



Company of Fools

**Part of the Sun Valley Center for the Arts
Sun Valley, Idaho**

Job Title: Producing Artistic Director

The Search

Company of Fools (COF) has begun a search for a Producing Artistic Director (PAD). Its parent organization, the Sun Valley Center for the Arts (SVCA), is seeking candidates excited by the opportunity of leading COF to its next level of artistic and organizational achievement. COF intends to identify and engage the successful candidate by fall of 2018.

Background

One of only three professional theatres in Idaho, Company of Fools is a theatre company whose work is shaped by a deep connection between theatre and its community, a commitment to excellence in theatrical storytelling, and a passion for relevance in its offerings for audiences and artists.

COF was founded as an ensemble company in 1992 in response to an essay by Cecil Collins entitled “The Vision of the Fool” in which the fool embodies truth, joy, creativity and a childlike wonder at all that is magical and mysterious.

A series of discussions initiated by the Company’s founder, Rusty Wilson, and original Company members Vicki Bodin, John Glenn, Denise Simone, Robert Throckmorton and Joel Vilinsky, articulated a vision of a theatre company that embodied the qualities of the fool and was vital to its community. Wilson’s unheated garage in Richmond, Virginia served as the Company’s first acting studio. The Company realized four years of training and launched three productions—Tennessee Williams’ one-acts at the Historic Hanover Tavern, Williams’ *The Glass Menagerie* in partnership with Barksdale Theatre and *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*.

In the fall of 1996, Wilson and founding member Denise Simone relocated to Hailey, Idaho, intent on continuing the Company’s work. For its inaugural Idaho presentation, the Company adapted Nikolai Gogol’s *Diary of a Madman* on a shoestring budget and performed it for 30 people over two nights at \$5 a ticket. Over twenty years later, Company of Fools has evolved into an award-winning theatre that produces a full season of plays while providing substantial arts education programming for its community.

COF has been recognized numerous times for its significant contributions to the arts. Founding members Denise Simone and John Glenn are both recipients of the Idaho Governor’s Award for *Excellence in the Arts*. In 2009, the Company was acknowledged as the Arts Advocate of the Year by the Sun Valley/Ketchum and Hailey Chambers of Commerce. In 2004, COF was honored as a recipient of the Idaho Governor’s Award for *Excellence in the Arts*.

In January of 2013, the Company merged with the Sun Valley Center for the Arts, becoming part of what is now the largest arts institution in the state of Idaho.

In 2017, the historic Liberty Theatre in Hailey was gifted to SVCA/COF by Demi Moore and Bruce Willis and will remain Company of Fools' permanent residence.

Central to COF's mission and core purpose is a deep commitment to the community and region where it is located, the Wood River Valley, which includes Ketchum, Sun Valley, Bellevue, and Hailey. As such, COF is a non-urban professional theatre. It produces a 4-show mainstage season, a reading series, and educational and outreach activities for both students and adults. It operates under an Actors' Equity Association SPT contract, engaging local, regional and national artists for its productions and activities. COF has a full-time staff of five and maintains a company of freelance artists associated with the theatre.

Sun Valley Center for the Arts

Founded in 1971, the Sun Valley Center for the Arts, with an average budget of \$3.5M is the oldest arts organization in Idaho's Wood River Valley and serves more than 40,000 attendees every year (in a valley with a population of 22,000 full-time residents) through programs in the visual arts, theatre, music, film, education and humanities. The SVCA is a nationally accredited museum and is recognized in North America for its unique, multidisciplinary approach to programming and presenting, exploring ideas, themes and topics of relevance to its community through events in multiple disciplines, entitled "BIG IDEAS."

SVCA, a non-collecting museum, offers a full calendar of exhibitions, lectures, and concerts, engaging fine artists, distinguished speakers, and talented musicians to entertain and enlighten the broad spectrum of residents and visitors in the Wood River Valley. Its annual fundraiser, the Wine Auction, is consistently ranked among the nation's Top 10 Charity Wine Auctions by *Wine Spectator* magazine and raises funds for year-round free programming.

In 2000, SVCA began working with the Blaine County School District to help supplement the curriculum and increase students' access to art. Today SVCA's participation with the School District has developed into a robust partnership where SVCA helps facilitate learning by regularly bringing musicians, artists, actors and authors into the schools and offering extensive in-gallery and theatre programming for area students. COF developed a program that serves as the theatre curriculum for elementary schools in the district. Close to 60 percent of all Center programs and 80 percent of children's programs are offered free of charge.

In January of 2013, SVCA's Board of Directors approved a merger with COF. COF maintains its name and identity as a prominent SVCA program and continues to base its operations out of the Liberty Theatre in Hailey.

SVCA's museum and offices are located in Ketchum. In addition, SVCA operates two facilities in Hailey to better serve the needs of the population of southern Blaine County. The Liberty Theatre houses COF, and an ancillary facility consists of a historic house that was the birthplace of Ezra Pound and a state of the art freestanding classroom.

A Centerwide, core program of SVCA is "BIG IDEAS: The Arts Bring Us Together in Conversation."

The arts create dialogue, build connections and help us define our place in the world. Much of SVCA's programming is built around themes, or BIG IDEAS, that are relevant to the world today. Topics can be serious or playful, but are designed to engage the entire community and start conversations. BIG IDEA projects are multidisciplinary in nature—connecting film and theatre, visual art exhibitions and lectures, music and classes. BIG IDEAS are often developed in collaboration with other local non-profit organizations and businesses, using expertise from all avenues to explore a subject in depth. The COF Producing Artistic Director will be involved in the development of the Big Ideas and will select programming, readings or activities annually that align with the topics.

The Community

Located in South Central Idaho, the Wood River Valley is in Blaine County, at the edge of the Sawtooth and Challis National Forests. Sun Valley has been referred to as "America's First Destination Ski Resort." Nestled in the spectacular Rocky Mountains, the Sun Valley Resort is one of the great winter ski destinations. Summer offers a multitude of recreational and cultural activities. To the north is the majestic Sawtooth Wilderness Area that boasts over 200,000 acres of natural splendor, with opportunities for swimming, fishing, mountain biking, white-water rafting and more.

With all of these natural amenities and a terrific climate (an average humidity of only 30%) the community attracts an athletic, active population. They are involved and interested in sustaining a healthy, enriched lifestyle. Bright, accomplished professionals and their families typically spend winters and summers in the Valley and many choose to leave metropolitan areas to make this their year-round home. With excellent public and private schools, an abundance of arts, culture, and recreation, this is an ideal place to raise children. The well-educated, well-traveled population demands diverse and exceptional arts and culture programs.

ArtPlace named Sun Valley one of America's Top Twelve ArtPlaces—vibrant communities identified as being exceptionally successful in combining the arts, artists, and venues for creativity and expression with independent businesses, restaurants, and a walkable lifestyle.

COF is a non-urban theatre located in the Wood River Valley. Central to its mission and core purpose is a deep commitment to the community and region where it is located. Its location possesses all the virtues and appeal of a small-town community with a surprisingly rich artistic scene, including the acclaimed Sun Valley Summer Symphony, a dynamic Gallery Association, The Spot (an emerging theatre company), a new performing arts venue: the Argyros Performing Arts Center, and the annual Sun Valley Film Festival, among others. In fact, what distinguishes this community from many other mountain towns is its arts scene, including COF and SVCA.

Mission, Goals and Values

As part of an ongoing strategic planning process of the SVCA, COF has adopted the following as its Mission, Goals and Values:

Mission Statement

Company of Fools is a theatre company driven by the power of the theatrical experience to connect artist and audience. Whether through performing or teaching, we seek to engage, inspire, entertain and transform.

Goals

- Company of Fools creates professional, world-class theatre.

- COF is recognized and highly respected throughout Idaho and within the national arts community.
- COF is dedicated to a professional operating structure and collaborative culture that is highly functioning and effective.
- Consistent with the SVCA’s strategic plan, COF is on a clearly defined path to have the facilities and staffing resources that meet its mission.
- COF is structured for long-term financial security and sustainability.

Values

Excellence

Company of Fools continuously strives to excel in programmatic and operational effectiveness.

Imagination

COF offers compelling programming that stimulates the imagination, advances creativity, and promotes new perspectives.

Discovery

COF provides educational opportunities that enable all segments of our community to discover, re-discover and sustain the joy of learning.

Community

COF helps build an engaged and connected community through transformative experiences that are accessible and inclusive.

Stewardship

COF cares for the resources entrusted to us through best practices in all we do.

The Opportunity

COF was founded as an ensemble-based theatre company with successive leaders drawn from the early years of its founding. This ensemble achieved significant artistic success, acclaim, and audience and institutional growth. When Company of Fools took up residency in the Liberty Theatre in Hailey, Idaho, it became an arts organization deeply embedded in the Wood River Valley community.

Along with the American Theatre field, COF faced financial sustainability issues in the 2000s. In 2013, COF merged with SCVA, which also allowed it to support a full-time staff of five (in addition to the PAD, a Production Manager/PSM, Technical Director, Company Manager/Business Manager, and Production Support position) and to begin using the SPT contract.

Now COF is on the brink of a new chapter. As it grew, the original company members assumed different roles and/or left the organization. Recently, Artistic Director John Glenn began thinking about succession planning. Sadly, in June of 2017 John Glenn died unexpectedly.

In the winter of 2018, SVCA leadership hired Kent Thompson as Interim Producing Director and long-time company member and former leader, R.L. Rowsey as Season Producer to bridge the gap until new leadership is appointed. In addition, Thompson was hired as a consultant to evaluate the artistic and operational needs of COF, the relationship between SVCA and COF, and propose future strategies for continued success.

As the work of COF has grown and its impact has increased, the theatre has changed from a traditional ensemble to a company of artists that includes regularly returning local and regional artists who are supplemented by out-of-town artists. COF will continue its commitment to a company of artists, but

seeks to expand its pool of expertise and talent from outside the organization as well.

The PAD will report directly to the SVCA Executive Director, but s/he must also form an effective, dynamic partnership with SVCA's Artistic Director. The PAD will serve as part of the leadership team that guides SVCA.

It is expected that the new Producing Artistic Director will be an active artist/director who will lead with her/his own work and curatorial aesthetic.

Although the primary focus will be heading COF, to be successful the PAD must embrace the full slate of offerings, programs, and initiatives of SVCA.

Given COF's history of strong organizational values and an unwavering commitment to its mission, a key aspect for the search will be the need to identify a leader who has demonstrated his/her commitment to a collaborative artistic process, valuing the input of others even as s/he is responsible for final artistic and institutional decisions.

The new artistic leader will recognize the opportunity to expand the artistry of COF by extending the exploration of the ever-changing diversity of our nation throughout the work on its stages, the make-up of its staff and artists, and the broadening of its audiences.

The new PAD must recognize the importance of supporting the sense of community that exists throughout the organization, including stakeholder relationships with artists, artisans and technicians, staff, board members, volunteers, the audience and members of the Wood River Valley.

Qualifications

The Search Committee is focused on identifying a dynamic, talented theatre director and leader, who preferably has served as an artistic director for 5-7 years. However, other artistic leadership or program/project responsibilities will be considered. Experience in season planning, fundraising, and strategic planning as well as the creation and management of budgets is a plus.

The Producing Artistic Director will assume primary responsibility for setting the direction and supervising the implementation of all aspects of COF's artistic programming and administration. However, many of the specific administrative and management duties for COF are handled by SCVA staff. Therefore, the PAD is a fully integrated leadership position in all aspects of SVCA, and will work regularly with the SVCA Artistic Director, as well as Education, Finance, IT, Development and Marketing departments, program sponsors and donors, and Operations/Facility Manager.

Responsibilities – Successful candidates will be expected to:

- Set and supervise COF's artistic direction and overall aesthetic;
- Lead the season planning process including selection of plays;
- Provide ongoing artistic and administrative oversight; including oversight of season productions with staff;
- Hire and supervise personnel, both staff and contract artists;
- Direct up to two plays each season;
- In conjunction with SVCA Executive and Artistic Director, establish COF's budgetary

- parameters and develop annual budgets;
- Define season planning assumptions;
- Participate in and support SVCA’s centerwide program, BIG IDEAS;
- Contribute to and support the Education programs and activities;
- Manage fiscal and human resources responsibly;
- Participate in board development, fundraising and recruitment activities and actively engage in the long-range planning process of COF and SVCA;
- Represent COF throughout the community and the profession.

Qualifications – Successful candidates will demonstrate:

- A history of artistic achievement and a compelling creative vision;
- The ability to articulate that vision in a clear, inspiring way;
- A demonstrated history of directing exciting, vibrant theatrical experiences;
- An existing network of professional artists and collaborators;
- A dynamic public presence that will inspire the company, staff and patrons to support the theatre’s artistic and organizational vision;
- The experience and ability to build, mentor, and lead the staff through an open and collaborative management style;
- A passion for and experience with classic, modern, contemporary and new work;
- A commitment to the highest level of artistic excellence;
- A commitment to Education programs for audiences and visitors of all ages;
- The desire and ability to participate in fundraising activities on behalf of the theatre and to engage as a civic leader on behalf of COF’s & SCVA’s organizational interests;
- The passion to engender a sense of community within and outside the theatre, and the potential and commitment to be a community leader;
- A commitment to balance artistic initiatives and risks with responsible fiscal management while respecting COF’s audience, mission and core values;
- The ability to provide innovative responses to organizational challenges and the maturity to exercise effective artistic and organization leadership within a complex organizational environment;
- The ability to analyze the theatre’s status and operations and its relationship to the community in order to develop strategies for sustaining and building its audience;
- Highly developed communication skills (both written and verbal).

COF is seeking candidates with vision, passion and commitment. The successful candidate must embrace the opportunity to work closely with SCVA’s Executive Director and Artistic Director and to be an effective representative of both the arts and most particularly, the art of COF. The successful candidate must exhibit the ability and desire to assume an active, visible leadership position within the company and the community.

The committee will look for evidence of professional relationships with a diverse network of professional theatre artists and the ability to attract talented individuals to serve the theatre’s future

goals.

Finally, the successful candidate will be an individual who is, or is looking forward to becoming, a full-time resident and an active participant in the Wood River Valley.

Compensation

Compensation will be competitive with other companies of comparable stature and size, and commensurate with the leadership role that this position represents for COF & SVCA. SVCA offers a comprehensive range of benefits including medical and dental insurance, life insurance, paid vacation and sick leave, and an employee-sponsored retirement plan.

To Apply

COF and SVCA is committed to diversity in all areas of its work and encourages women and persons of color to apply.

Learn more about programs and activities at <https://sunvalleycenter.org/companyoffools/theatre/#> and at <https://sunvalleycenter.org>.

Send letter of interest, resume, and four references as Word or PDF documents electronically by e-mail only to: COFSearch@sunvalleycenter.org

Subject line: Producing Artistic Director Search

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