

December 14th, 2020

In November of 2019 racist language was used in an SIA rehearsal hall by our previous Artistic Director. This event was not adequately dealt with by our Board of Directors or our administration. We now recognize that the lack of diversity on our team severely affected our ability to handle this situation correctly. SIA's response upheld racist paradigms and in doing so, we failed to fulfill our duty of care to the artists involved. Moreover, we lost the trust of many BIPOC in the theatre community and the community at large.

For this we apologize unreservedly and unequivocally.

We apologize for the language used and the harm it caused. We apologize for not being more transparent in the aftermath of this event and for not having policies in place to protect the artists involved. Finally, we apologize for not acknowledging the incidents in question in our communications around the change in leadership that happened in March 2020. These events made it clear that we needed to grow our understanding of diversity and inclusion. We are doing this now and consulting with BIPOC in the arts community to make SIA a safer space.

With that said an apology alone is not enough. We would like to detail the actions we are taking to redress the harm that was caused by this event.

- **Diversifying our Board** is a significant priority. This means asking BIPOC to take on positions of significant power and influence in our organization and centering the residents of the community we serve. Historically, our Board has not been representative of York South Weston, the artists we employ or our admin team. We have been aware of this inequality for some time but the events of last November further underscored its relevance to the health of our organization. The Board considers adding more BIPOC to our board a high priority.
- We have **commissioned an outside consultant**, Paulina O'Kieffe, to create an organizational audit of SIA. The recommendations she has produced will serve to guide us in becoming a more equitable organization. We will be making Paulina's report and its recommendations public.
- We are creating **policies and procedures** to ensure that anyone who works with SIA has recourse if they are confronted with racism in the workplace. We recognize that racism is a systemic issue and that it is our responsibility to prevent SIA from perpetuating harmful norms or practices.
- We are **re-examining our mission and mandate** to ensure that the perspectives of people of colour, particularly Black and Indigenous people, are centered in our work and ethos. We acknowledge that BIPOC voices have been silenced by systemic racism in the arts and we are committed to stopping this practice at SIA.
- Finally, we will be **transparent in our actions and journey**. Our original response lacked transparency and accountability, and this compounded the harm that had already been done. We will be updating our website regularly with the steps that we are taking to improve SIA and we welcome your feedback in this process.



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This last year has been an opportunity for us to reflect and refocus. SIA is proud to be situated in York South Weston, one of the most vibrant neighbourhoods in Toronto and we believe the Weston community and surrounding areas deserve access to the arts. We hope to deepen our relationships and create a space where residents can enjoy, participate and create with us. During the pandemic, like so many, we have shown up differently. We are ready to build partnerships with local agencies and provide cultural enrichment to YSW. From delivering food, to online programming, to socially distanced youth pop-ups - we have found new ways to be of service to our community and we intend to continue this evolution.

Finally, we recognize that what happened in November 2019 was one incident within the context of a larger societal problem. We are now committed to de-centering whiteness at SIA. From now on we will strive to center the voices and experiences of people of colour, especially Black and Indigenous people. We can do better and we will.

Signed,

Joanne Acri, Vice-Chair

David di Giovanni, Artistic Director

Kelly McAllister, Director

Romina Cortina, Director

Howard Goldby, Chair