

Josh Costello appointed new artistic director at Aurora Theatre Company

By Emily S. Mendel, Feb. 5, 2019, 12 p.m.



Josh Costello is the Aurora Theatre Company's new artistic director. Photo: Scot Goodman

The appointment of Josh Costello as the new artistic director of Aurora Theatre Company was announced on Feb. 5. He will replace departing artistic director [Tom Ross](#), who is leaving after 27 years with the company. Since 2012, Costello has been Aurora's literary manager and artistic associate.

I met with Costello recently to talk about his new appointment. He is an engaging, lively Berkeley native who has been a theater enthusiast since fifth grade at Berkwood Hedge School. It was there that he participated in the theater program, which was run by the Blake Street Hawkeyes theater group. He attended ACT's Young Conservatory during his high school years, received an M.F.A. in directing from the University of Washington, Seattle, and a B.F.A. in theater from Boston University. After serving as the founding artistic director of Impact Theatre in Berkeley, Costello joined the Marin Theater Company as its artistic director of expanded programs, where he also directed.

Tom Ross plucked Costello from Marin to join Aurora in 2012, after seeing a play that Josh had directed. While at Aurora, Josh has directed at least one play per season, including last season's hugely successful and highly regarded *Eureka Day* written by Jonathan Spector.

Costello expresses a sincere and ardent commitment to live theater.

"I fell in love with theater at a very young age ...," he said. "I knew that theater was powerful and realized that I wanted to share this thing I knew was very special with more people ... and that became my life's work and my mission — to share the unique and visceral power of live theater with other people."

He "intends to build on the quality of work and culture that Tom Ross created."

"Although this is a challenging time in the U.S., he said that he is "an optimist and hopes that theater and storytelling can be an antidote to our disconnect."

Julie Saltzman Kellner, Aurora's managing director, described the search process, which did not employ a search firm, but which did create a search committee that included non-Board member theater professionals, actor Aldo Billingslea and scenic and lighting designer Richard Olmsted.

Julie Kellner explained: "... [The search committee] crafted a values statement and a job profile. Once posted, we received approximately

75 applications for the position from all over the country. ... It was a wonderfully diverse pool of semi-finalists in terms of gender, race and geographic location and made the process challenging. ... At least two committee members interviewed each of the 13 [final candidates]. [Four finalists] were seen in person over a two-day process that included meetings with staff, board, the committee, and ultimately a presentation for our larger family. ... after many hours of conversation, we unanimously and enthusiastically chose Josh to be our next Artistic Director.”

Board President Gary H. Moore commented: “Aurora enjoys the support of a solid base of theatre-goers who appreciate the high quality, thought-provoking theatre that Aurora produces in its intimate environment. Josh’s vision is to

build on and expand that base, by championing new and diverse voices in the theatre, by engaging with a broad spectrum of communities in the Bay Area, and by making Aurora the storyteller of the community.”

Costello’s official tenure begins on Aug. 1. He will be directing Oscar Wilde’s delightful comedy, *The Importance of Being Ernest*, starting April 12.

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