



Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2024-25-030
Business Name: Magic Theatre
Business Address: 2 Marina Blvd., Fort Mason Center, Building D
District: District 2
Applicant: Kevin Nelson, Managing Director
Nomination Date: December 1, 2024
Nominated By: Supervisor Catherine Stefani

CRITERION 1: Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?
☒ Yes ☐ No

1572 California St. in 1974 (<1 year)
540 Powell St. in 1974 (<1 year)
756 Union St. in 1974 (<1 year)
1618 California St. from 1975 to 1977 (2 years)
2 Marina Blvd., Fort Mason Center, Building D from 1977 to Present (48 years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?
☒ Yes ☐ No

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?
☒ Yes ☐ No

FEATURES OR TRADITIONS: Theater

NOTES: NA

DELIVERY DATE TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION: August 18, 2025

Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
Legacy Business Program

Legacy Business Program
Office of Small Business
City Hall Room 140
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6680
legacybusiness@sfgov.org
www.legacybusiness.org



Member, Board of Supervisors
District 2



City and County of San Francisco

CATHERINE STEFANI

November 25, 2024

Katy Tang
Office of Small Businesses
City Hall, Room 110
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Director Tang,

I am delighted to nominate Magic Theatre for the Legacy Business Registry. Led by Managing Director Kevin Nelson, Magic Theatre is a performing arts non-profit organization located in Fort Mason.

For more than 50 years, Magic Theatre has served as a home and showcase for both emerging and established playwrights in San Francisco, offering audiences an intimate setting to engage with new works in development. Productions here provide a unique chance to participate in the creation of contemporary plays that speak to modern issues with originality, urgency, and a spirit of adventure.

Magic Theatre has earned national recognition as an essential center for new American plays, enriching the community and influencing the landscape of American theater. Its commitment to nurturing diverse voices and innovative ideas has made it a beloved institution across San Francisco and beyond.

As a historic and indispensable part of our community, Magic Theatre truly deserves recognition. It is with great pleasure that I nominate Magic Theatre as a candidate for the Legacy Business Registry.

The nominee can be contacted here: Kevin Nelson; Fort Mason Center, 2 Marina Boulevard, Building D, San Francisco, CA, 94123; (415) 263-9055; kevinn@magictheatre.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Catherine Stefani".

Catherine Stefani
Supervisor, District 2
City and County of San Francisco



Legacy Business Registry Application



Business Information

Business name: Magic Theatre

Business owner name(s): Nonprofit Board of Directors

Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business

Current business address: 2 Marina Blvd., Fort Mason Center, Building D, San Francisco, CA 94123

Telephone: (415) 441 – 8822

Email: info@magictheatre.org

Mailing address (if different than above):

Website: www.magictheatre.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/magictheatre.org

Twitter:

7-digit San Francisco Business Account Number (BAN): 0 3 7 0 6 8 7

Do any of these describe your business? (select all that apply)

Requires at least 51% of the business be owned, operated, and controlled by the business designation below.

☐ Immigrant-Owned Business

☐ Owned by Person with a Disability

☐ LGBTQ+-Owned Business

☐ Veteran-Owned Business

☐ Minority-Owned Business*

☐ Woman-Owned Business

**Minority is defined as one or more of the following racial or ethnic groups: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latino; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander*

Contact Person Information

Contact person name: Kevin Nelson

Contact person title: Managing Director

Contact telephone: () –

Contact email:

Business Location(s)

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business.

If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address.

Original San Francisco address: 1572 California Street **Zip Code:** 94109

Is this location the founding location of the business? (Y/N): N

Dates at this location: From: 1974 To: 1974

Other address (if applicable): 540 Powell Street **Zip Code:** 94108

Dates at this location: From: 1974 To: 1974

Other address (if applicable): 756 Union Street **Zip Code:** 94133

Dates at this location: From: 1974 To: 1974

Other address (if applicable): 1618 California Street **Zip Code:** 94109

Dates at this location: From: 1975 To: 1977

Other Address (if applicable): 2 Marina Blvd., Fort Mason Center, Building D, San Francisco, CA **Zip Code:** 94123

Dates at this location: From: 1977 To: Present

Other address (if applicable): **Zip Code:**

Dates at this location: From: To:

Applicant Disclosures

San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- ☒ I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- ☒ I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- ☒ I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- ☒ I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- ☒ I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- ☒ I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- ☒ I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Name: Kevin Nelson

Signature:



Date: 11/11/2024

MAGIC THEATRE

Written Historical Narrative

INTRODUCTION

a. Describe the business. What does it sell or provide?

Magic Theatre is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that identifies and cultivates writers on the cutting edge of American theatre, serving as a vital center for the creation and performance of new American plays.

With the appointment of Sean San José as the new Artistic Director in June 2021—the first person of color to fully lead the organization in its 50+ year history—Magic Theatre expanded its vision to rightfully center Black, Indigenous, and people of color in new residency and performance programs. Resident companies at Magic Theatre include Campo Santo, the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, and the Black Artists Contemporary Cultural Experience. Magic Theatre is also the new home of the Saint John Coltrane Church.

Magic Theatre has produced hundreds of works since 1967 and continues to be known and celebrated for premiering bold, new American plays while centering people of color on stage and beyond.

b. Describe whom the business serves.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Magic Theatre performed for an average of 10,000 people each season, with audience members primarily from San Francisco and the greater Bay Area. Since the worst years of the pandemic, yearly attendance has steadily grown. In 2024, attendance jumped by 61% with the introduction of 100% BIPOC programming, multi-year artist residencies, and new organizational partnerships. Annual attendance is now up to 6,500 for Magic Theatre performance events, with 70% of the audience residing in San Francisco and 1/5 qualifying as low-income. Magic Theatre's audience is multicultural and intergenerational. To address economic barriers, Magic Theatre offers affordably priced and free tickets to its audience and organizational network.

In addition to productions at its Fort Mason site, Magic Theatre also offers theater education and performance activities to children, college students, and adults through off-site programs in vulnerable neighborhoods of San Francisco.

c. In about 2-5 words (15-30 characters), describe what the business is known for.

Cultivating bold new plays and playwrights.

CRITERION 1: The business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years

a. Provide a short history of the business, including locations and owners.

Magic Theatre was founded by student John Lion in 1967. Its first production was a staging of Eugène Ionesco's *The Lesson*, directed by Lion, at the Steppenwolf bar at 2136 San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley, California. Lion named the company after a location in Hermann Hesse's 1927 novel *Steppenwolf*. He later said his inspiration for an experimental and “developmental theater” was in reaction to the formation of San Francisco’s American Conservatory Theater. “I became aware of the need to provide a different reality from the one A.C.T. was providing.”¹

In its early years, Magic primarily operated out of Steppenwolf bar and other Berkeley locations such as The Mandrake (10th Street and University Avenue). In 1969-1970, internationally known Beat poet Michael McClure brought the theatre its first significant attention with premieres of his one-act plays, *Gargoyle Cartoons*. McClure would go on to have an 11-year playwright residency at Magic Theatre. With Lion as artistic director, Magic Theatre became a nonprofit organization on January 19, 1971 (per the Secretary of State’s website), producing experimental theater and original plays. By 1971, the company consisted of five directors, 15 actors, and playwrights in residence producing an average of ten world premieres a year, with a quarter of its audience coming from San Francisco.²

In 1972, Magic Theatre moved into a warehouse at 2485 Shattuck Avenue with stated ambitions to present “the best new playwriting talent in the Bay Area and across the country,” as well as continue to support and develop unproduced playwrights.³

Magic Theatre put on occasional productions in San Francisco locations as far back as 1970, when five of McClure’s *Gargoyle Cartoons* had a month’s run at The Village at 901 Columbus Avenue. In August 1973, Magic staged another McClure work (*Gorf*) at the Firehouse Theatre, 1572 California Street.

In 1974, John Lion permanently moved Magic Theatre to San Francisco, staging original productions in a series of venues from 1974 to 1977: the Firehouse Theatre (1572 California Street), the Museum of Erotic Art (540 Powell Street), Intersection (756 Union Street), and above the Rose and Thistle Pub (1618 California Street).

¹ Sally Harms and John Levin, “Showbiz on a String,” *San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle*, May 23, 1976, Datebook section, pg. 22.

² John Lion, “Who Goes to the Magic Theater?” *San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle*, July 4, 1971, Datebook section, pg. 5.

³ John Lion, “Yesterday’s Beerhall Players are Today’s Magic Players,” *San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle*, December 5, 1971, Datebook section, pg. 3.

Magic Theatre became a founding tenant of the Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture in 1977, opening with the premiere of *Wolves* by John Robinson.

At Fort Mason, Magic Theatre would stage significant works and world-premieres of playwright Sam Shepard, including *Inacoma* (1977), *Suicide in B-flat* (1977), *Buried Child* (1978), *True West* (1980), *Fool for Love* (1983), and *The Late Henry Moss* (2000).

Founder John Lion left Magic Theater in the late 1980s to focus on directing and teaching. Larry Eilenberg became the artistic director in 1992, followed by Mame Hunt until 1998. Eilenberg resumed the position for five more seasons, during which time he premiered Charles L. Mee's *Summertime* (2000) and *First Love* (2001) and Moira Buffini's *Silence* (2001). His Festival of Irish Women Playwrights resulted in Magic Theatre offering the U.S. premiere of Marie Jones' *Stones* in *His Pockets* before its Broadway run.

Loretta Greco, former producing artistic director of the Women's Project in New York City, served as the Magic's artistic director from 2008 to 2020. Notable productions during her tenure were *The Brother/Sister Plays* by Tarell Alvin McCraney (a 2010 collaboration with the Marin Theatre Company and the American Conservatory Theater); *Any Given Day* by Linda McLean (2012); *HIR* by Taylor Mac (2014); and *Nogales* by Richard Montoya.

In April 2021, Sean San José was appointed as Magic Theatre's artistic director. The theater and adjoining spaces in Building D have been opened for community engagement, entertainment, arts, and activation with new murals by local artists as well as Black art from the Saint John Coltrane Church.

Highlights of the 2024 season include several world premieres: A.M. Smiley's *Dirty White Teslas* *Make Me Sad*, an Afro-Futurist work taking place in Bayview/Hunters Point; Naomi Iizuka's *Garuda's Wing*; and *GhostRave* by TigerBear Productions, an Indigenous theatre company and producer of the monthly series at the theater called *Indigenous Magic*.

b. Provide the ownership history of the business in a consolidated year-to-year format.

1967 to 1971: John Lion

1971 to Present: 501(c)(3) California nonprofit corporation governed by Board of Directors

c. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for any significant length of time.

Magic Theatre has operated continuously in San Francisco since 1974 despite periodic economic downturns and a continually changing grant-making environment. The COVID-19 pandemic paused performances in 2020 and 2021.

CRITERION 2: The business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community

a. Describe the business' contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community, business sector, or San Francisco as a whole.

Magic Theatre is a Fort Mason anchor tenant, one of the original nonprofit organizations that moved into Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture when it converted from a military base to its public use as part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in 1977.

Magic Theatre is known as the home and showcase for emerging and established playwrights in San Francisco. Productions engage audiences in a unique experience: the chance to participate in the development of new work that is staged in an intimate, professional setting that speaks to contemporary issues with originality and a sense of urgency and adventure. Across the country, Magic Theatre is known as an important center for the creation and performance of new American plays.

Magic Theatre provides a safe yet rigorous artistic home for playwrights with programs to support writers with practical resources they need to develop new works through extended residencies, customized workshops, and world-premiere productions.

The residency program provides long-term space, stipends, production, and marketing support to BIPOC organizations and artists. This investment in the community frees artists to take creative risks and succeed on their terms instead of the administrative and financial burdens that usually accompany self-productions.

Magic Theatre is home to Campo Santo, Black Artists Creative Cultural Experience (BACCE), displaced cultural institutions (Lorraine Hansberry Theater, Saint John Coltrane Church), artists (including Luis Alfaro, Star Finch, Les Waters and Nora el Samahy, Naomi Iizuka, Ellen Sebastian-Chang, Sunhui Chang), and year-round community initiatives (Indigenous Magic's monthly open mic series). Local theater, dance, and film communities benefit from the Magic's subsidized rental program. Magic Theatre is the only producing theatre in San Francisco that has prioritized supporting artists of color at this level.

b. Is the business associated with significant people or events, either now or in the past?

Renowned writers who have premiered their work at Magic Theatre include Michael McClure, Sam Shepard, Nilo Cruz, Adele Edling Shank, John Belluso, Lynne Kaufman, Tom Strellich, Claire Chafee, Edna O'Brien, David Mamet, Taylor Mac, Luis Alfaro, Mfoniso Udofia, Paula Vogel, Jessica Hagedorn, Richard Montoya, Joan Rivers, and Craig Wright. Internationally renowned scholar and critic Martin Esslin acted as dramaturg in the 1970s, with the Magic being the first theater in America to establish this position. Notable directors of Magic productions include Robert Woodruff, Albert Takazauckas, Loretta Greco, and Joseph Chaikin.

In 1977, Magic Theatre introduced the Bay Area to Performance Art with the premieres of Alan and Bean Finneran's "Soon 3" and Jock Reynold's Hospital.

Accomplished and celebrated actors who have performed at the Magic include Danny Glover, Peter Coyote, Kathy Baker, Ed Harris, John O'Keefe (who also acted as playwright), Nick Nolte, Sean Penn, Woody Harrelson, James Gammon, Elaine May, and Cheech Marin.

Recent notable artists have included playwrights Mfoniso Udofa, Lloyd Suh, Miranda Rose Hall, Marc Anthony Thompson, Roger Guenveur Smith and local artists Star Finch, Ashley (A.M) Smiley, Tongo Eisen-Martin. Academy Award Nominated Actor, Colman Domingo has served on the Magic's board of trustees since 2021.

Magic Theatre is probably best known for its association with Sam Shepard (1943–2017), who served as playwright-in-residence beginning in 1975. Described by New York magazine as "the greatest American playwright of his generation." Shepard won 10 Obie awards for writing and directing, the most by any writer or director.⁴ Shepard received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1979 for *Buried Child*, which premiered at Magic Theatre.

c. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?

Since the company's founding in 1967, the Magic Theatre has supported contemporary writers with the practical resources to develop new works from conception to performance. Magic Theatre champions innovative writers at all levels of their development, from emerging writers to veterans. The mission to nurture writers as they experiment, as they grow, is how the Magic contributes to the evolution of American theater.

The Magic Theatre also runs "Making Magic: Art & Community," a standards-based literacy and art education program serving hundreds of immigrant, first-generation, or unhoused LGBTQ youth and adults in the Tenderloin, Bayview, and Castro neighborhoods since 2018.

Making Magic also offers sliding scale workshops specific to areas in the theatre industry at its Fort Mason theatre. Topics include Audition Techniques, Directing and Playwriting, and Dramaturgy.

In 2023, the Magic began its monthly Indigenous Magic series, organized and led by resident company TigerBear Productions' Jerome Joseph Gentes. This open-mic style event has held space for indigenous artists in the Bay and ranges in format from full concerts to art-sharing to cabaret events.

Since 2021 the Magic has focused on creating a home for artists and organizations that have been othered and seeks to rightfully center People of Color in all things.

⁴ Ross Wetzsteon, "The Genius of Sam Shepard," *New York Magazine*, November 24, 1980, pg. 20.

d. Has the business ever been referenced in the media, business trade publication, and/or historical documents?

Magic Theatre has appeared in numerous national and international publications for its commitment to producing new American plays and for the quality of its productions, including the *New York Times*, *Theatre Journal*, *Journal of American Studies*, *Los Angeles Times*, *American Theatre Magazine*, *Forbes*, and *San Francisco Chronicle*. Following are several key media references:

- **In 2025, Magic Theatre keeps pushing its art form forward**
San Francisco Chronicle
October 24, 2024
<https://datebook.sfchronicle.com/theater/magic-theatre-2025-lineup-19861201>
- **Bucking regional trends, S.F.'s Magic Theatre goes all-in on world premieres in 2024**
San Francisco Chronicle
October 2, 2023
<https://datebook.sfchronicle.com/theater/sf-magic-theatre-2024-schedule-18401597>
- **New leader, new lobby, no more assumptions in Sean San José's Magic Theatre**
San Francisco Chronicle
October 6, 2021
<https://datebook.sfchronicle.com/theater/new-leader-new-lobby-no-more-assumptions-in-sean-san-joses-magic-theatre>
- **Chatting With Sean San José: Magic Theatre's new artistic director to center local artists of color**
Local News Matters
July 29, 2021
<https://localnewsmatters.org/2021/07/29/chatting-with-sean-san-jose-magic-theatres-new-artistic-director-to-center-local-artists-of-color/>
- **Sean San José: Collaboration, Cooperation, and Community**
American Theatre
May 10, 2021
<https://www.americantheatre.org/2021/05/10/sean-san-jose-collaboration-cooperation-and-community/>
- **Magic Theatre timeline**
SFGATE
February 3, 2016
<https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Magic-Theatre-timeline-6804781.php>

e. Has the business ever received any awards, recognition, or political commendations?

Magic Theatre plays have received numerous awards: the Pulitzer Prize for Sam Shepard's Buried Child, ten Obie Awards, the Kennedy Center Award, PEN-West Awards for Drama, Bay Area Critics' Circle Awards, Los Angeles Drama-Logue Awards, and the NAACP Image Award.

In 1979, John Lion received the first award given for Achievement in Theatre by the San Francisco Arts Commission as well as a special commendation from the mayor of San Francisco.

In 1986, John Lion and the Magic Theatre received the Margo Jones Award, the highest honor given by the Dramatists Guild. The award cited the Magic's "significant contribution to the dramatic art through the production of new plays."

In 2018, Artistic Director Loretta Greco received the Zelda Fichandler Award for her work and commitment to developing work in the region.

In 2023, Magic Theatre received the Will Glickman Award for best play in the region for Luis Alfaro's The Travelers.

f. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?

If Magic Theatre were to stop operations, not only would the region lose a significant space for new and experimental theater, but dozens of writers, actors, and production professionals would lose employment. There would be a huge impact on the hundreds of high school youth at partner organizations in the Tenderloin neighborhood who rely on Magic Theatre programs. Historic BIPOC institutions that have found a home at Magic Theatre — Lorraine Hansberry Theater Company, Saint John Coltrane Church, Campo Santo — would be displaced with few options to continue.

The Magic Theatre employs four full time staff members and over 80 part time and seasonal staff each year. Most of these staff are actors, designers, artists, and technicians. The Magic Theatre is one of only a handful of San Francisco theaters that works with Actors Equity Association, The Stage Directors and Choreographers Guild, and United Scenic Artists, offering competitive wages and consistent work for members.

As the only remaining company in San Francisco with a physical location committed to producing all new work, the impact of losing that space would not only deprive San Francisco of fully realized professional production of new work but would also lose one of the only theaters dedicated to centering people of color and other marginalized voices.

CRITERION 3: The business is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business

a. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building, structure, object, signage, mural, architectural detail, neon sign, or any other special physical feature that defines the business?

Magic Theatre is an anchor tenant of Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture whose buildings are federally protected historic landmarks. As such, no permanent fixture or significant signage has been associated with Magic Theatre in San Francisco. The theater and workshop spaces are located on the third floor of Landmark Building D and have new wall-sized murals by local artists Mister Bouncer (Miguel Perez) from the Trust Your Struggle Collective, Adrian Arias, and CeCe Carpio. As the new home of the Saint John Coltrane Church, Magic Theatre now has a space filled with important Black art from Emory Douglas, Mark Roman, and Deacon Mark Doox.

b. In a few words, describe the main business activity you commit to maintaining.

Theater cultivating bold new plays and playwrights while centering people of color on stage and beyond.

c. What is the plan to keep the business open in the long term beyond the current ownership?

Magic Theatre will continue to function as a nonprofit organization governed by its Board of Directors. Magic's Board has committed to an expansive direction in programming to further diversify audiences seeking out inclusive work. Magic Theatre is already attracting a more diverse, intergenerational audience at the theater, while providing a networking space for BIPOC artists to reinforce community connections.

As the industry continues to feel the effects of the COVID pandemic and navigate an ever-changing financial landscape, the Board of Directors remains committed to adapting its financial plan and strategies to best keep the organization viable. In recent years, facility rental income has increased over 400% of pre-pandemic times, as local professional theatre spaces continue to dwindle.

d. What challenges is the business facing today?

Magic Theatre's biggest challenge today comes from ever-shifting priorities of grant-funders and the slow return of audiences to live theater productions after the COVID-19 pandemic. In the 2010s and 2020s, San Francisco has also endured radical shifts in cultural, social, and economic landscape as gentrification and double-digit inflation have displaced artists and theater craftspeople. Magic Theater has responded by transitioning resources to not only produce work but to provide supportive resources to creatives.

The Magic Theatre's Residency Program has helped increase its own facility rental income, which comes at a heavily discounted rate for resident organizations, as well as through full-priced commercial rentals. Professional theater facilities in the bay are disappearing at an alarming rate and one of the Magic's greatest assets is its physical space.

While Magic Theatre's single ticket audiences have increased in the last two years, keeping pricing accessible and affordable for the community has meant that ticket revenue alone does not stretch as far as it once did.

With foundation and government support opportunities shifting and decreasing, and corporate philanthropy all but nonexistent, Magic Theatre has redoubled its efforts to cultivate a strong base of donors and supporters. In 2022, the Magic hired a Director of Growth, who has been able to bolster this support through relationships with large sum donors. The Magic has also created strong ties with other organizations that have significantly greater financial capacity such as Play On Shakespeare, which provides financial support for ongoing collaborative programs from workshops to full on productions.

Legacy Business Program staff will add the following details:

a. Features or traditions that define the business and should be maintained for the business to remain on the Legacy Business Registry.

Theater.

b. Other special features of the business location, such as if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.

The Planning Department Historic Resource Status of the building that houses Magic Theatre is "A - Historic Resource Present." The building is listed on the California Register and the National Register, and it is a contributing structure to the Fort Mason Historic District.



magic
san francisco

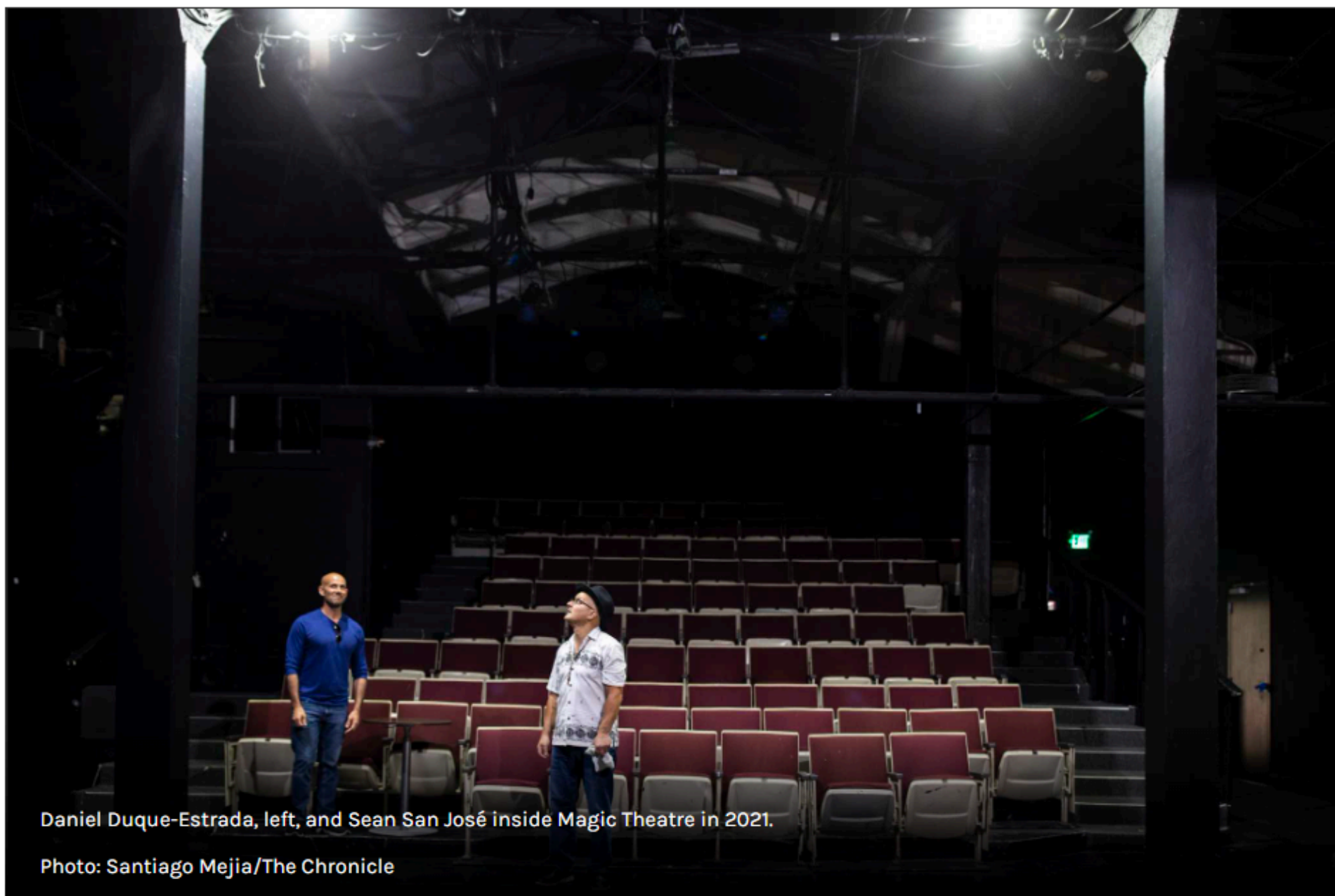
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Daniel Duque-Estrada, left, and Sean San José inside Magic Theatre in 2021.

Photo: Santiago Mejia/The Chronicle

THEATER

In 2025, Magic Theatre keeps pushing its art form forward



Lily Janiak | October 24, 2024 Updated: October 28, 2024, 5:24 pm



Actors Colman Domingo, left, and Sean San José pose for a portrait in July at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco.

Photo: Minh Connors/The Chronicle

In a Bay Area theater scene buffeted by **closures**, Magic Theatre continues to go all-in on artistic dares.

As with this year's, its 2025 lineup, announced Thursday, Oct. 25, consists exclusively of world premieres. Peruse other companies' seasons, and you'll see plenty of chestnuts whose name recognition, theater leaders hope, outweighs their hoariness. It's all part of a wager that supposedly safe bets are more likely to get people off of their couches, a long-term consequence of the pandemic. (American Time Use Survey data **shows** that, from 2003 to 2022, American adults' time spent at home on an average day rose by one hour and 39 minutes.)

But Magic Theatre, under the direction of **Sean San José**, is taking a different course, one that pushes the art form forward.



Director Ellen Sebastian Chang poses for a portrait before a July 2023 rehearsal of "Josephine's Feast" at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco.

Photo: Benjamin Fanjoy/Special to The Chronicle

First up next year is "The Boiling" (April 4-20). Sunhui Chang's play about an odd pair in pursuit of a virus carrier was originally envisioned as a screenplay, and its stage version seeks to preserve film's facility for jumps and cuts. **Edris Cooper-Anifowoshe** stars, and **Ellen Sebastian Chang** directs.

Summer brings "Aztlán" (June 25-July 13) by Luis Alfaro, whose previous Magic Theatre project, **"The Travelers,"** won the prestigious **Will Glickman Award** for best script to premiere in the region. The new play, which gets its name from the mytho-historical home of the Aztec people, is set both in the spiritual realm of the gods and on California's Highway 99, tracing a battle against inner demons by its title character, played by Daniel Duque-Estrada. The show also marks San José's return to the stage for the first time since 2019.



Richard Montoya, left, and Sean San José in "Nogales," a collaboration among Magic Theatre, Campo Santo and Borderlands Theater.

Photo: Jennifer Reiley/Magic Theatre

The schedule closes with "Jerry Garcia in the Lower Mission" (Oct. 29-Nov. 16), which after having first been scheduled for this year got postponed when a planned partnership with the **Presidio Theatre** fell through. Richard Montoya's theatrical concert, featuring a live band, delves into Grateful Dead lore and its co-founder's early years in the colorful San Francisco neighborhood.

For performance passes of \$120 for the whole slate, call 415-441-8822 or visit <https://magictheatre.org>.

Reach Lily Janiak: ljaniak@sfchronicle.com



Lily Janiak

Lily Janiak joined the San Francisco Chronicle as theater critic in May 2016. Previously, her writing appeared in Theatre Bay Area, American Theatre, SF Weekly, the Village Voice and HowlRound. A Michigan native whose childhood also took her to Tennessee and Texas, she holds a BA in theater studies from Yale and an MA in drama from San Francisco State. She served on the jury for the 2024 Pulitzer Prize in Drama.

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Sean San José (left) directing 'La Prietty Guoman' with playwright/performer César Enriquez and Helen Orzel for 2019 Virgin Play Festival. (Photo by: Hunter Nelson)

ENTRANCES & EXITS INTERVIEW ⓘ MAY 10, 2021 💬 0 COMMENTS

Sean San José: Collaboration, Cooperation, and Community

As San José takes the reins of the Bay Area's Magic Theatre, he's set to bring his Campo Santo ethos to a larger platform.



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By [David John Chávez](#)

Sean San José is a real one.

There is no pretense to the artist who has called San Francisco home since the day he arrived into the world. He is a highly respected theatremaker with a strong reputation for answering the calls of community through art. San José's lengthy career as an actor, playwright, educator, and advocate has led to his most prestigious post yet, [artistic director](#) of the famed [Magic Theatre](#), housed at the Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture. Born to a Puerto Rican father and Filipina mother, San José will become the seventh artistic director in the history of the Magic and the first person of color to lead the company, which was founded in 1967.

The job fits like a glove. [Loretta Greco](#), who ran the Magic since 2008, stepped down as artistic director in May 2020. The company has a history of world premieres by the likes of Sam Shepard (a resident artist in 1975), Paula Vogel, Taylor Mac, and Luis Alfaro, to name a few. San José's history with the company runs deep, with the first play he ever saw being at the Magic, and his first gig there being *Soiled Lives of a Ghost* in 1990, cast by late great casting director Barbie Stein, which garnered both San José's Equity card and the start of his career. San José credits both Greco and artistic director Mame Hunt, who stewarded the Magic for five years beginning in 1993, for the countless opportunities he's had.

In addition to the history San José shares with the Magic, he is program director and co-founder of [Campo Santo](#), a group that has developed and produced [nearly 100 original works](#) since 1996. The institutional knowledge gained by founding a renowned company alongside Margo Hall, Luis Saguar, and Michael Torres, three other prestigious Bay Area artists, is the foundation for the work San José will be embarking upon with the Magic.

San José will officially take the reins in June on a part-time basis, with the full-time appointment kicking off in August. He recently sat down to discuss his goals for the firmly established company, what community truly means, and his disdain for the national-versus-local debate.

DAVID JOHN CHÁVEZ: I've seen plenty of appointment announcements as they come through Facebook or Twitter, but I can't remember one as exciting as when it was announced that you will be leading the Magic Theatre. We're in a time right now where many of the largest and most consequential Bay Area theatres have women or artists of color as artistic directors. Have you had a chance to reflect on what your appointment means to the Bay Area theatre community?

SEAN SAN JOSÉ: I haven't had time to reflect on it, because I'm not heavy duty on the socials, but folks had said to check it out because there were lots of good responses. I mean this as less of a reflection of me becoming artistic director of the Magic—I truly believe it's an "us" thing. This idea that I am a part of and a representative of such an institution I think comes across. What feels really exciting to me is that we're all going to eat, we're all getting in, we're all getting to open the table up and sit there together and populate that place.

What are some ways that you can build on your experience with a collaborative space like Campo Santo and take that into a bigger regional venue?

The work that I've been a part of, most significantly with Campo Santo, has been resonant because people know that I am one of a group and that I'm representative of my community. That comes across, so that they go, "Oh, homeboy is going to be in—that means the squad is in, and that's cool." And for future tripping, it's great because it means people are excited about that notion, going beyond the more structured thinking of

what so-called regional theatre is representative of—a singular vision, and it will do X, Y, and Z. I think there was a hope for that possibility to be in there, but I also think there was a desire, a need, and a want for change in there too. Those are all great for me; I'm hyped about that.

You worked with prior artistic director Loretta Greco throughout her tenure, and are close with her professionally and personally. When she announced her departure, did the possibility of succeeding her come to you right away?

My first thought when she announced that she was stepping down was, oh no, what's going to happen to this spot? She has brought so much life, so many writers, and such a family vibe to this place. When I spoke to her more and she told me they were going to open up the process, she asked me if I was interested. I said hell no. As many opportunities that I personally have benefited from at the Magic, it's still a white organization. It's white-run organization, a white-money-run organization. Why would I willingly place myself in a situation like that? And I was like, nah, I'm good.

So what changed?

Loretta said that some folks felt I should be considered for it. And I thought, okay, that's cool, that's gratifying. But what I wanted to know was, are they widening their pool? I was like, if you think they're honestly open to hearing at least another possibility, yeah, for sure, I would do that.

The whole process, probably why it worked is that I was able to keep it 100 the whole way—very honest, truly very close to who I am and how I speak. Most importantly, how I believe. So I was able to shoot straight the whole time and that felt good.

You got the job, so clearly they wanted your vision. What did you prioritize when it came to having an attentive room that was ready to listen to what you had to say?

I do so much grant writing for Campo Santo, and I'm always in that spot where I'm like, man, this project is dope, should I just say it's dope? No, because I have to fit my narrative into their square, and I'm not going to lie or manipulate. I don't find myself in many situations where I'm talking to a room of mainly white people and speaking a vision that represents culture for people of color. I'm in this room saying this needs to be centered and it's going to be beautiful for everyone and generate life for everyone, and I felt good about that.



Sean San José.

You're one of four artists who founded Campo Santo, and now you're going to lead another highly regarded institution, one of San Francisco's most prestigious theatres. What would you say will be some of the biggest challenges in running an established mainstay as opposed to a company like Campo Santo, which you and others built from nothing beginning in 1996?

San Francisco has always been filled with activity, events, theatres, spaces, and artists, and that's the mix that I came out of and that I'm in. That energy has to be part of what I'll do at the Magic. It's a huge question that I think the committee considered a lot when considering me: "What are you going to do differently from Campo Santo?" To me, the question is, what will I do that we have established and succeeded within the ethos of what Campo Santo does? Then I can amplify, leverage, expand upon, grow, and evolve that.

I'm completely about collaboration, cooperation, and community. I'm not going to push that off as I step up to this tier and vision a new way out. I believe in what got me here, so I want to find more ways to make that more effective, more resonant to bring in more people.

The Magic has a national reputation based on the actors, playwrights, and artists who have developed their work in that space. Yet it is still a regional theatre that serves the San Francisco and greater Bay Area community. How do you approach building a vision around those two ideas?

This notion of national versus local is an empty paragraph header. What does that mean? It's just jive to me. If you do something that is dope and you believe in it and it resonates with people on a local level, then

eventually it's going to catch a fire nationally. If you aim for a national scope, you're going to get a very far-reaching target. I'm not interested in reaching for something I can't see. I want to be close to people and know who our audiences are when they walk through the door.

So this idea that it's national—I think that's a misnomer. It's silly to me. It's also a part of a big classist thinking that is one of the many fucked-up things about our so-called American theatre system, that is all about the larger thing does this and the national scope does that. The regional and the cities drive the national vision; everybody knows that.

So enhancing a national reputation for the Magic is not high on your priority list.

It's about just making impactful work. I know it sounds simplistic and a little Pollyanna-ish, but it's true. When we started Campo Santo, we started that sucker with nothing, zero. We weren't going to pay anybody anything because we didn't have anything. But you keep driving, building, articulating, growing, and if there's a mutual need for you and the community, it can work. So it's about defining your expectations and your goals. Inside of all that, all of us have to redefine words like community. It's a word that means a whole lot to me.

Expanding on that, the Bay Area community exists within in a very expensive place. Making the Bay Area livable for the marginalized is a conversation that has been going on forever, but there haven't been many sustainable solutions to the problem of artists struggling to live and work here. Have you thought about ways the Magic can continue giving marginalized artists opportunities in a region that is so cost-prohibitive?

Yeah, that's huge. I'm realistic—I know what the budget is there and I'm no magician in terms of that. I don't suddenly know rich people because I've been appointed to a new position at a bigger space. What I do know is, the potential workplace means what dividends can come from it, and I think it could be very direct to artists in our community. The main thing you do is give people space and allow it to happen. That doesn't mean the Magic is suddenly producing 28 plays in a year. What it means is, the Magic is suddenly collaborating with as many people as we can, which is mutually beneficial for everyone.

Is this something you would like to see happen immediately?

We're not talking about these first few years and suddenly upping everyone's pay scale, finding housing for artists. If I knew how to do that, I'd run for mayor. I'd rather our city be saved than our theatres be saved. But I think there's a way of injecting more life, more visibility, and more potential by opening your space up, and we're definitely going to do that.

I've conversed with multiple artistic directors about ways to make theatre audiences more diverse. What are some possible ways to get greater representation in your seats, especially of those who haven't engaged much with theatre for a variety of reasons?

I don't have any great fairy tale about the Shakespeare company coming to my second-grade class and turning me out, and then going on to theatre school. I come from a huge family. Theatre was not on our radar and was not made to be on our radar. And that's what I keep saying: Open up your space, invite people to your space, and make a home of your space. No one's going to willingly one day choose to go to a thing

that has historically been made exclusive, with all its roots in white supremacist thinking and structure. People can say whatever, but that comment is true. I'm not saying there is a direct line to it, but people that make up words like "classic" and make up schools for people that tell you who is represented on that stage and what languages are spoken on that stage—I'm sorry, but that's an inherently racist and classist set-up. Look no further than the power structures of our theatres.

I say all of that to say that we have to make the space feel like a home. If I don't make you feel welcome in my home, you're not going to have a good time and you're definitely not going to want to come and kick it with me again. You make people feel welcome enough that they would want to return.

After this long COVID pause, as we prepare to reopen theatres soon, what do you think can be different or better when we return?

I think about who gets the mic, who gets the space, and who gets centered. And I think that's something we can do infinitely better. We're always going to have to try and do better at that. How do you really center it in a way that is truly reflective of your community? Oddly, mainly in contrast to other opinions I've heard out there, I feel really hopeful about what's going to happen next. I feel like we're all charged and we want to be together. We know there's power in community on a basic level, and we want our stories to be told.

David John Chávez (he/him) is a Bay Area-based theatre critic and reporter. He is the vice-chair of the American Theatre Critics Association. Twitter: [@davidjchavez](https://twitter.com/davidjchavez)



Small Business Commission

Resolution No. _____

September 22, 2025

MAGIC THEATRE

Application No.: LBR-2024-25-030
Business Name: Magic Theatre
Business Address: 2 Marina Blvd., Fort Mason Center, Building D
District: District 2
Applicant: Kevin Nelson, Managing Director
Nomination Date: December 1, 2024
Nominated By: Supervisor Catherine Stefani
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo and Michelle Reynolds
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

Adopting findings approving the Legacy Business Registry application for Magic Theatre, currently located at 2 Marina Blvd., Fort Mason Center, Building D.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included on the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on September 22, 2025, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Magic Theatre in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Legacy Business Program

Office of Small Business
City Hall Room 140
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6680
legacybusiness@sfgov.org
www.legacybusiness.org





BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Magic Theatre.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Theater cultivating bold new plays and playwrights while centering people of color on stage and beyond.
- Murals by local artists Mister Bouncer (Miguel Perez) from the Trust Your Struggle Collective, Adrian Arias, and CeCe Carpio.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Magic Theatre on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Theater.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on September 22, 2025.

Katy Tang
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –

Legacy Business Program

Office of Small Business
City Hall Room 140
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6680
legacybusiness@sfgov.org
www.legacybusiness.org





LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: September 17, 2025

Filing Date: August 19, 2025
Case No.: **2025-007618LBR**
Business Name: Magic Theatre
Business Address: 2 Marina Boulevard, Fort Mason Center, Building D
Zoning: P (PUBLIC) Zoning District
40-X, OS Height and Bulk District
Cultural District: Fort Mason Historic District
Block/Lot: 0409/002
Applicant: Kevin Nelson
2 Marina Boulevard, Fort Mason Center, Building D
Nominated By: Former Supervisor Catherine Stefani
Located In: District 2
Staff Contact: Will McCallum - 628-652-7338
Will.Mccallum@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Magic Theatre is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that identifies and cultivates writers on the cutting edge of American theatre, serving as a vital center for the creation and performance of new American plays.

In its early years, Magic primarily operated out of Steppenwolf bar and other Berkeley locations such as The Mandrake (10th Street and University Avenue). In 1969-1970, internationally known Beat poet Michael McClure brought the theatre its first significant attention with premieres of his one-act plays, Gargoyle Cartoons. Magic Theatre became a nonprofit organization on January 19, 1971, producing experimental theater and original plays. Since being owned and operated by John Lion from 1967 to 1971 the 501(c)(3) has been governed by a Board of Directors. By 1971, the company consisted of five directors, 15 actors, and playwrights in residence producing an average of ten world premieres a year, with a quarter of its audience coming from San Francisco. In 1974, John Lion permanently moved Magic Theatre to San Francisco, staging original productions in a series of venues from

1974 to 1977: the Firehouse Theatre (1572 California Street), the Museum of Erotic Art (540 Powell Street), Intersection (756 Union Street), and above the Rose and Thistle Pub (1618 California Street).

Magic Theatre became a founding tenant of the Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture in 1977, opening with the premiere of *Wolves* by John Robinson. At Fort Mason, Magic Theatre would stage significant works and world-premieres of playwright Sam Shepard, including *Inacoma* (1977), *Suicide in B-flat* (1977), *Buried Child* (1978), *True West* (1980), *Fool for Love* (1983), and *The Late Henry Moss* (2000).

Magic Theatre is known as the home and showcase for emerging and established playwrights in San Francisco. Magic Theatre is home to Campo Santo, Black Artists Creative Cultural Experience (BACCE), displaced cultural institutions (Lorraine Hansberry Theater, Saint John Coltrane Church), artists (including Luis Alfaro, Star Finch, Les Waters and Nora el Samahy, Naomi Iizuka, Ellen SebastianChang, Sunhui Chang), and year-round community initiatives (Indigenous Magic's monthly open mic series). Local theater, dance, and film communities benefit from the Magic's subsidized rental program. Magic Theatre is the only producing theatre in San Francisco that has prioritized supporting artists of color at this level. Renowned writers who have premiered their work at Magic Theatre include Michael McClure, Sam Shepard, Nilo Cruz, Adele Edling Shank, John Belluso, Lynne Kaufman, Tom Strellich, Claire Chafee, Edna O'Brien, David Mamet, Taylor Mac, Luis Alfaro, Mfoniso Udofia, Paula Vogel, Jessica Hagedorn, Richard Montoya, Joan Rivers, and Craig Wright.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1967.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. Magic Theatre qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Magic Theatre has operated continuously in San Francisco for 48 years.
- b. Magic Theatre has contributed to the history and identity of the Marina neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Magic Theatre is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art / craft / cuisine / tradition?*

Yes. The business is associated with the performing arts.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and / or architecture?*

Yes. The Marina Boulevard property is listed on the National and California Register Fort Mason Historic District. The property is also included in the San Francisco Port of Embarkation US Army Historic District, and the Eligible Auxiliary Water Supply System Historic District (discontiguous).

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

Yes, the site is listed in the California Register of Historical Resources and the National Register of Historic Places as a contributor to the Fort Mason Historic District.

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

No, not as of the date of this Executive Summary.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. There have been a number of features and articles on the Magic Theatre. The theater was featured in three different San Francisco Chronicle articles, between 2021 and 2024, and has been featured in other publications such as Local News Matters, SFGATE, the New York Times, Theatre Journal, Journal of American Studies, Los Angeles Times, Forbes, and American Theatre Magazine.

Racial and Social Equity Analysis

On July 15th, 2020 the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission adopted [Resolution No. 1127](#) centering Preservation Planning on racial and social equity. Understanding the benefits, burdens, and opportunities to advance racial and social equity that proposed Preservation Planning documents provide is part of the Department's Racial and Social Equity Initiative. This is also consistent with the Mayor's Citywide Strategic Initiatives for equity and accountability and with the Office of Racial Equity, which required all Departments to conduct this analysis.

The Legacy Business Program is deeply intertwined with these goals. One of the primary purposes of the Legacy Business Program is to maintain San Francisco's cultural fabric and to foster civic engagement and pride by assisting long-operating businesses remain in the city. The Legacy Business Registry was established to recognize longstanding, community-serving businesses that are valuable cultural assets of the city. These businesses, ranging from restaurants to art galleries to tire shops to community shelters, are key to sustaining the racial and social diversity in San Francisco and adding to the identity and character of our city and the many communities within it.

Magic Theatre is home to Campo Santo, Black Artists Creative Cultural Experience (BACCE), and displaced cultural institutions (Lorraine Hansberry Theater, Saint John Coltrane Church). As the new home of the Saint John Coltrane Church, Magic Theatre now has a space filled with important Black art from Emory Douglas, Mark Roman, and Deacon Mark Doxx.

The Magic Theatre also runs "Making Magic: Art & Community," a standards-based literacy and art education program serving hundreds of immigrants, first-generation, or unhoused LGBTQ youth and adults in the Tenderloin, Bayview, and Castro neighborhoods since 2018.

In 2023, the Magic began its monthly Indigenous Magic series, organized and led by resident company TigerBear Productions' Jerome Joseph Gentes. This open-mic style event has held space for indigenous artists in the Bay and ranges in format from full concerts to art-sharing to cabaret events.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Locations:

- 2 Marina Boulevard, Fort Mason Center, Building D (1977 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 1572 California Street (1974)
- 540 Powell Street (1974)
- 756 Union Street (1974)
- 1618 California Street (1975-1977)

Recommended by Applicant

- Theater cultivating bold new plays and playwrights while centering people of color on stage and beyond.

Additional Recommended by Staff

- Murals by local artists Mister Bouncer (Miguel Perez) from the Trust Your Struggle Collective, Adrian Arias, and CeCe Carpio

Basis for Recommendation

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative
 - Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
 - Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
 - Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DRAFT RESOLUTION NO.

HEARING DATE: September 17, 2025

Case No.: **2025-007618LBR**
Business Name: Magic Theatre
Business Address: 2 Marina Boulevard, Fort Mason Center, Building D
Zoning: P (PUBLIC) Zoning District
40-X, OS Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0409/002
Applicant: Kevin Nelson
2 Marina Boulevard, Fort Mason Center, Building D
Nominated By: Supervisor Catherine Stefani
Located In: District 2
Staff Contact: Will McCallum - 628-652-7338
Will.Mccallum@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR MAGIC THEATRE CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2 MARINA BOULEVARD, FORT MASON CENTER, BUILDING D , BLOCK/LOT 0409/002.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on September 17, 2025, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends that MAGIC THEATRE qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for MAGIC THEATRE.

Location(s):

Current Locations:

- 2 Marina Boulevard, Fort Mason Center, Building D (1977 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 1572 California Street (1974)
- 540 Powell Street (1974)
- 756 Union Street (1974)
- 1618 California Street (1975-1977)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Theater cultivating bold new plays and playwrights while centering people of color on stage and beyond.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file to the Office of Small Business on September 17, 2025.

Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

RECUSE:

ADOPTED: January 17, 2025