Organization

Founded in 1998, the Ojai Playwrights Conference (OPC) is recognized as one of the leading new play development programs in America. Led since 2001 by Artistic Director/Producer, Robert Egan, the not-for-profit Ojai Playwrights Conference has grown steadily over the years in the number of artists served, the diversity of its artists and leadership, and in acclaim. OPC is committed to developing socially, politically, and culturally challenging works that reflect the great ethnic, cultural, and ideological diversity of America. Its mission is to develop unproduced plays of artistic excellence from diverse writers both emerging and established, and to nurture a new generation of playwrights. Diversity is a major factor in the selection process to ensure the conference accurately reflects and refracts the many voices and faces of the contemporary American experience.

The Ojai Playwrights Conference is unique in its process of developing new plays for the American theatre by offering a safe, productive, rigorous haven for socially, politically, and culturally committed writers. This is fundamental to OPC's vision. Plays are selected each fall by the Artistic Director/Producer in collaboration with OPC's Artistic Committee, utilizing feedback from a reading committee. Full play submissions for each season are by invitation only, but playwrights are welcome to submit a resume, play description, and a 10-page sample of their work for future consideration. Each summer, selected playwrights, directors, dramaturgs, and other theatre professionals, as well as OPC artistic staff and interns, gather in Ojai, California for a two-week conference. The conference culminates in the New Works Festival, in which new plays are presented as staged readings and audiences are invited to join in post-play discussions.

Each playwright works with a director and dramaturg throughout the two-week conference. During the first week, plays are read out loud by participants, and moderated dramaturgy begins. The actors, stage managers, and production staff join the playwrights and their core artistic teams for a week of rehearsals and continued development in advance of public workshops of their new plays during the New Works Festival. In addition to new play workshops, the festival also features the popular Intersection Series, young artist performance events, and local receptions with the artists.

The Ojai Playwrights Conference offers two educational programs: the OPC Intern Program (for college students) and the OPC Youth Workshop Program (for high school students). Both provide opportunities for young artists to engage with playwrights and artistic staff and to be mentored in the creation of their own original works, which are presented as part of the New Works Festival. Fully immersed into the OPC artistic community, the interns act as literary or directing assistants for the new play workshops and assist OPC staff with overall operations and logistics. Through the popular OPC Youth Workshop, high school students are led through a multi-day process of writing, developing, and presenting their own dramatic works, under the tutelage of veteran writing and acting coach Kim Maxwell.

The Ojai Playwrights Conference is passionate about developing playwrights and plays that challenge, investigate, and reimagine the values, beliefs, and discourses that are fundamental to the ongoing experiment that is the United States of America. Its primary goal is to fulfill the vision the playwrights have for their new works. Many of the plays developed at the Ojai Playwrights Conference have enjoyed numerous productions on Broadway, Off-Broadway, and at regional theatres across the country. Some have been nominated for and won prestigious awards. In 2019, OPC was awarded the Gordon Davidson Award for distinguished contribution to the Los Angeles theatrical community by the LA Drama Critics Circle.

OPC has a 26-member board of directors led by President Carl Thelander. For the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020, OPC reported a total revenue of $196,890 with $187,040 from contributions and grants, and $9,250 from program services. Total expenses were approximately $181,022.
Community
"Ojai" is Chumash for "nest." Located some 80 miles from Los Angeles and 35 miles from Santa Barbara, Ojai is located in the Ojai Valley in Ventura County, California. The first residents of Ojai were Chumash Indians, who called the Ojai Valley "Awhai," meaning moon, according to the Ojai Valley Museum. Ojai was incorporated in 1921. The city's self-styled nickname is "Shangri-La" referencing the natural environment of this health and spirituality-focused region as well as the mystical sanctuary of the 1937 film adaptation of James Hilton's novel Lost Horizon. It is also reflective of the Ojai "Pink Moment," a breathtaking watercolor sunset phenomenon resulting in the shadow of the setting sun casting down on bluffs of the Topatopa Mountains.

As a tourism destination, Ojai is known for its boutique hotels, recreation opportunities, hiking, and farmers' market of local organic agriculture. Ojai Valley's Mediterranean climate makes for a variety of produce, including grapes and olives. It has small businesses specializing in local and ecologically-friendly art, design, and home improvement. Chain stores are prohibited by city ordinance to encourage local small business development and keep the town unique. Its downtown village is walkable and quaint, with shops, restaurants, and the Ojai Valley Museum, an exhibition hall inside a historic church, clustered along its main vein. The Ojai Music Festival is an annual festival of performances by some of the world's top musicians and composers that occurs on the first weekend after Memorial Day. In early June, often coinciding with the Music Festival, the Ojai Wine Festival is held at Lake Casitas where over 3,000 wine lovers sample the products of more than 30 wineries.

In the 2020 census, the population was 7,637, up from 7,461 in the 2010 census. The racial makeup of Ojai was 87.9 percent White, Hispanic or Latino of any race was 17.9 percent, 0.6 percent African American, 0.6 percent Native American, 2.1 percent Asian, 1 percent Pacific Islander, 5.9 percent from other races, and 2.9 percent from two or more races.


Position Summary
Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Artistic Director/Producer (ADP) serves as the CEO of Ojai Playwrights Conference and is responsible for imagining, creating, and executing OPC's artistic mission and vision across all areas of its administrative and artistic operations. The ADP serves OPC in a part-time capacity along with a highly engaged, part-time staff and a network of committed patrons and volunteers. Equal parts practicing artist and executive leader, the ADP guides and manages the organization year-round, though the time commitment and demands of the position vary depending on the programming schedule. While artistic programs may be expanded at the direction of the ADP, the primary phases of programming and producing center around the annual New Works Conference which takes place over the course of two weeks each August in Ojai and the annual Gala Benefit Performance which is held in Ojai or Los Angeles and generally occurs in the spring each year.

Role and Responsibilities

Strategic Vision and Leadership
- Serve as a key spokesperson, representative, and ambassador of the Ojai Playwrights Conference, taking an active role in the community and cultivating key relationships and associations with centers of influence within the city and state, regionally and nationally.
- Collaborate with and provide overall leadership to the OPC Artistic Committee in all major decisions affecting the artistic and dramaturgical direction and policies that provide the foundation of the socio-political work presented at the conference in alignment with the vision and mission of OPC.
- Foster an artist-centric work environment prioritizing and modeling the OPC core values which place social justice at the forefront of the art making while ensuring cultural, ideological, geographical, and generational inclusion across all areas of the annual conference and OPC programs.
- Provide overall leadership in close collaboration with the senior leadership team of Managing Director, Producing Director, Development Director, and Marketing Director in the administrative structure and practices, long-range planning, budget, and staffing to ensure organizational stability in alignment with the vision and mission of OPC.
- Oversee and support education programs, professional training, and community engagement initiatives by hiring support staff to execute the administrative duties of the office while ensuring strategic alignment with the organization’s articulated mission and goals.
Authentic Artistic Leadership, Staff Relations, and Teambuilding
- Guide and mentor the artistic planning staff including those responsible for production, education and training, community engagement, casting, dramaturgy, and new play development.
- Provide artistic leadership and participate directly in guiding the play reading committee in the selection process for the summer New Works Festival, having final decision of the plays that are selected as well as serving (to the extent desired) as director and/or dramaturg of selected plays.
- Nurture and inspire new and established playwrights, with a particular commitment to those from Southern California, establishing purposeful professional pipelines and national opportunities with various theatres contributing to the livelihood of writers, new play development, and production.
- Act as an organizational liaison with visiting guest artists, communicating regularly with artists and their representatives, and build and maintain relationships with casting directors, dramaturgs, literary agencies, producers, and other theatres to determine creative team selection for workshops in alignment with OPC’s commitments to equity, diversity, inclusion, and access.
- Champion equity, diversity, inclusion, and access strategies, in alignment with OPC’s mission and values, by managing and mentoring a diverse team, leading on human resources issues, and setting performance goals and objectives that support employee engagement, while also offering professional development support to staff and associated artists.
- Honor the institutional memory, traditions, legacy, spirit, and the foundational structure of OPC while seeking out and implementing new workplace methodologies and bringing in new voices alongside long-term committed staff, involving all in a participatory decision-making culture.

Fiscal Oversight, Fundraising, and Board Development
- Maintain the financial health of the organization by working in partnership with the Managing Director, senior staff, and board to develop and track budgets and accounting systems focused on the fiscal health, sustainability, and advancement of OPC.
- Devise and implement a fundraising strategy, while actively seeking out new and renewed sources of contributed income, cultivating relationships with individual donors, corporate sponsors, private foundations, and other funders.
- Serve as the lead producer of the Annual Gala Benefit, taking responsibility for the program, casting, staffing, and execution of the event.
- Establish positive and productive relationships with board members, communicating openly and effectively with the board in a timely and accurate manner so that they can make informed decisions.
- Collaborate with the Board of Directors to expand and diversify the membership to achieve diversity from the community and ensuring that members’ interests and skills are aligned with the organization’s needs, mission, and objectives to oversee operations, increase resources, and expand programs.

Community Partner Relationships and Field Engagement
- Create or deepen authentic and meaningful relationships local partners while engaging a wide variety of stakeholders to form new connections, partnerships, and resources.
- Expand satellite programming with schools, community arts groups, and social service organizations with involvement from elected city officials and media outlets, to enhance the organization’s brand and reputation.
- Build OPC’s national identity by capitalizing on its stellar reputation to establish stronger relationships with national and international theatres to continue to attract the top artists.
- Broker partnerships with regional theatres and producers around the country to create pathways for artists to additional development and production opportunities.
- Increase audience awareness and participation from the greater the Los Angeles area and surrounding communities by creating opportunities for more involvement though expanded focus on pre-conference activities and growth of ancillary staff, regional dramaturgs, and interns.
Traits and Characteristics
The Artistic Director/Producer of Ojai Playwrights Conference will be an imaginative, collaborative artist and charismatic leader. The ADP will be mission-driven and energized by a love for theatre, plays, and the creation of new work. The ADP will possess excellent people skills and a good sense of humor. They will communicate with transparency and a generosity of spirit. The ADP’s relevant experience will provide them with the ability to begin their tenure with purpose and focus, while listening and learning from the OPC’s highly experienced staff and community. The ADP will recognize the importance of consensus and will lead with that objective in mind. This collaborative-minded person will create a supportive atmosphere that inspires others. They will bring their deep affinity for the established values, mission, and processes of OPC with a commitment to Southern California writers. The ADP will have the ability, experience, and commitment to collaborate with individuals and teams that are mixed across race, gender-identity, sexual orientation, religion, ability, age, class and, immigrant status.

Other key competencies include:

- Diplomacy and Appreciating Others – The ability to handle difficult or sensitive issues effectively and tactfully while identifying with and caring about others.
- Interpersonal Skills – The facility to effectively communicate, build rapport, and relate well to all kinds of people.
- Personal Accountability and Teamwork – The dependability to be answerable for personal actions as the final authority while still being able to collaborate, encourage and cooperate with others to meet objectives.
- Leadership and Project Management – The capability to organize and influence people to believe in a vision while creating a sense of purpose and direction, identifying, and overseeing all resources, tasks, systems, and people to obtain results.

Qualifications
Ojai Playwrights Conference does not require a minimum number of years of experience or specific educational credentials. Qualified candidates must possess dramaturgical skills and extensive experience with new play development as well as strong relationships with established and new playwrights across form and genre. Producing experience and a network of existing relationships with theatre makers locally and nationally are required. The part-time Artistic Director/Producer should have (or demonstrate the capacity to establish) connections to artists, patrons, and audiences in Los Angeles and Ojai. The Artistic Director/Producer should have proven experience in championing and/or implementing inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, anti-bias, and anti-racism policies. Demonstratable success in fundraising is preferred. Aptitude to craft and oversee budgets is required, as is proficiency in Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Word). The position requires flexible work hours reflective of the dynamic schedule. Candidates with currently atypical paths toward artistic leadership in regional theatres are encouraged to apply (e.g., dramaturgs, literary managers, artistic program administrators, independent producers, freelance directors, playwrights, etc.).

Compensation and Benefits
Ojai Playwrights Conference provides a salary of $60,000, based on the position’s seasonal workflow that varies throughout the year and averages approximately 10 hours per week. The Artistic Director/Producer position offers great flexibility and may be ideal for a freelance artist. While the Artistic Director/Producer need not relocate in Ojai, or Southern California, they must be in residence in Ojai for the annual Playwrights Conference, and in Los Angeles for major fundraising events.
Applications and Inquiries
To submit a cover letter and resume with a summary of demonstrable accomplishments (electronic submissions preferred), please click here or visit artsconsulting.com/employment. For questions or general inquiries about this job opportunity, please contact:

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The Ojai Playwrights Conference is committed to greater diversification of its board and its staff on both the administrative and artistic levels and will act to make this increased diversity of board members and staff leadership a reality. OPC is committed to anti-racist training for staff, as well as engaging in organized, ongoing self-reflection on goals and standards of inclusion. OPC will continue and deepen its commitment to collaborate with artists of color, creating theatrical work that speaks to the critical social, political, and cultural challenges of our time.