# OREGON SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
## AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT MANIFESTO
## March 30, 2010

Created by Artistic Director Bill Rauch, Executive Director Paul Nicholson, Director of Marketing & Communications Mallory Pierce, Associate Artistic Director Christopher Acebo, and Manager of Audience Development Freda Casillas

**Introduction**
As articulated in OSF's mission statement, we take our inspiration from powerful twin sources: the works of William Shakespeare and the cultural richness of the United States. We believe that Shakespeare's plays represent an expansive humanistic achievement that has a strong parallel in the endlessly complex dynamics of contemporary American society. In this spirit, we must pro-actively build an audience that reflects our nation's diversity in its many expressions. This manifesto outlines the philosophy that forms the foundation of our commitment to Audience Development and will be used to guide the development of future benchmarks and strategies. We recognize that we are building on many past and present efforts to diversify our audience, both organizationally and individually.

**Foundational Principles of Audience Development**
We value every single member of our current and future audience. People who have developed a love of the arts have traditionally been and will continue to be OSF's core audience. We need to make an extra effort to invite targeted groups of people who are not coming here already. We are not displacing but rather adding to our core audience.

We acknowledge that as an institution we have created and continue to reinforce barriers that exclude people who are not part of our core audience, and we commit to a constant examination and dismantling of such barriers. We will create access for non-traditional OSF ticket buyers by strategically strengthening methods and procedures that overcome barriers, including but not limited to: play selection, casting, director and designer choices, pricing, ticket availability, planning horizon, language, lack of familiarity with OSF processes, and perceptions of theatre as an elitist art form. Our education programs offer one of the most powerful ways we can increase the socio-economic, age, and racial and ethnic diversity of our audience. We recognize that sometimes these new approaches may disrupt the smooth operation of existing systems.

We believe that we will most effectively diversify our audience when *every* company member in *every* department acts as an ambassador in inviting new audiences. We encourage and support each company member to be an enthusiastic advocate with family, friends, neighbors, social contacts, and even perfect strangers. We recognize and honor the fact that audience development initiatives will be a part of the fabric of all of our workloads.

We recognize the areas of focus outlined in this manifesto do not form a complete catalogue of the types of audience diversity we value at OSF. However, we feel that widening access on the basis of age, socio-economics, disabilities and race and ethnicity requires our most immediate attention.

**Increasing the Socio-Economic Diversity of our Audience**
As a mission-based arts organization, we recognize and welcome the responsibility and opportunity to reach people of all socio-economic classes and educational backgrounds. In order to expand access for those who are not part of our current core audience, OSF will strategically make affordable tickets

available throughout the season. Moreover, we believe there is substantial earned income potential in selling discounted tickets to performances with availability, especially locally.

To reach families who increase the socio-economic diversity of our audience, we most effectively create access through select programming that multiple generations of families can enjoy together.

**Increasing the Age Diversity of our Audience**
As the baby boomer generation grows older the overall population of the US is aging. In recent years however, OSF 's audience has grown older at a faster rate than the national average. Non-student-group audiences under the age of 45 have been on a steady decline and are now less that half of what they were 15 years ago. To combat this trend we will continue to develop programs and pricing strategies that enable young adults to experience our work.

**Increasing Access for People with Disabilities**
To retain our core audience and include new audiences with disabilities, we will continue to grow our access programs. We will work to improve access across the Bricks and within the Angus Bowmer Theatre for people with mobility concerns and offer more open captioned, sign interpreted and audio described performances.

**Increasing the Racial and Ethnic Diversity of our Audience**
People of color currently represent roughly 10% of our audience but are more heavily represented in our student groups. While we expect that the composition of our audience will change organically as larger societal demographics shift, we will be proactive and intentional in working towards an audience makeup that better reflects the ethnic diversity of all regions from which we draw our audiences.

We want all people of color to see OSF as a welcoming place of meaningful cultural opportunity. We will actively cultivate both local audiences of color as well as tourists of color who have an interest in cultural destinations. We will expand upon existing efforts and employ new approaches, such as new tour and travel contacts, advertising and direct marketing.

We acknowledge that there are perceptions and realities about racism in Southern Oregon, both historical and current, which are further complicated by the misconception that racism in not a problem in Ashland. OSF will actively partner with leaders, businesses and other organizations in our community to build awareness and create change to eliminate both overt racism and the subtle racism that is often unintentional and the result of unconscious biases.

We recognize that audiences of color find resonance and relevance in all of our plays, not only those that reflect their own cultures. We will continue to practice color conscious casting and tell stories that embody the fullest possible range of ethnic and cultural experiences.

**In conclusion**

OSF commits itself to the hard and joyful work of expanding our core audience to better reflect our nation in the 21st century. As expressed in OSF's Values Statement, we believe the inclusion of a diversity of people, ideas and cultures enriches both our insights into the work we present on stage and our relationships with each other.