



For Immediate Release:

## **Live Arts Names Susan E. Evans as Next Artistic Director**



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**Charlottesville, Virginia**—Live Arts is delighted to announce that it has named Susan E. Evans as artistic director of the volunteer-powered theater, now in its 31st season, effective June 1. The announcement follows a seven-month search that drew an impressive pool of applicants from around the country.

### **About Susan E. Evans**

Evans brings to Live Arts nearly 20 years of experience as artistic director for three small theater companies in the San Francisco Bay Area, an extensive roster of directing credits, and a reputation as a gifted theater instructor.

For three years before the pandemic, Evans led the Town Hall Theatre, a 187-seat house located in an historic building in Lafayette, California. There she planned what board members described as “interesting and inspiring” mainstage seasons while expanding programming to include a series of staged readings and a playwriting competition.

At the slightly larger Douglas Morrisson Theatre in Hayward, California, Evans commissioned and produced the theater’s first world premiere, inaugurated an annual Playwrights’ CageMatch contest, and hosted a solo artists festival.

Evans wore many hats at Eastenders Repertory Company, a nomad company that produced all over the San Francisco Bay Area. Her roles ranged from artistic leader, to talent scout, to set builder, to grant writer. During her 11-year tenure, the theater produced several festivals showcasing the work of emerging local playwrights and commissioned four full-length world premieres. The theater also gained attention for its ambitious one-act play festivals and its 100-year retrospectives of the short-play form centering on themes of political theater, sexuality/gender, comedic styles, and queer theater.

Evans earned a BA in English from Emory University in Atlanta and a certificate from the Drama Studio London at Berkeley. She also studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London.

## **The Lure of Live Arts**

Evans was attracted to Live Arts by its adventuresome production history and its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. She learned of the theater through her frequent visits to Charlottesville to visit her mother, who has lived in the community for 15 years. She also has one sibling in Virginia and another relocating here next year.

“I am drawn to the active verb in Live Arts’ mission: forging—theater and community striving toward bringing folx together, vigorously exchanging perspectives through art,” she says.

## **A Natural Fit**

“We are thrilled to welcome Susan to Live Arts and the Charlottesville community. She greatly impressed us with her breadth of artistic leadership experience, adventuresome approach to programming, enthusiasm for new works, collaborative spirit, and abiding commitment to social justice,” says Live Arts Executive Director Anne Hunter.

Colleagues describe Evans as deeply passionate about theater, a voracious script reader and chronicler of plays, and a person of great integrity who is driven to address inequities at all levels of an organization. She is drawn to plays that have heart and strives for balance when curating a season. She is known as a direct communicator and skilled mediator who works with actors of all skill levels.

“Susan was an exceptional AD with a deep artistic vision and theater acumen. A true student of theatre, she is well researched, is knowledgeable, and has a love of all aspects of the theatrical experience,” says Lynda DiVito, a Board member at Town Hall Theatre.

Dale Albright, the former deputy director of Theatre Bay Area, echoes those remarks. “Susan is very respected in the community. She’s collaborative, intelligent, and so well trained. People enjoy working with her and want to earn her respect. She’s very communicative and empowering.”

## **The Search Process**

The seven-person Search Committee first convened in March 2020 under the co-direction of Hunter and Live Arts Board Member Shannon Montague. It paused its work for seven months during the pandemic and resumed the national search in November 2020. More than 140 applicants applied. Finalists were vetted by the Committee, submitted videos, and were interviewed by the Live Arts staff and community.

“We are very grateful to the community for their contribution to the process and their unwavering support of Live Arts,” says Montague, whose leadership was instrumental to the search.

Evans looks forward to working with Jeremy Pape, who will be returning to the production department after successfully serving as interim artistic director since September 2019.

“I’m eager to connect with Jeremy, and work with and learn from all the Live Arts staff. I feel tremendously welcomed and energized,” says Evans.

## **About Live Arts**

Live Arts is a nonprofit community theater in Downtown Charlottesville, powered by more than 1,200 volunteers. Founded in 1990, Live Arts is celebrating more than 30 years of forging theater and community. Live Arts is supported in part by grants from the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, Albemarle County, the BamaWorks Fund, Bank of America, the Batten Foundation, Victoria Brown and Ed Botwinick, Charlottesville Area Community Foundation, the J&E Berkley Foundation, S&P Global, Walmart of Gordonsville, and Whole Foods Market, and by the financial support of hundreds of theater lovers in our community.

## **For more information**

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