



VANCOUVER  
ASIAN  
CANADIAN  
THEATRE

**EMPOWERING  
YOUR IDENTITY**

**Position Specification**  
**Artistic Managing Director**

May 2021



## ABOUT vAct

Based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre (vAct or the Company) is Canada's leading theatre company exclusively producing and developing new Asian Canadian work. It is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2021. vAct operates within an annual budget in excess of \$400,000 and derives earned revenue through ticket sales, co-productions, and touring revenue. Additional revenue is generated through private sector fundraising and public sector grants from municipal, provincial, and federal agencies.

### History

Passion. That's what started our journey. And that's what fuels us now. Joyce Lam knew this in 2001, when Vancouver's stages didn't reflect the REAL Vancouver. A Vancouver of clanging dim sum carts and ranging dialects. A Vancouver where Asian culture cuts so deep it forms our city's lifeblood. So, she started vAct, an incubator for some of the best Asian Canadian talent in the country.

#### *2001 – 2013: Beginnings*

In the first 13 years of the company's existence, we made a strong impression in the Asian Canadian theatre-going community, garnering a large and loyal audience base and list of donors that continue to support us to this day. Highlights of our early programming included the annual Etch-Your-Sketchoff comedy nights and the premiere and subsequent local tour of the original musical *Red Letters* by Kathy Leung and Alan Bau.

#### *2013 – Present: Professionalization*

In 2013, we fused Asian content with artistic excellence. Donna Yamamoto was appointed as the Company's first Artistic Director. Understanding that artistic merit catalyzes social change, she ushered in an era where we defined our stories. We redirected our focus to the creation, development and production of new, professional Asian Canadian work. This began vAct's rapid transformation from a community theatre to one of the most exciting diversity-mandated professional theatre companies in Canada. Since then, vAct has produced six new Asian Canadian mainstage plays as part of The Cultch's seasons (*Ga Ting* by Minh Ly; *Dirty Old Woman* and *The Ones We Leave Behind* by Loretta Seto; *Empire of the Son*, *1 Hour Photo*, and *Kuroko* by Tetsuro Shigematsu). vAct's productions have garnered 25 nominations at the annual Jessie Awards, winning two.

Since 2012, we have developed more than 25 new plays through our play development program, the MSG Lab. The Lab has nurtured various groups of writers and actors within the Asian Canadian diaspora and prioritized gender diversity with over 70 percent of our chosen MSG candidates being female or non-binary.

In 2016, Donna Yamamoto was awarded the Jessie's inaugural Vancouver Now Representation and Inclusion Award for her "Outstanding leadership in developing work by three Asian Canadian playwrights in The Cultch's 2015-16 season."

In the ecology of Western Canadian theatre, vAct plays a unique role. We are the only professional theatre company in Western Canada to consistently premiere new works by Asian Canadians.

From a financial perspective, VACT has enjoyed dynamic growth. Our annual operating revenues have increased from \$45,000 in 2014 to \$433,000 in 2020.

#### *National and Local Interest and Acclaim*

*Empire of the Son*, written and performed by Tetsuro Shigematsu, had its world premiere on October 6, 2015 as part of The Cultch's 2015-16 season (Vancouver's largest theatre presenter). The entire run sold out and was held

over before it opened. The holdover also immediately sold out. The production garnered seven Jessie Award nominations. *Empire of the Son* was remounted at The Cultch in 2016 with another sold-out run, followed by a national tour at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, the Centaur Theatre in Montreal, and the Factory Theatre in Toronto. A second tour to the Atlantic provinces and Alberta was completed in our 2017-18 season. For our 2018-19 and 2019-20 seasons, *Empire of the Son* was remounted at the Gateway Theatre in Richmond, BC, and went on a third tour to Prairie Theatre Exchange in Winnipeg, Persephone Theatre in Saskatoon, and WTC in Kamloops.

## **Current Operations**

vAct currently has two full time employees – the Producing Artistic Director and the General Manager. They are supported by a team of part-time staff and contractors who assist with production, donor relations, marketing, administrative tasks and finance matters.

## **Strategic Plan**

Through the collaboration of the management team and the Board of Directors, vAct has developed the following strategic plan to guide the organization today and into the future:

### ***Our Vision***

Enriching lives by presenting stories from an Asian Canadian perspective.

### ***Our Mission***

To develop and produce professional Asian Canadian theatre shows and talent.

### ***Our Values***

Inclusion, Community-engagement, Artistic Excellence, Financial Sustainability, Arts Cultivation. We are the only theatre company in Canada that exclusively creates new Asian Canadian work, at all levels: in scripts, on stage, in the producer's chair. Bringing artistic excellence from the Asian diaspora, uplifting narratives previously unseen.

### ***How vAct Defines Success***

A company-wide commitment to artistic integrity and financial sustainability with an understanding of the need for a patron-centric lens.

### ***Our Priorities:***

- Premiering/producing a Mainstage production annually and touring vAct shows
- Developing new works
- Nurturing and showcasing talents
- Attracting new patrons
- Increasing and sustaining donated revenue
- Expanding Patron Loyalty
- Growing Partnerships
- Implementing appropriate operational systems and procedures
- Investing in human capital



*"Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre took home a significant artistic achievement award for its show 1 Hour Photo which was recognized for its superior delivery and design in historical storytelling." –Vancouver Sun*

*"Twenty-three productions were named in the large-theatre category. Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre's Kuroko leads the way with nine nominations, including one for outstanding production, one for Tetsuro Shigematsu for his script, and nods to Amiel Gladstone for direction and Lou Ticzon for supporting role; the show, which played at the Cultch Historic Theatre last fall, is also up for the Critics' Choice Innovation Award." –Georgia Straight*

### **Photo Credits:**

**Title Page:** Tetsuro Shigematsu in *1 Hour Photo* by Raymond Shum. Set Design by Pam Johnson. Lighting Design by Gerald King. Costume Design by Laura Fukumoto.

**Page 4:** Tetsuro Shigematsu, Donna Yamamoto, Joyce Lam and Susan Miyagishima at the 2019 Jessie Awards.

**Page 9:** Agnes Tong and Alannah Ong in *The Ones We Leave Behind* by Raymond Shum. Set Design by Pam Johnson. Lighting Design by Gerald King. Costume Design by Laura Fukumoto.



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## THE OPPORTUNITY

Position	Artistic Managing Director
Location	Vancouver, British Columbia
Reporting Relationship	Board of Directors
Direct Reports	General Manager
Website	vact.ca

vAct is seeking an experienced and visionary Artistic Managing Director to provide leadership for both the artistic and business activities of the Company. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the successful candidate will be responsible for creating and executing the artistic vision of the Company in accordance with the strategic direction set by the Board of Directors. The Artistic Managing Director is responsible for the overall artistic vision and operations of the Company, including programming, hiring directors, casting, and technical operations. In addition to artistic responsibilities, the Artistic Managing Director is also directly responsible for the administrative operations of the Company, including strategic and business planning, budgeting, marketing, and funding development.

### Key Responsibilities Include:

#### *Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement*

- Partner with the General Manager and the Board of Directors in developing a compelling artistic vision and strategic plan to guide the Company in its position as Canada's sole exclusive producer of new work by Asian Canadian artists
- Create and execute the artistic programs to reflect the Company's commitment to excellence for both audiences and artists
- Act as a professional advisor to the Board of Directors on all aspects of the Company's artistic and operational activities to achieve balance between Company's artistic direction and financial stability
- Work with the Board of Directors and the General Manager to lead and implement a strategic planning cycle for the organization that identifies short and long term artistic and organizational goals
- Develop and maintain positive relationships within the local, regional, and national professional theatre industry, Vancouver community groups, educational institutions, and other organizations and individuals to build partnerships that achieve the goals of the Company
- Foster a culture of collaboration and open communication throughout the Company

- Serve as the ambassador and primary spokesperson for the Company, developing a strategic organizational culture and effectively communicating it to align with the Company's brand, vision, mission and values
- Establish and maintain positive relationships with representatives of government agencies at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels
- Enhance the Company's profile and brand in the community by attending events and participating in initiatives which are in keeping with the Company's mission and values

#### *Theatre Operations and Management*

- Work collaboratively with the General Manager to achieve the goals established in vAct's Strategic Plan
- Work with the General Manager to develop operational priorities and processes that enable the Company to operate at its highest efficiency, ensure financial stability and organizational resilience
- Negotiate and secure performance rights to plays
- Approve and select producing partnerships and creative teams for the development and production of projects
- Oversee the hiring of Directors for each production and contribute to casting and design decisions as required
- Support the Company's programs that develop new Asian Canadian plays and playwrights
- Through the selection of compelling theatre productions, generate excitement among local and regional audiences, sponsors and funders that support subscriptions, attendance and enthusiasm for vAct
- Report to the Board of Directors on a regular basis to update on artistic and operational activity; translate strategic direction from the Board of Directors into plans, tactics and actions

#### *Internal Administration and External Advocacy*

- Serve as the primary liaison to the Board of Directors, accountable for timely, accurate and transparent communication and reporting to the Board
- Work with the General Manager to prepare and present a comprehensive annual budget to the Board of Directors
- Provide oversight to the expenditures related to artistic programming to achieve budget objectives
- Participate in key funding development campaigns and strategic initiatives including working with the General Manager in the process of timely grant application, preparation and reporting
- Engage with corporate sponsors, donors and sponsors, and public funders on significant fund development initiatives and events as required
- Participate in marketing and communications initiatives that support audience development, patron loyalty, and community engagement objectives

## **Defining Success**

The successful candidate will join a dynamic team of artists and arts administrators, along with a passionate Board of Directors. Critical success factors for the Artistic Managing Director within the first 12 months include:

- Developing a deep understanding of the Company, its operations (artistic and business), and internal culture and values

- Building trusting relationships with the Board of Directors, the General Manager, other direct reports, staff and volunteers
- Establishing relationships with key external stakeholders, including private and public funders, donors and subscribers, media, industry peers, and leaders within the local arts community
- Developing key relationships within Vancouver's diverse theatre community
- Maintaining an ongoing understanding of current trends in Canadian professional theatre by networking with peers, participating in industry conferences, and attending theatre productions of peer organizations when possible
- Programming a diverse and compelling season

## **Professional Experience / Qualifications / Skills**

The Artistic Managing Director is an experienced theatre professional with a deep understanding of the not-for-profit professional theatre sector and senior leadership experience in non-commercial theatre. The individual has extensive experience as an Artistic Director, progressive leadership experience, and producing experience within a small to mid-size regional theatre environment. Candidates considering this position should have all or most of the following experience and qualifications:

- Relevant background in a senior creative leadership role with a professional theatre company, festival or as a freelance director with experience programming and producing diverse theatre across multiple stages
- Proven track record in successfully leading operations of an organization with artistic success and financial sustainability
- Reputation for creating and articulating an artistic vision for a professional theatre organization with deep roots in a community
- Industry recognition for developing, producing or directing challenging, thought-provoking, and entertaining plays for large and small stages
- Ability to work collaboratively with the General Manager and the Board of Directors to develop and implement a strategic plan in alignment with the trends and conditions of the community and the Company's strategic plan
- Advanced network of theatre artists across Canada and beyond and the ability to engage them in the creative opportunities with the Company while also nurturing the dynamic local community of theatre artists
- Past experience developing a diverse team of creative artists, designers, and arts administrators through mentorship and professional development resulting in a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration across the organization
- Extensive experience in all operational logistics associated with producing and mounting successful plays including touring productions
- Capacity to serve as the primary spokesperson on behalf of the Company when required and to effectively establish relationships within the regional business, arts, and government circles to advocate on behalf of the Company
- Demonstrated skills as an effective mediator and negotiator

### *Personal Characteristics*

- Passion for vAct's mission, vision and creating an environment for audiences to experience compelling and challenging Asian Canadian stories on stage
- Sensitivity and awareness of the profusion of thought and culture in Asia and the Asian diaspora
- Collaborative individual who seeks input from others and who works cooperatively and effectively with others to set goals, resolve problems, and make decisions that enhance organizational effectiveness
- Clear and articulate communicator (written and oral) capable of understanding and summarizing complex issues and with the ability to deliver compelling presentations designed to inspire and engage diverse stakeholders
- Enhanced leadership skills with the ability to positively influence staff members and others to achieve results that are in the best interest of the Company
- Ability to delegate effectively and to hold staff accountable to high standards of professionalism
- Energetic and mature individual who demonstrates confidence, resilience, and problem-solving acumen when confronted with obstacles
- Ability to convey patience and empathy and understand the point of view of others
- Belief in supporting and empowering staff to achieve operational goals, ability to lead a team and inspire leadership in others
- Capacity to utilize innovation to develop new and unique ways to improve the artistic and business operations of the Company
- Outgoing personality with the sincere desire to engage stakeholders in the Company and its mission through actively networking and advocating the merits of vAct in a positive and persuasive manner.

### **Education**

The successful candidate will have completed an undergraduate degree in a creative theatre discipline or a related field. Additional graduate studies are desirable but not required.

### **Working Environment**

- This role operates in an office environment, as well as overseeing work taking place in theatres, scene shops, studios, and other external locations, dependent on the nature of the artistic work being presented or considered
- Hours of work can exceed 40 hours per week during productions
- Periods of high work volume should be expected during productions
- Evening and weekend work required, particularly during the run of plays
- Some travel required from time to time, typically no more than 3 weeks per year.

### **Compensation**

A competitive compensation package is provided. The final compensation profile will range from \$70,000-\$80,000, commensurate with experience and qualifications of the successful candidate.



## THE CITY

Vancouver is the largest city in Western Canada. It is blessed with a dramatic and stunning geographic location. Vancouver is consistently ranked as one of the top five cities in the world for quality of life and liveability. Ethnically and linguistically diverse, it is home to a thriving and sophisticated theatre scene. There are more than 30 local theatre companies and over 20 venues. They produce and stage thoughtful and thought-provoking work that push boundaries and is inspired by the surrounding environment and the stories of the people who live here.

## EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST AND VERIFICATION

Interested and qualified individuals are encouraged to submit their cover letter and curriculum vitae in confidence to: [president@vact.ca](mailto:president@vact.ca). Please note that only individuals eligible to work in Canada will be considered. We thank all applicants but only those selected for interviews will be contacted. Finalist candidates will undergo a comprehensive referencing and background verification process, including an Education Verification, Criminal Record, and Vulnerable Sector check.

