



THEATRE PUGET SOUND

## TPS Public Forum

April 27, 2017 | 5:00 PM

Seattle Center Armory | Loft 3, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor

### Introductions

Moderator: Holly Arsenault; Dir. Of Engagement for University of Washington

Good evening – on behalf of the entire board of Theatre Puget Sound, thank you for joining us for this important discussion. I am Holley Arsenault, your Moderator. I know you want to hear from your Board of Directors, and they're eager to hear from you as well; so I'm going to begin by asking them to introduce themselves and then they will offer a brief summary of recent events and current status. Immediately following their remarks, you'll have the opportunity to ask them questions from the floor. People's trust has been disrupted, that's a real thing. We're not ignoring that, but sometimes when organizations are in crisis, boards close off. I have never seen that tactic work.

### Board Members

- Bryan Mize, Real Estate Professional
- Jane Martin Lynch, Treasurer, actor, on board since 2011
- Shawn Belyea, 14/48 Director
- Liisa Spink, Seattle Children's Theater
- Agastya Kohli, Comtech, Praditwani Theater, ReAct Theater
- Karen Lund, President, Taproot Theater
- Tony Beeman, Secretary, Microsoft Developer, Unexpected Productions,
- Paul Levy, Xbox, Improv

### Board Statement – Liisa Spink

Thank you for your time tonight. The Mission of Theatre Puget Sound is twofold. First, to promote the necessity of theatre to the public, and second, to unify and strengthen Puget Sound's performing arts community. As Holly said, we're here to connect – to share the facts about recent events and decisions that affect all of us, and also to listen to your questions and address your concerns. You are the heart and soul of Theatre Puget Sound; as your volunteer Board of Directors, we try to do everything we can to ensure the success of TPS.

Recent staff changes have unfolded in a manner that has created uncertainty and undue stress for all stakeholders in TPS. Tonight, it is our goal to clarify the situation for you - through an explanation of the timeline and decisions, and through honest and transparent dialogue with you. We sincerely regret any perceived gap between our desires and our achievements in serving you, as well as any frustration you have experienced. We are united in our efforts to serve you better going forward.

Right now, Agastya is going to share a brief summary and timeline of staffing changes in the last few months from the board's perspective; and then we look forward to your questions.

### Timeline of Events – Agastya Kohli

Thank you, Liisa – and thanks to each of you, once again, for being here. In an effort to provide clarification and ensure transparency in this discussion, this timeline extends from September of 2016 to the present time.

**September 2016:** In September of 2016, to accommodate a month long paid sabbatical extended to her by the board of directors, Executive Director, Karen Lane hired Zhenya Lavy as Deputy Director.

**November 2016:** In November 2016, TPS and Karen Lane parted ways. At that time, the board asked Ms. Lavy to serve as the Interim Executive Director while we worked to develop a new strategy for TPS leadership and staffing. Ms. Lavy agreed. The board also appointed a Transition Committee, comprised of Tony Beeman and myself, to develop that leadership and staffing plan.

**January 2017:** Karen Lane's separation was finalized in January 2017.

**March 24, 2017:** Just about a month ago, on Friday, March 24th, 2017, Tony and I met with Ms. Lavy at her request. We thanked her for her feedback; it was a mutually valuable time of sharing information and perspectives about TPS. At the end of that meeting, we were surprised when Ms. Lavy stated that she was no longer willing to continue in her Interim position. She demanded the board abort the current plans for an Executive Director search and instead make her Interim position a permanent one. She gave the board two weeks to provide her with a response, stating that if we could not offer her the permanent position by April 7th, we must "lay her off" no later than May 7th .

**March 26, 2017:** Tony sent an email to Ms. Lavy dated March 26th to confirm the details of that verbal conversation and assure that no misunderstanding had occurred.

**March 29, 2017:** In her response, dated March 29th, Ms. Lavy repeated her demand and clarified her position in writing.

**April 6, 2017:** The following week, on April 6th the board met to discuss Ms. Lavy's demands and the plan moving forward. With confidence in the ability of our staff to move forward effectively, we unanimously agreed that continuing the comprehensive and open search for a new Executive Director was the best way to serve the mission of TPS and our community.

**April 7, 2017:** On April 7th, 2017, Ms. Lavy's deadline, board representatives met with her to communicate our decision to continue the search for a new Executive Director. Asked about her plans, Ms. Lavy said she wanted to leave and she selected the separation date of Friday, May 5th. Although TPS still needed an Interim executive Director, we agreed to her request to leave and the date she selected. Another meeting was scheduled on April 11th to finalize these details in writing; however Ms. Lavy informed the board that illness and other events required her to postpone that meeting until Tuesday April 18th.

**April 17 2017:** On the evening of Monday, April 17th, the board received an email from Ms. Lavy demanding the resignation of all board members by end of day Tuesday, April 18th. She warned that a refusal to comply would trigger the resignation of three additional TPS staff members who were signatories to that letter. Follow up investigations into the notable absence of Shane Regan's name on that list led to the discovery that Ms. Lavy had terminated Shane's employment earlier that day.

Immediately, the board met to discuss next steps. We were unanimous in our decision not to walk away from our responsibilities at TPS; and we took action to suspend Ms. Lavy, pending investigation, without pay. No other action was taken regarding other staff members.

**April 18, 2017:** On Tuesday morning, April 18th, Ms. Lavy posted the letter she had sent to the Board on the TPS website and Facebook page. We discovered this public call for the Board's resignation while on the way to meet with her. During that eventual meeting, the Board informed her of her suspension. Shane Regan's employment was restored at this time.

**April 19, 2017:** The next morning, on Wednesday April 19th, two board representatives addressed the available staff members in the presence of a mediator. They relayed the board's perspective and confidence, and encouraged them to consider staying with the organization. Rex Carleton agreed to continue his employment. A meeting was scheduled with the remaining staff members for the next day, but regrettably, we received and accepted resignations from the other two employees in question.

**April 21, 2017:** Last Friday, on April 21st, we received and accepted the resignation of Zhenya Lavy.

Presently, our search for an Executive Director continues. Liisa will conclude this portion of the meeting with a brief update on that search, and then we'll take your questions.

## Next Steps – Liisa Spink

We have been actively forming the search committee that will recommend the next Executive Director.

- Executive Director Search Committee
  - Board Members: Shawn Belyea, Agastya Kohli, Liisa Spink
  - Community Members: Valerie Curtis-Newton, Sharon Nyree Williams
  - Seattle Center Representation: John Merner, Director of Seattle Center Productions

We are actively seeking one or two additional members from our community. If you are interested in joining us, or want to suggest someone we should approach, please make a point to talk to one of us this evening. We need the search committee to represent and reflect voices from all aspects of our theatre community; we know how critical diversity in people and perspectives is to the success of this task. In addition to the openings on the search committee, we welcome continuing conversation with you as we create the job description and schedule public presentations by all the final candidates to the Membership. We also want to renew the TPS Membership Advisory Committee; and we would appreciate your service in that capacity. If those possibilities interest you, a sign-up sheet is available tonight. On behalf of the entire Board, thank you for your passion, your dedication to TPS, and your willingness to join us tonight. We look forward to your thoughts and questions.

## Statement from Rex Carleton – TPS Technical Director

*(Rex requested an opportunity to speak at the meeting. He signed the original letter by Staff to the Board on April 17, 2017 asking the Board to resign. However, after meeting with the Board, Rex changed his position and asked to remain on staff. The Board accepted.)*

Some of you are curious, some of you because you're upset, some of you because you're angry. I'd like to believe you're all here because you care about the organization, who we are, and where we're going (*tearing up*).

2 days after this whole mess came down, I sent a note to Shane Regan, but it's meant for all of you. There simply aren't any words to express how deeply I regret what I've done. Given what I've heard from the board over the past 48 hours, I've asked myself over and over again how I could have been so blind and accepted the information I've been given without vetting. I've told the Board that if they can forgive me for what I've done, I'll do my best to repair the damage and move forward. I'm all in, if you'll have me.

*(Applause.)*

I don't deserve your applause. If you feel like applauding, applaud the board and the mission of this organization.

## Q&A

Holly (Moderator):

As we begin the Q and A portion of the evening, let's work together to create an atmosphere that maintains the boundaries of mutual respect, common sense, and legal constraint around some of the answers the Directors can provide tonight. That does not mean you should be shy about voicing any concerns. If you have a question, please do not hesitate to ask it. They will let you know if they are unable to offer detailed answers. There are no real ground rules, but please trust me to moderate. Three requests:

1. Please step up and step back and leave space for others. If you don't monitor yourself, I may monitor you.
2. Please don't video or audio record. Notes are being taken.
3. Try not to be on your phone, unless you have an emergency.

#### QUESTION

Eric Newman: You said you would be discussing staff changes. What did you mean by that?

#### ANSWER

Paul Levy: We just discussed separation of Karen Lane and the suspension of Zhenya Lavy last Tuesday. We received resignations from Catherine Smith and Jeanette Sanchez. Shane Regan's employment was never officially terminated and he is still on staff. *(As mentioned before, Rex Carleton also remains on staff.)*

#### QUESTION

Katyi Barnett (former TPS Board Member): But what plans are there for future changes? After you discussed search, you mentioned some other considerations.

#### ANSWER

Agastya: we meant that we are trying to determine next steps for new leadership

#### QUESTION

Stephanie Hilbert (founding TPS Board Member): Lots of congratulations. Is there a timeline for making changes going forward? Some of us as actors appreciate the listserv. Some of us appreciate rehearsal space. Will this continue and what is your time frame?

#### ANSWER

Shawn Belyea: At this time we have three primary goals.

1. Maintain high quality of TPS service. No interruption planned in those.
2. Increase accessibility and transparency. That begins with this meeting and we'll continue to post developments. We are also bringing in a Community Liaison Officer to plan public events and increase transparency.
3. Create a positive work environment for a new leader, so we are working on creating clear goals and a clear plan for them. We have hired a new business manager, Evan Tucker. Rex is working on a facilities plan, and we are relying on Shane to incorporate organizational knowledge into a new plan.

#### ANSWER

Liisa Spink: Our timeline for the ED is late Summer/Early fall. We are putting together job description and a new search committee. We will engage with membership about that later. Applicants to the ED position will be required to write a page on the TPS vision as part of their application.

#### QUESTION

Daniel Christensen: I haven't heard the perspective of any staff members who left. It sounds like something was broken, and I haven't heard anyone talk about that so we can perhaps fix what was broken.

#### HOLLY:

Anyone want to respond to that?

#### ANSWER

Rex Carleton: We believed in the leadership of this organization going forward after the difficult departure of Karen Lane, who had been there since the beginning. It was a tough transition, but the Interim ED came in with a tremendous amount of focus and drive. It was a totally believable plan going forward. I was grossly misled, step by step, to believe this board was moving to torpedo TPS, and that's why I acted the way I did.

#### QUESTION

Aaron Clements-Levin (TPS Member): When problems like this come about, they don't happen because of one member on the staff, they come about from all parties involved. From my experience, it has to do not only with the ED but from the board President. From what I've heard, this is a white-washing, but nobody is talking about what's broken, how it got broken, and how to solve it. So, I'm leaving this meeting the way I walked in. I don't hear the Board taking any

responsibility for the mess. If the mess was created by the staff, why didn't the board know anything about it before. I'm not hearing anything from any of you about what the hell went on. How do you plan to avoid having it happen again?

#### ANSWER

Liisa Spink: Thank you for your honesty and passion. I think I speak for the entire Board when I say we take full and complete responsibility for this. It became evident from the community and staff reaction that communication and transparency are not something that we have done well in the past, and it is something we plan to really concentrate on in the future. Working on the Exec. Search committee, we need to make sure the ED coming in has fertile soil and part of that is connecting with membership in the ED selection and organizational plans.

Tony Beeman: I believe everyone on the ground level staff of TPS even when we disagreed, was acting with integrity. A number of lessons learned.

1. We brought in an interim who was also interested in the job, which was difficult. We won't do that again.
2. We've learned a lot about moving forward about selection, and the need to open that up to the community.

Shawn Belyea: One of the challenges we have is that we have two stories happening now. One is the story the previous Staff was telling people outside the organization, including in secret meetings. The other is the story that the previous Staff told the Board. The management memos coming to the Board from the Interim ED - that's the one person we communicate and work with - if you look at minutes and management memos from ED for the past year, the picture and story that is told of the organization is a very strong one: biggest UGAs ever. More fringe theaters started and supported, high-functioning programs, and happy staff.

#### QUESTION

Aaron Clements-Levin (TPS Member): It was my understanding it was difficult for Karen and staff to run programs because there was not enough staff. Now there is even less staff. All I've heard is you plan to hire a new ED? What do you plan to do to keep things running?

#### ANSWER

Shawn Belyea: We've had 3 staff resign, so obviously we have to hire staff. Shane Regan has been promoted and is going to supervise hiring new people to manage events. Evan Tucker has been brought on as Business Manager and is creating efficiencies in office management for us. As mentioned before, Rex Carleton is staying on as Technical Director.

We are also re-activating the Advisory Board of the Gregory Awards and the Membership Advisory Council, to bring members of the community into our planning and execution moving forward.

#### QUESTION

Karen Kinch (TPS Member): Thanks for being here tonight. My concern is there are two members of our community who are respected and valued whose reputations may be on the line (two former EDs). Is there some place in this process to heal what has been broken there? I hope that you will take a look at what was missing in your process. And finally, how solvent is TPS? Do you know? How long have you known about insolvency?

#### ANSWER

Jane Martin Lynch: We are on solid ground. Over the past 2 weeks, we've gotten up to speed on the financial situation of current programs and our overall financial position, and we believe we have the budget to continue those as people expect.

#### QUESTION

Charles Waxberg (TPS Member): Why did Karen Lane leave?

#### ANSWER

Jane Martin-Lynch: there are some areas in today's conversation that have confidentiality around them. We honor the contributions and legacy of Karen Lane. There is a confidentiality agreement in place that prevents TPS or Karen from talking about how she left.

Karen Lund: If before this weekend, you'd Googled "Karen Lane separates from TPS" you'd have seen nothing but honor and appreciation. That separation was handled by the Board. We put out a press release. What happened last week with the publishing of that letter on FB, with the firing of Shane, that was not a respectful situation. The Board didn't have anything to do with that, but we are here to try to fix it and move forward. Say what you want about me, but this Board is volunteers, and we have to pay to be on the Board. We do it for the love of this community. We have a possibility for a sea change moving forward with this organization because we've been to a place of deception and now we are in a place of honesty.

#### QUESTION

John Merner: Seattle Center started the rental program in 1999 and has worked closely with TPS ever since. I worked with Karen on a regular basis and I loved her. Regardless, the position of Seattle Center is that we stand firmly with this Board, with the rental program, and with the shared vision going forward.

#### QUESTION

Christine White (TPS Member): I like the discussion about moving forward, but I can't help but wonder: is there a place that I as a TPS member can go online to read job descriptions of an ED, Interim ED, and board member? I'd love to have a clear idea of what is expected so I can help as a member support you and this community going forward.

#### ANSWER

Liisa Spink: That's an awesome idea and we'll do that.

#### QUESTION

Craig Bradshaw (TPS Member): I've seen a lot of vague statements. We've been given one timeline and reference to board meetings and board minutes. It's difficult for me to sort through what I've heard from people on all sides of this issue. Are governance documents, board minutes, and details of the timeline available to us?

#### ANSWER

Tony Beeman: I've been living in those documents so they exist. We do plan to publish the TPS by-laws that govern the TPS board. Board minutes are not generally public, but we actually have that document. We have to remove personal issues, contract negotiations, HR issues, and plans of member theaters (we don't want to reveal someone's show because we talked about it in board meeting), but once we've done that we can publish the rest of the minutes. There were some accusations by the Interim ED of secrecy. However, in any executive session (meetings without ED), all discussions were about the ED search (because she was interested in it), HR issues, and one whistleblower issue which has to remain anonymous.

We wonder if producing the by-laws is just polluting the site with a bunch of information people don't want to hear. However, contact me directly and we can discuss what else you want to see released and what we legally can release.

What the bylaws also provide for is the formation of a Membership Advisory Committee. Two members of that committee would also be members of the Board – this is a way for the membership to have a voice in Board decisions.

#### QUESTION

(follow-up from Craig Bradshaw): When I hear statements like "grossly misled" without evidence to back it up, that concerns me.

#### ANSWER

Jane Martin Lynch: That's something we can't discuss in detail, and I'm sorry for that.

#### QUESTION

Jen Moon (TPS Member): The departure of Karen Lane didn't feel respectful (*support from audience*). It felt disorganized and weird and disrespectful. While I feel a Membership Advisory Council is a good idea, I think you need a consultant to educate you in how to act as a board, how to communicate things. I don't mean that as an insult. (*Lots of applause.*)

#### HOLLY

It doesn't sound like you wanted a response, that was just advice.

#### QUESTION

Jason Dooley (TPS Member): Do you have details about how the Membership Advisory Council will operate?

#### ANSWER

Paul Levy: I would hope soon, but we don't have exact dates worked out yet. If you sign up and are interested, we will keep you up to date. Once the board activates the council, the council generally governs itself. Programs like Leadership for Social Change show us the dangers of only relying on our own networks, so anything like the Membership Advisory Council will take some time to make sure we are reaching everyone.

#### HOLLY:

Two more questions. If you have more questions, please send them to [sbelyea@tpsonline.org](mailto:sbelyea@tpsonline.org)

#### QUESTION

Kate Kraay: I got here late, sorry if you've already answered this question. What are the next steps in searching for the new ED?

#### ANSWER

Liisa Spink: We did answer that earlier but I'm happy to talk to you after the meeting. (*See "Next Steps – Liisa Spink" above*)

#### QUESTION

Annie Paladino (TPS Member): In a letter sent by Zhenya Lavy, there were concerns raised. We don't know veracity of those claims. Has there been any thought of a neutral third-party to look into those claims?

#### ANSWER

Liisa Spink: There was a meeting with Katherine and Jeanette and a moderator of their choosing. We went through the letter line by line and asked for examples of when things happened because we were at a loss, and they didn't have examples. The moderator is here if they want to speak to that, but we wanted to know because we didn't understand what happened. There isn't a single person here who didn't want to know, "What did I do wrong, what could I have done differently?" We wanted Katherine and Jeanette to stay. They chose not to, but I'd like to speak to them at any time with another moderator of their choosing.

John Merner: I was the moderator for that meeting with Jeanette and Catherine. We spoke for 6 hours. Karen is correct, they asked repeatedly what went wrong. However, there wasn't anything they could point to. I knew the staff members better than anyone on the board. One of my jobs is to determine if the contract we have with TPS is in good hands and over the course of 6 hours, I was convinced the contract is still in good hands with this board. The city can revoke that program at any time without reason with 30 days' notice. Over the course of those 6 ½ hours, Karen and Shawn were open to discuss any issue in any detail and I never heard any bit of evidence to support that letter.

## Closing Statement by Karen Lund

It's been good to see you tonight. More importantly, it's been good to hear you. Thank you, again, for being here. Thank you for showing up, and for continuing to show up for Seattle Theatre year after year. The events of the past few weeks have confirmed what I have always believed - TPS is not one person, one board member, or one theatre. TPS is no more, and no less, than the entirety of its membership and the community it serves. It is increasingly clear to all of us that our

members and friends are engaged and passionate about the mission and purpose of TPS for our shared theatre community. We're humbled, and we're so grateful.

It's also become clear to us that we need to reach out to you more effectively, and engage you more meaningfully. We need to create more ties, more forums, and more moments for dialogue and exchange of ideas – starting with the search for our next Executive Director. We have work to do – no doubt – and each of us can help.

More than anything, we in the Seattle theatre community need to recapture the narrative of the last few weeks; not to erase it, but to reframe it. Let's make a choice to reflect what is really going in our vibrant Arts culture. *HERE LIES LOVE* is happening across campus right now, *Nadeshiko* is performing downstairs; new works, world premieres, classics and musicals are being mounted all over our region. Gregory nominators are out and about in the theatres making their recommendations for the fall awards. As theatre artists we have much better stories to tell than the one we were reading about last week - stories that give life, change minds and challenge ideals. These are the stories we need to be telling right now.

This setback will not diminish Theatre Puget Sound – not as long as you're here to learn and grow with us. Thank you for your support. Thank you for coming this evening. Stay active. Stay engaged. I hope to see all of you on Monday showing our support for Access to All at the King County Court House at 1:30pm.

## SLIDE

### **What can I do as a member to support you?**

Ways you can get involved:

- Become a member of TPS
- Join the member advisory committee
- Give big! On May 10<sup>th</sup> (donate to your favorite arts organization)
- Participate in the Access to All Campaign
- Step up and represent membership on ED search committee
- Show up and volunteer at programs