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**Tony Castro**

**City of Los Angeles**

**Department of Cultural Affairs**

201 North Figueroa Street, Suite 1400

Los Angeles, CA 90039

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**RE: Director of Performing Arts Position**

Dear Mr. Castro,

**Los Angeles' cultural ecosystem is at an inflection point.**

You can feel it in our theaters; see it in our audiences.

On our stages, there is more virtuosic work than we've seen in the last 15 years: more glorious moments when we are reminded of the power and immediacy of the performing arts to cut through the mediation of technology that rules our modern lives to reconnect us with the essential questions of humanity.

Yet, our non-profits are still trying to dig out from recessionary cutbacks. Our arts leaders struggle for the capacity to sustain their own organizations. They lack the means to build a larger city-wide collaboration of audience and culture. Great art is playing to small, often geographically specific houses (not surprising in a city as big as Los Angeles).

And there is the disparity between what our city looks like and what our performing arts look like: our work on stage isn't representing or serving the diversity of our city.

**How do we create the visibility, capacity, and infrastructure that nurtures virtuosity while ensuring diversity and access?**

Clearly, the primary answer to this challenge must come from the individual arts organizations that make up our ecosystem: how they meet the world and the profundity with which they believe art can be a vital part of our society, our city.

But many of these challenges are bigger than a single organization . . .

The Performing Arts Director position, alongside the other successful initiatives and leadership of the Department of Cultural Affairs and in concert with Mayor Garcetti's broader goals and initiatives, have the potential to directly and meaningfully impact this challenge and bring us closer to having art reach every single Angeleno.

As you've outlined, the success of this position will rely on a bold strategic vision that ensures integrity at every phase of implementation intertwined with an intimate knowledge of both the strengths and challenges of the non-profit performing arts groups of Los Angeles. All of this must be steeped in a profound commitment and belief in audience: an understanding that great art without a great audience is nothing more than a rehearsal — that developing and nurturing a citywide (and nationwide) audience for Los Angeles' performing arts is as essential as fostering the art itself.

**How do we, as an entire community, find a deeper, sophisticated, and sustainable collaboration that makes Los Angeles performing arts better — and in the process — makes Los Angeles a more livable city? Can art really play that role?**

Let's look to Culver City.

I had the privilege of guiding Center Theater Group's Kirk Douglas Theater Project from its earliest days (literally the back of napkin sketches) through an on time/on budget opening, a successful capital campaign, a sold out subscription campaign, and the production of the inaugural season of five world premieres. The Kirk Douglas Theater was a \$12.1 million dollar public/private partnership with the City of Culver City. When we began, downtown Culver City didn't even have a Starbucks and the latest you could get something to eat was 9 pm. We joked that they rolled up the sidewalks each night.

Look at downtown Culver City now.

This, of course, was not only the work of the Kirk Douglas Theater project — but art was an important part of that ecosystem's growth. Before the restaurants and bars, there was the theater. Center Theater Group could have never succeeded in Culver City without municipal support, vision, and partnership. That partnership began in Culver City Hall and extended to an initial residency and renovation of the Ivy Substation, to the merchants and downtown business owners, and to residents of Culver City. It took time, consistency, accountability, and follow through. Local government can have a profound impact on art and art can have a profound economic and cultural health of a city.

### **Why me?**

Over the past two decades of devotion to Los Angeles theater, I've worn many hats. I've had the privilege of producing at virtually every level of LA theater — from the barest of shoestring budgets to the larger houses. I've taught some of our most talented students and professionals. I've worked within a major university as an advocate and liaison for the arts. I've tried to give voice to the community and highlight the best our community has to offer through my work at KCRW.

More than simply being familiar with the challenges of theater in Los Angeles, I've faced them. I've built and produced in indoor and outdoor theaters; I've increased ticket revenue 20% year over year for 3 years (Shakespeare Center of LA); I've raised the contributed income of an annual gala by 50% (SCLA); I've produced over 100 plays, workshops, and readings for the American theater. I appreciate the challenges that our theaters and our performing arts organizations face because I have faced them myself.


These two decades dedicated to Los Angeles theater have endowed me with an appreciation for the whole and a passion for the small details that can actually move the needle.

My experience is only half of the equation. I believe profoundly in the power and promise of the performing arts to make Los Angeles and the world a more livable, tolerant, and rich society. My passion, wrought from this belief, is now in engaging the broader ecosystem: to address the cultural infrastructure of Los Angeles. While our community is at an inflection point, the resources that exist in Los Angeles remain largely under-appreciated, the potential impact untapped.

**How can we, together, change that?**

It would be an honor to support Mayor Garcetti's vision and join the talented passionate staff of the Department of Cultural Affairs. I would be grateful for the opportunity to share my passion and experience with you and discuss further my qualifications for the Director of Performing Arts position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Byrnes', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anthony Byrnes