

**TPS Executive Director Search: Member Forum 7/17/17**

**Candidate 1 (11:10am)**

Transcript of Presentation and Q&A Session

*(Name of candidate and identifying information has been removed from this transcript by the request of the final candidates to preserve anonymity at this stage in the process.)*

**Liisa Spink:** Good morning, everybody.

My name is Liisa Spink. I'm the co-chair along with Agastya Kohli over here for the TPS Executive Director search. So I just wanted to say welcome and thank you for coming we incredibly appreciate how passionate our membership is.

And I'll do a brief intro, in terms of where we are in the process, then I'll hand it over to the main event: [Candidate 1]

So we started this process in April, it started with an open application process, which we had a team of folks reviewing the resumes, right at the very beginning, we're surveyed the membership, so we asked them what they'd like to see out of this search because TPS is of and for and consists of the members, so it was important that we get your feedback

From that survey, we implemented a couple things for the search, one was that we had significant member involvement at every level of the search, so we had a membership representative on the resume review team we had a membership representative on the first interview panel and for the final selection process we have a membership forum, from which we'll be collecting data which will be influencing the decision.

For folks that are unable to be here because it's in the middle of the day, we are recording the presentation, and that will go out as transcript, and members will be able to comment that way as well. Thank you all for being here in person, and please do reach out to people to take a look at that transcript and go ahead and put their voice in.

The names will not be on the transcript. We had a request from our candidate pool to keep confidentiality. If you're here, you'll obviously know who the candidates are, but we do request that you keep it somewhat confidential. So (inaudible) candidate 1, 2, and 3, and the reason for that was a request from the candidate pool.

Yes so without any further ado, let me give it over to [Candidate 1], he'll speak for about 10 minutes, then we'll have about 10 minutes of Q&A which Agastya will moderate and then the next ones today will be at 2:10 and then at 3:10. So I'm going to stop talking and head out and (inaudible) you people and hand it over to [Candidate 1].

**Candidate 1:** Thank you so much. Good morning everybody, thank you so much for coming in, it's such an honor to be here and a pleasure as well

I have limited time and a lot of information I want to cover, so I'm gonna jump right on in I'm gonna start with myself and i'll be saying exactly what you're reading, so we can be connected or we can be on the screen.

Most of you, or, people that know me know me, know my arts background, but you don't know my executive and administrative background, so I'm just gonna jump into that first.

I have 26 near consecutive years in entertainment and arts administration.

22 years of executive level administration both in for-profits and non-profits  
I've been in Seattle for 11 years.

And during that time, a lot of my day job employment work is included -- big focus on human resource consultancy, focusing on employee retentions, employer best practices, and workplace culture

I've been in managerial and leadership positions for all 11 years locally and 22 years of my overall career

Co-founder, past chair and event planner of the gregory awards (years 1-3)

And I've held executive positions in non-profits serving, non-profits not just in Seattle, but my lifetime career, serving: Jewish Nation, immigration equality, wildlife, and of course the arts.

I've held multiple titles in my career, from executive administrator and assistant to general manager and supervisors, restaurant and bar managers, paralegals, public relations, social media consultant, etcetera ectetera.

First off, let's talk about Theatre Puget Sound. I'm sure we all know but let's just narrow it down to "Who we are" and I'm going to use the word "we" because I'm already a member, and so I'm part of that [ ] already. Theatre Puget Sound is a leadership and service organization founded in 1997 to advocate for the region's growing theatre community's causes and administer much-needed services. TPS is the Northwest's premiere arts advocacy and leadership organization, providing programming and services that benefit both the theatre community and the larger regional arts community.

What do we do? Well, let's go to the Mission Statement to find out.

TPS has a two-fold mission statement.

To promote the spiritual and economic necessity of theatre to the public, and to unify and strengthen the theatre community through programs, resources, and services.

Just briefly, what we're gonna cover today is priorities. There's a request (inaudible) what are the new ED's priorities.

So let's look at internal operations, strengthening and unifying, let's look at our programs, arts advocacy, and then I want to touch briefly on the bigger picture.

The following is a very brief bullet point on what we're going to cover. And the search committees and the board will receive greater detail on the information you'll be receiving today. Priorities -- what are our immediate priorities? We've gone without full staffing without an ED for a little while, so we gotta get in there and see what's happening internally.

Overall assessment of internal office processes and what needs immediate attention.

We need to assess staffing and staffing priorities.

We need to assess financials: Where are the budgets?

That's 2017 and 2018 is right around the corner. And how have the recent changes affected the financials?

Then we need to assess upcoming priorities and urgent needs -- what's in our pipeline? The Gregory Awards are right around the corner, and once we're beyond that, we have our membership drive.

We need to know where all these items are, and we need to take action.

Next steps in our priority lists, what's beyond that?

We need to work on strengthening and unifying our community and our members.  
We need to become the leader in social justice and racial equality in our city and our industry.  
Expand our membership base to be more inclusive of the diverse art forms and individuals that we represent and that we'd like to represent.

We need to Establish and re-establish professional development programs :free and low-cost workshops to strengthen our collective knowledge base and our skill-sets as a community  
And an Overall assessment of the Gregory Awards to make them more inclusive and legitimize our final nominating process

Looking at our programs in our next steps priority list

Are our programs aligned with our mission?

What programs have proven most needed and desired by the membership?

What are the budgetary requirements of these programs?

And are we spending wisely and appropriately on these programs?

And most importantly, What are the cutting-edge, visionary programs that we need to implement in order to become a leading organization in Seattle that represents, employs, serves and lifts up the multitude of identities in our city and in our region?

Recently, TPS sent out a member survey that asked What do you believe the top three priorities should be for the new Executive Director?

In order of ranking, those came out to be:

- Advocacy for the Performing Arts
- United General Auditions
- Space Rentals
- Leadership for Social Change
- The Gregory Awards
- Communications and Website

It's my belief that the Generals and the Gregory Awards are not currently a 911, we'll assess those later down the road. If we remove those items, We are left with a new priority list from the membership base which includes:

- Advocacy for the Performing Arts
- Leadership for social change
- Communications and Website

So I'd like to start with Leadership for Social Change

This is part of our bigger picture here.

We are a member organization covering a lot of people in a lot of areas.

Seek training, guidance and mentorships for the internal office first.

Establishing and re-establishing training, workshops and forums for our members in regards to social justice.

We need to address OUR OWN own internal policy and procedural inequities

And we need to take Action, then we need to share that information.

The focal Point of future membership drives need to include individuals and organizations that traditionally work with artists of color and underserved sectors of our community  
And we will work on this through internal in the office AND externally to achieve our goals  
And then we need to assess our TPS programs and put them through a lens of social justice and racial equality, as well.

Because we will and we want to achieve an environment that welcomes a more diverse membership

As a recent board member put it, in an interview with the newspaper, "Unless we are intentional then we are inequitable."

Thank you for the use of that quote.

Bigger picture, let's look at priorities and advocacy

Seattle is the 7th Fastest Growing City in the United States, and the 3rd Fastest Growing Economy in the U.S.

Home to Amazon and Microsoft the two largest tech companies in America, according to Forbes Magazine.

The Seattle area is the ninth fastest-growing metro area in the US

With Approximately 1,100 new residents per week coming to our region. That's from the U.S. Census Bureau this year.

How do we as an arts community bridge the widening gap between our new residents and the conglomerate companies that are employing them?

And I believe that's TPS with one thing -- you see a little transition there.

I believe that TPS needs to be the body that connects those entities with our members and our organizations

Those houses are not full, they're not filling up

And more and more people moving in, why are they not showing up? I think TPS needs to be the bridge that connects to departments of community engagement at local Fortune 500 companies' and King County's largest companies

I also believe that we need to build relationships with these companies, tech companies, and newly transplanted companies.

Seeking sponsorship and funding for TPS itself, which will enable us to market the arts community, increase our communication and thus promotions to the public, as well as to our members, and strengthen our programs

Which brings me to priorities for the bigger picture with website and communications

Originally we had Seattle Performs, which was an online comprehensive listing of all the productions, shows, what's going on in the city, and that was replaced with Arts Crush. Both of these are no longer effective nor are they useful.

I don't believe the general public knows how to get there or how to find us.

I believe we need one comprehensive website for the general public, listing up all productions in our current membership base at any one time. TPS needs to take on a greater marketing campaign towards the larger community, connecting these new residents and new companies to our membership base.

The TPS members' site does not reflect the technology or the tech city that we have become.

Now, I know this is a huge and expensive task, and I have greater plans for that which I'll discuss with the board. But we need to update that as well.

What I recommend and propose is that we end up with one website geared towards the public, with a member portal.

That way, we can market all of our community together as a whole, through the funding that TPS would want to search and find from these companies.

And also, a small side note, I believe that TPS needs a newsletter so we can communicate to each other. What do we each have going on? Why are art industry nights empty? Let's get those out there and filled. They should be community events where we're going to celebrate each other. And listings of needs, volunteers, load in days, all kinds of wonderful options we can share with our community internally.

And then I want to move over briefly to some of my core beliefs and wrap it up sort of with this: There may be a lot of questions in regards to my being a working artist or a producing artist with a producing membership company under our flag of that, and I've had a lot of conversation topics to discuss with the board when we get there later in the week, but there's a lot of benefits to having me.

I'm deeply, deeply infused in the community

I have experience developing, monitoring, and maintaining non-profits, continually having to return to this mission.

I'm constantly in contact with members and possible members.

I believe that TPS membership growth is a major priority, and that is done face to face, it's not done through e-mails it's done by us being out in the community

It's also about us being out there, finding out what's not working and working with each other, so we can see what those obstacles are, come back to the office, and find solutions for that at any given time, or the best possible solution.

I also just want to communicate that the arts are and always have been my work, my hobby, my entertainment, and my social life.

I have a deep, deep love and passion for the arts, and our arts community, which is actually how [theatre company] came about. I wanted to have a greater impact on our community. More than I could have as an individual actor or a director, and thus came a new organization.

The next step, I believe in my process to find a way to effect our community at a much, much larger scale -- through the information I have, the knowledge I have, the experience I want to gain, and have passed, so just to touch base on that.

I'm seeing the flag over there that says I'm out of time, so I'll stop and let's move on to questions. Thank you, Agastya.

#### **Q&A:**

**Q1:** I'm going to ask the same question to everybody bc I think it's so critical. Historically, TPS has not benefited to the degree one might expect from Grant opportunities and from corporate support. There's a number of reasons for it, not the least of which is inadequate or sometimes ineffective staffing. But there's a bigger issue there, that I'd like you to address. As a service

organization, we don't carry the public profile that granting organizations and corporations respond to. How do you bridge or how do you mend that gap between perception and function, in terms of the gaining support, the critical support we need, to build this organization beyond simply a membership income-base.

**Candidate 1:** Great. Excellent question and one of our biggest obstacles, I agree. I'll start by saying it's my experience that most non-profits that reach over the 4-5 hundred thousand dollar annual budget, typically have a Director of Philanthropy or such title in place that is out there marketing and then who's sole purpose, their only purpose day in and day out, is to bring money into that organization. I assume for the moment, it would be the new executive director, ultimately working towards having somebody that specializes in that and finds great joy and passion in communicating and connecting with corporations or individuals with organizations that need it. The greater message -- so that's one -- that would be one long-term goal. That would be worked towards, once there was funding for that position.

The greater issue is communicating the need to these corporations and new corporations and tech companies and new tech companies that keep coming to our city. To invest in the community in a city that they've literally taken over. Right? And how can they do that? Amazon, for example, I assume, is not interested in funding a small fringe theatre that has a budget of \$75,000-\$80,000 a year. But are they interested in sponsoring and working with an organization that has 100+ arts organizations under its umbrella? Or are they interested -- and I believe that they are -- if we connect with the right people. These corporations are still made by -- they're still functioning through human instinct with the funds available to invest in their community. It's just convincing them to invest in the arts themselves and the culture.

**Q2:** Hi. Can you talk to the transition, assuming you were hired, the transition that would have to occur between your priority as AD of [redacted: title of theatre company], which has been the focus of your life for a long time now, to a more community-based, different sort of focus. Can you talk to that?

**Candidate 1:** Absolutely. So, that's a great question, and I know it's going to come up a lot. So, first off, let me establish that [Theatre Company] has always occurred, as all of my professional work has occurred in the arts, after my 40, 50, or 60-hour a week jobs. That's the way it's been established, and the way it's always been run.

Next, we've already spent the last year and a half training my staff up, so my administrative skills have minimized more and more each time. We've run a couple of productions now, literally with me being a face and a voice and a newsletter -- and then managing budgets overall, but basically overseeing the situation. So, my role is continually already been minimized, so we would hire a couple more people on board to take over the tasks that might be a little bit more time consuming, so I can be more of a governing individual, and then we will produce less -- which was already a decision that we had made: to back off how much we've been producing. So, we have one slot in 2018 with a big break followed after that, so everything can be reassessed. Additionally, I do believe in the relationship between Executive Director and the Board, so it would be constantly under assessment and discussion. And assessing -- making sure we're making the right decisions going forward for both parties, both non-profit organizations.

**Q3:** Speaking of valuing relationships with tech companies, Amazon in particular, it's really important that we \_\_\_ specific people that can care about bringing their own staff to the arts. I'm surrounded by Amazon people. They have no idea what's going on. "Where are you going? Where are you going?" Particularly since the newspaper dropped the listings. Absolutely no idea of the cultural opportunities. And I think you can do things that are more fundraisers, Bezos -- my son would cover them for the Wall Street Journal many years ago. Bezos needs to find their one first project by Amazon, not from his own personal money. So, I wonder what you will do yourself.

**Candidate 1:** Great, can you clarify that to like a one-sentence question for me?

**Q4:** How would you approach Amazon in particular to get them to sell you \_\_\_\_\_ tech companies, attracting new people to town?

**Candidate 1:** Fantastic. I'll take it from there. Great question. And ultimately, what all of this comes down to, in any non-profit, and business, but especially non-profits, it's about relationships. It's people, people, people, people. First and foremost.

So, it's literally am I afraid to get on the phone and call community engagement at some of these companies? No, I'm not afraid of that. I'll do it in a heartbeat, and trust me when I say, I'm inspired. I'm in love with this community. I can sell this arts community. And that's all of them, not theatre-specific. That's dance, music, and all of these things. So it's really about getting single doors open first. And starting to talk. And building new relationships one-on-one. And these things don't happen overnight. But they certainly can happen because ultimately it's people wanting a better life experience no matter what. It's what we all want. And how can we make that happen? There are civically-minded individuals in these organizations, responsible for cutting checks. So, I'm going to narrow it down, and just say it's about relationships. And that is the responsibility of the Executive Director of any non-profit. Then sometimes, you are able to find possibly a Director of Philanthropy who specializes in it to move it further.

**Q5:** Mine is more of a personal question. Two-fold. What made you interested in applying for this position? And if you could speak on why theatre and theatre in Seattle is important to you.

**Candidate 1:** Great. Actually, one of the reasons my husband and I moved to Seattle was to be a part of a large, thriving arts community. As I've mentioned, I've been in the arts my entire adult life. And before. Again, my desire is to affect change on a larger level. Change comes from one individual to another individual to another individual. And we all experience that. So if you're an actor, or a dancer, or a director, you know when you've affected someone's life. You see when you've affected somebody's life. That's what we're doing in our individual creative lives, day-by-day. I want to have a legacy. I want us to have a legacy. I don't have children, and I don't plan to have children. I want to leave a mark on our community. I believe in community first and foremost. It's back to that civically-minded engagement that we all want to participate in. I believe and know that the work experience I've had, as an individual moving up, in my administrative career as well as my non-profit careers, are moving my skill sets and desire to a place where I can affect change on a much larger scale. That's my desire. Right? So, every time I've moved from what step to the next, it's because it gave me another opportunity individually

and personally, to affect more people. And so this is the ultimate opportunity. To be able to affect much greater through the organizations that we're umbrella-ing, so they can affect individuals on their levels through audience engagement, which is what we're ultimately all about.

**Q6:** I have 3 questions. You can pick whichever one you want to answer because I know we're short on time, and I came in 5 minutes late, so if you've already addressed this, I apologize but -- What do you think is the most important thing that TPS could do, that it's not doing to help theatre organizations in the city, as a whole? What do you think is the most difficult thing -- the most ambitious thing -- that TPS, in your vision, could attempt to help performers, artists, individuals in the Seattle theatre community. And third, I know the theatre is associated with Shunpike, I'm curious if those two organizations could work more closely together, in what model do we make that most effective? Those are my three questions.

**Candidate 1:** Great. So, the most important thing I think we can do is advocate for our arts. And unify our members. We're a little divided -- we've been a little divided. I think we need to remove that division and unify ourselves because -- we're artists. We color the world. Everybody is building it, keeping it self, moving it forward, but we're the ones who color it. We're the ones that infuse humanity into it. And that's the core of what we do as artists. And what the artist memberships are doing. And we need to advocate for them. This is the most important thing we do. And I also think it has the most obstacles to it, which is money, manpower, structure, things like that. But I do believe that the solutions are there. And also, I have great respect for Shunpike. I am an incredible collaborator with their Executive Director and team. And I do think there are bridges that could be built there, as well as 4Culture and other arts organizations here to move the artists forward. I think there's a lot bridges to be built, and I would be all over that.

**Agastya Kohli:** Thank you very much!

**Candidate 1:** Thank you so much!