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SHAFER MAZOW NAMED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SAN FRANCISCO'S Z SPACE

Mazow makes history as one of the first openly transgender leaders in the American theater

SAN FRANCISCO (April 8, 2021)—**Z Space Board of Trustees** named **Shafer Mazow** (*he/him*) as the new Executive Director of San Francisco's multifaceted performing arts venue for relevant and risk-taking new works. Mazow succeeds Lisa Steindler who departed Z Space at the end of March 2021 following 16 years at the non-profit organization, and is making history as one of the first openly transgender leaders in the American theater. Mazow began his tenure as Executive Director on April 1, 2021.

Z Space's new leadership model will be comprised of Mazow, as well as two artistic leaders—a Producing Director who will head up Z Space's productions, co-productions, and presentations, and a Curatorial Director who will head up Z Space's curated rental program. Rose Oser serves as Interim Producing Director as of April 1, 2021. Searches for both artistic leaders will be forthcoming.

Shafer Mazow is a writer, theater artist, fundraiser, and activist who brings over 20 years of experience working in program development and strategic initiatives at the intersection of art, science, and social justice. He has focused his professional and creative efforts on deepening understanding of gender, its complex intersections with other aspects of identity, and the implications of oversimplified binary categories. Prior to his appointment, Shafer served as Z Space's Managing Director where he oversaw all aspects of daily operations, including personnel, budgets and finances, programming, and general administration.



Says Z Space Board President **Laura O. Bergman**: "I first met Shafer when I interviewed him for the role of Z Space Managing Director a few years ago and found him to be incredibly passionate about both theater and social justice. He was our clear choice then, as he is now, to lead this ever-evolving and amazing organization into the next phase of shared leadership. I so look forward to forging this path together!"

"I am tremendously humbled and honored to help lead Z Space into its next chapter," says **Mazow**. "My deepest love and gratitude go to so many who have so thoughtfully and intentionally supported my success and who continue to invest in ensuring a future for non-traditional theater leaders like me. While we celebrate this milestone, we can't forget that it is one step on a long path to building a theater community that is truly welcoming and inclusive of everyone."

Mazow adds: “As we look to reopening our venues and welcoming the return of in-person gatherings, we—as a field—have an opportunity and urgency to reimagine ourselves, to amplify voices that have been historically excluded from the narrative, and to double down on the making of theater as social practice. I am a true believer in the power of the shared experience of art and in its necessity to inspire the belief that we can build that better world we want to see.”

“Shafer is a lifelong champion of equality and opportunity for all on a local and national scale,” says **Lisa Steindler**. “He has worked with leaders of advocacy and art organizations across the country to amplify the voices of all, exemplified in his work with the women’s leadership summit. Becoming one of the first openly transgender Executive Directors in this country is an enormous milestone to be celebrated. I am thrilled to see him take on this new position at Z Space.”

“Shafer is a valued colleague and thought partner,” adds **Ellen Richard**, six-time Tony Award winner and Executive Director of Laguna Playhouse. “His strategic thinking, his passion for social equity and justice, as well as his deep commitment to the transformational power of art will serve this amazing company well into our new post-COVID world.”

“This is truly a trailblazing appointment,” says **Carey Perloff**, American Conservatory Theater Artistic Director Emerita. “Shafer has been an imaginative and visionary leader in Bay Area theater for the past decade, and I’m thrilled that Z Space has offered him this amazing platform to help bring back live performance and to guide a beloved venue into the future. Bravo!”

Prior to Z Space, Mazow served as Senior Grants Manager at San Francisco’s Exploratorium and was the strategic lead for the museum’s Research and Development work in the Lab, which includes the Center for Art and Inquiry, Environmental Initiative, Living Systems, and Human Phenomena. Previously, he held the position of Director of Institutional Giving and Strategy at American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.) where he lead all foundation, government, and corporate fundraising for annual productions and programs and the campaign to build the Strand Theater, as well as the strategic development of special initiatives, including the Community Space-Sharing Initiative, the Irvine Foundation-funded Stage Coach community-based theater program, the Citizen Artist curriculum for the Master of Fine Arts degree, and the Women’s Leadership in Residential Theaters research study.

Shafer serves on the Boards of the National Queer Theater and Theatre Bay Area and leads the trans and gender-non-conforming advocacy and empathy project, IPFreely. He has helped to establish space-sharing initiatives for performing artists, community-based theater programs, and research and action initiatives to address gender equity in leadership in the non-profit theater field. Most recently, he has partnered with exhibit designers and educators to develop and lead a series of temporal experiences in public restrooms that uses participatory practice, immersive theater, and inquiry-based learning to extend awareness and understanding of issues people face when they don’t “look” like they belong to a space or a group.

Mazow holds a B.A. in English from Wellesley College and a M.F.A. in English and Creative Writing from Mills College. His work has appeared in the *Berkeley Fiction Review*, *580 Split*, and the zines *Found* and *Brood*. In his early days in San Francisco, Shafer performed stand-up and sketch comedy throughout the Bay Area and was a founding member of the gender-bending comedy troupe, This Side of Butch.

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About Z Space

Z Space empowers artistic risk, collaboration, and camaraderie amongst artists, audience, and community in the service of creating, developing, and presenting new work. Founded by David Dower in 1993 and led by Executive Artistic Director Lisa Steindler from 2007-2021, Z Space is now in its 28th year serving the Bay Area artistic community. Operating out of an old can factory in the Mission District of San Francisco, Z Space activates two performance spaces, an 85-seat black box and a 244-seat main stage, with a warehouse aesthetic and an adventurous edge. Eschewing traditional theater models with fixed seasons and a singular artistic vision, Z Space strives to embrace a multitude of artistic voices through a variety of programs and partnerships. www.zspace.org