



## **NEWS RELEASE** **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# **Plaintiffs in Actors vs. Actors Equity Association respond to AEA statement**

Dear Equity Member and Los Angeles Theatre Community –

By now you have seen Equity's Press Release and letter to their members attacking actors for their efforts to preserve intimate theatre in Los Angeles. Equity's letter is malicious and false.

The Plaintiffs filed this suit on behalf of the entire Los Angeles Theatre Community after Equity ignored a referendum in which the Equity members of this community defeated Equity's proposed changes by one of the widest margins in Equity's voting history. We filed our lawsuit because Equity seeks to unilaterally abolish the 99-seat plan that was in place since 1989 by annulling the 1989 settlement agreement and dismantling the Review Committee – the major protection members have from destructive maneuvers by Equity to end intimate theatre.

Over six months we had a series of facilitated discussions with Equity. We hoped to forge a path for financially successful theaters to grow, step-by-step, stage-by-stage, to minimum wage contracts. We agree that theaters should pay artists more when they can. But they should not be closed down if they can't. We want to see theatre thrive in Los Angeles. We want to see more contract work here. We will continue to urge Equity to reconsider; to gain an appreciation for the importance of small theatre to our City.

We are not New York. We are not Chicago. Models used in those cities, however successful they may be, should not be foisted on us here.

The talks were supposed to be confidential, but Equity, distorting the facts, now discloses that its true "intent," never before disclosed publicly, was to target only 14% of the small theatres in Los Angeles. But Equity's final goal is to do much more than that. It intends to destroy volunteer intimate theatre in Los Angeles and force almost all non-membership theatres to a minimum wage regime. We expect Equity, ultimately, to end all special status for membership companies.

If Equity enacts its new rules on December 14th as threatened, Equity members' ability to work in 99-seat theaters will be almost entirely eviscerated, and many small theatres will be forced to close. We will be preparing and distributing a detailed analysis of how members' opportunities will become more difficult, costlier and much less available.

If our lawsuit and other efforts are not successful, the era of volunteer small theater in Los Angeles will be over.

Equity paints itself as a victim. Not so. We did not “demand” negotiations. We offered a reasonable approach to resolving our dispute. We did not “blacklist” anyone. We represent a vibrant and creative community that supports the lawsuit and other efforts to preserve small theatre. We are not rigid ideologues. We are flexible and we only wish Equity would be flexible as well.

Our leadership committee worked arduously to try to resolve the dispute. This group and its leaders never acted inappropriately. We call on Equity to retract these malicious and false accusations.

We ask Equity what we have been asking them for three years - to listen to its membership and to be transparent. Instead Equity continues to vilify members who disagree with them, members who have the conviction and the courage to stand up and say “There is a better way.”

Our efforts were unsuccessful. So what happens next? We will serve the lawsuit and defend vigorously against Equity's efforts to have the case dismissed. We will ask the NLRB to enjoin Equity from putting its new plan into place.

We will rally and we will be heard. "Let LA decide the fate of LA Intimate Theatre."

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