

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Christie Snyder, csnyder@ppt.org, 412.316.1600 x719

Contact: Dawn Keezer, dkeezer@pghfilm.org, 412.512.8780

Contact: Saul Markowitz, saul@markowitzcommunications.com, 412.977.8517

Pittsburgh Public Theater and Pittsburgh Film Office Announce Partnered Initiative to Support Workforce of the Future

May 31, 2023 | Pittsburgh, PA – Pittsburgh Public Theater Managing Director Shaunda McDill and Pittsburgh Film Office Director Dawn M. Keezer announced on May 31 an exciting new partnership to attract, develop, and retain talent in the film, theater, and entertainment production industries to support the growing entertainment arts environment of Pittsburgh. CREATE PA: Film & Theater Works! will be led by Morgan Overton as Workforce Director.

Pittsburgh has a long history of supporting film production and has been the backdrop to blockbusters and cult classics alike, from the first modern zombie film *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) to the 2016 Academy Award Best Picture Nominee *Fences*, a film adaptation of playwright August Wilson’s Pulitzer Prize-winning play. Since 1990, the economic development agency Pittsburgh Film Office has marketed the region to the film industry to help support this history and develop its future, an industry that brings in hundreds of millions of dollars per year and has topped \$2.5 billion since 1990. Pittsburgh Film Office Director Dawn Keezer said the region is in the top 10 places people want to film for television and movies.

“The film industry is a vibrant and growing sector of our region's economy.” Keezer said. “This workforce training program offers a valuable opportunity to join the creative workforce, providing family-sustaining jobs. Our partners at IATSE are enthusiastic about expanding their talented local crew, ready to welcome and train new workers.”

Morgan Overton, the former Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, & Access Manager of Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey’s Office, will fulfill missions critical to the Pittsburgh Public Theater and the Pittsburgh Film Office by coordinating and growing job training partnerships with local unions, community organizations, and media companies. The program will also mentor film and theater students in the region to develop their skills and experience through vibrant internship opportunities. CREATE PA: Film & Theater Works! will be promoted on the Pittsburgh Film Office and Pittsburgh Public Theater social media pages, websites, podcasts, and YouTube channels.

“I am excited to join the Pittsburgh Film Office and the Pittsburgh Public Theater to create opportunities for inclusion in the creative workforce of our area,” Overton said. “There is amazing room for creating

equitable pipelines for talented communities across intersections to reach their fullest potential. I'm thrilled to join this effort."

The program will attract high quality talent and develop their skills for behind-the-screen and behind-the-stage crew positions, including Grips, Electric, Hair, Wardrobe, Carpentry, Set Decorating, and Accounting. CREATE PA is the first partnership between theaters and television producers of its kind outside of New York.

"Pittsburghers need to be ready for the jobs of the future," said Mamie Stein, IATSE President, Local 489. "Our members work extremely hard and are known throughout the country for the quality of their work. This partnership will help us prepare a pipeline of new workers for family-sustaining jobs in creative industries."

Partnerships between public organizations, government, and private supporters have long led to success in Pittsburgh.

"During this dynamic time of unprecedented challenge and great opportunity in the American Theater, we are building the future of Pittsburgh Public on the pillars and values our founders set in place when they posited that Pittsburgh could not only produce steel and football, exorbitant wealth and a labor movement that would change the nation. Like our friends at the Pittsburgh Film Office, we produce world-class arts and culture, and have for generations," Pittsburgh Public Theater Artistic Director Marya Sea Kaminski said. "Our values are founded in the gritty hard work of the families who built and defined this region and are inspired by the titans of industry and visionary artists who have innovated and articulated our many chapters of growth, hardship, and hope."

CREATE PA: Film & Theater Works! will impact far beyond Allegheny County, influencing the 10-county southwestern Pennsylvania region which is home to more than 2.5 million people.

"Film and T.V. productions are growing in Pittsburgh, but many aren't aware of the opportunities," Pennsylvania Lt. Gov. Austin Davis said. "CREATE PA: Film & Theater Works! will be part of a concerted effort to reach out to underserved communities, to make them aware of the jobs that are and will be available in the future."

Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey highlighted the importance of supporting this burgeoning field in the city and investing in the talent of the future.

"Pittsburgh has just about everything it needs to support a thriving film industry," Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey said. "We've got a skilled workforce, but it needs to evolve and grow as the industry changes. This partnership points a path forward for creating new film, television, and theater career opportunities."

Details about the program will be available online through Pittsburgh Public Theater or the Pittsburgh Film Office.

"As founder and Chair of the Pennsylvania Film Caucus, it is obvious the creative industries are a growing sector of Pennsylvania's economy. I am thrilled to support the workforce training which will allow more Pennsylvanians to participate in this incredible industry" said Senator Camera Bartolotta.

###

The Pittsburgh Film Office (PFO is a 501(c)3 non-profit economic development agency dedicated to the mission of marketing the southwestern Pennsylvania region to the film industry. The PFO markets the southwestern Pennsylvania region to the film industry, successfully generating over \$2.5 billion for the Pittsburgh region since 1990 through 200+ feature film, television, and commercial productions. The return on investment is \$218 in economic impact to every \$1 contributed to the Pittsburgh Film Office. Supported by a Board of Trustees, the Pittsburgh Film Office is guided under the direction of director Dawn Keezer.

Pittsburgh Public Theater strives to serve as a true public theater to the Pittsburgh region, producing more than 120 performances each season and welcoming more than 70,000 guests through the O'Reilly Theater's doors every year. The theater is renowned for its exceptional mix of programming, featuring international classics, fresh new works, and favorite musicals. Its commitment to education and engagement initiatives is a hallmark and includes the signature Shakespeare Monologue & Scene Contest and innovative community partnerships. The organization, under the leadership of Artistic Director Marya Sea Kaminski and Managing Director Shaunda McDill, celebrates its 49th season in 2023.