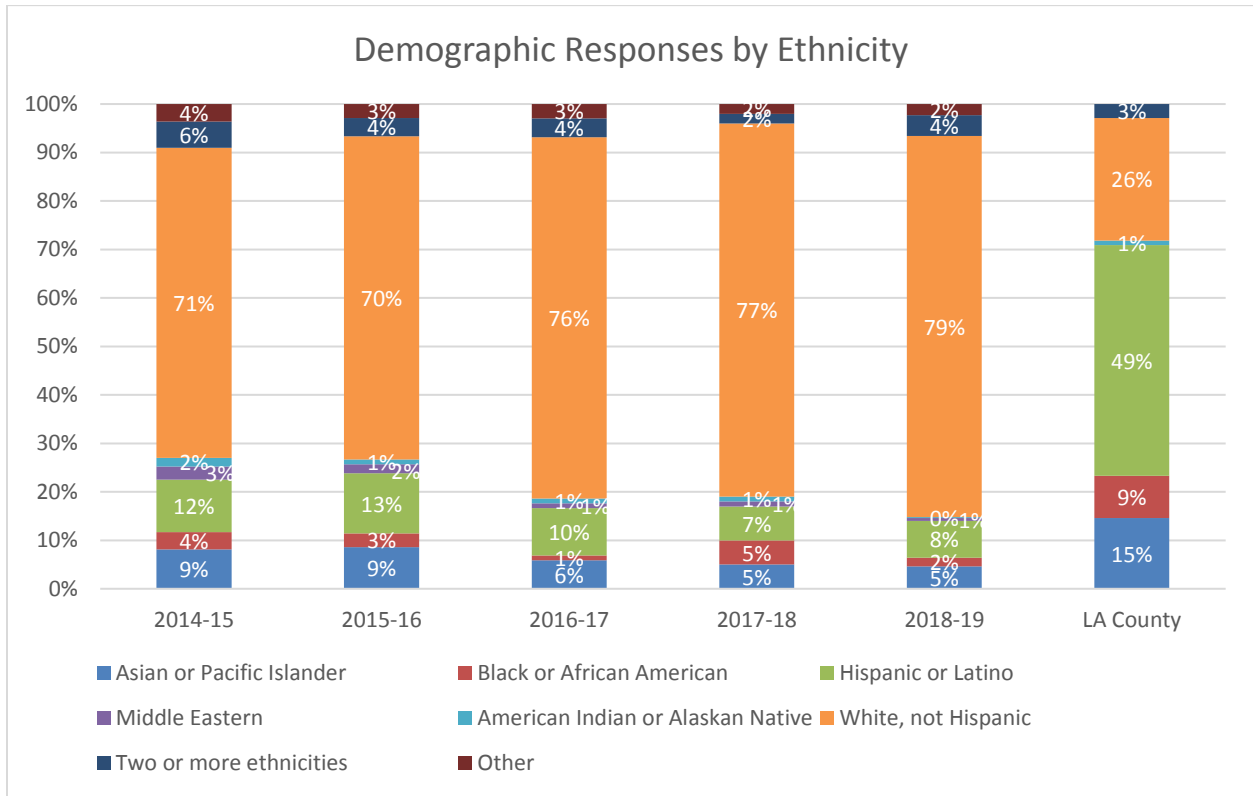
A Noise Within has undertaken a significant survey effort to better understand the demographics and interests of our audience members. We will continue to use this instrument to build a picture of our current and target audiences in order to maximize the value of our work in the community as well as to promote access for our audiences of limited means. ANW will maintain reduced-price ticket offers for targeted under-served audiences (approximately 25% of stock).

Our survey results indicate that different demographic groups within our audience base hear about our programming through different media. ANW will be experimenting with a variety of pilot programs in an attempt to boost our outreach to under-served communities. Of those surveyed (excluding students), our current audience is 23% POC; we will continue to build our expertise in reaching out to under-served audiences until our audience is broadly representative of our community.

We will continue to compile responses to the survey and analyze the results from the perspective of improving our outreach to the broadest section of our community.

Part of ANW's 2019-24 strategic plan involves hiring marketing and community development consultants to assist the company with strengthening its outreach to segments that we have previously not made purposeful efforts to engage.

**Demographic Overview of ANW's survey respondent data:**



## Archive

Our Commitment to Equity and Inclusion changes and grows over time and below are some of the tactics and data points we have collected.

### Examples of Implementation as of 2016

#### **Inclusive Invitations:**

- Highlighting the impressive diversity of casting on our stage and our commitment to it:
  - o *San Gabriel Valley Tribune* on *All My Sons*: “the casting — far more diverse than a Midwestern neighborhood of that era would have seen — seeks for universality.”
  - o *Hollywood Progressive* on *All My Sons*: “the non-traditional multi-culti casting or roles, with nonwhites wed to and romancing white, plus multi-racial siblings, would almost certainly be highly unusual in postwar USA. But it goes uncommented upon in this production and after the initial surprise of recognition goes unnoticed and works well. Good on A Noise Within for expanding the roles open for nonwhites to play in the dramatic canon – which also helps expand the audience beyond Caucasian only theatregoers, as ticket buyers often like to see cast members who look like them up on the stage.”
  - o *Around Town Pasadena* on *Antigone*: “refreshingly diverse.”
  - o Geoff Elliott quoted in Beacon Media story: “we will continue the same mission of ensuring access to a diverse audience.”
  - o *Stage Happenings* on *Earnest*: “...cast is so uniformly superior, it became part of the delight to realize that ANW was embracing the newish concept of non-traditional casting.”
  - o *LA Times* on *Earnest*: “Michetti...gives the property a refreshingly nontraditional spin as regards casting.”
  - o *Edge Media* on *Mrs Warren’s Profession*: “Another compliment must be paid to the ongoing non-traditional casting by A Noise Within, which allows trained actors of any race, creed, national origin or sexual orientation to play characters not directly written for them. Bravo to ANW for its sensible courage in their hiring of a diverse cast and crew.”
- Expanding marketing campaigns to boost word of mouth
- Assuring accessible price points for tickets to each production
- Focusing on retention and inspiring loyalty in our audience

#### **Benchmarking and Tracking:**

Our 2014/15 season established a benchmark for ANW in terms of our audience’s response to questions such as:

- How did you learn about this play?
- Why did you attend?
- Did you feel a bond with any of the characters?

- Did attending the performance give you a sense of pride in the community where you live?
- Did the casting of the production reflect the diversity of Southern California?
- Were you satisfied with [various aspects] of the performance?
- What is your gender?
- What is your age?
- Which [of the following] describes your ethnicity?

**Building Partnerships:**

- Hosting artist mixers among companies so talent can cross borders
- Hosting board mixers so companies can share best practices
- Implementing policies around casting that value the experiences of artists who identify with historically disenfranchised groups
- Accompanying ANW patrons to new theatre experiences and hosting other companies attempting to do the same
- Programming readings that challenge our audience's perception of "classic theatre"