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EXCLUSIVE — NEWS

## Exclusive: Deeksha Gaur named new executive director of TDF

Gaur spoke to Broadway News about her approach to leading the next chapter of the audience development nonprofit.

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Deeksha Gaur (Credit: Jacquelyne Pierson)

Deeksha Gaur will be the next executive director of TDF, beginning on Aug. 7. Gaur will succeed outgoing executive director Victoria Bailey, who has led the nonprofit organization for 22 years.

Gaur is the co-founder and current general manager of Show-Score, a platform for theater reviews by theatergoers. Show-Score was acquired by TodayTix Group in 2020. Prior to her role with Show-Score, Gaur held senior marketing and public relations positions with Woolly Mammoth

Theatre Company in Washington, D.C., Two River Theater Company in New Jersey and Long Wharf Theatre in Connecticut. Gaur has served on the boards of Second Stage Theater, Ars Nova and SPACE on Ryder Farm. Born in India and raised in London, Gaur moved to the U.S. to attend graduate school.

In fact, the first time Deeksha Gaur encountered TDF, she was a master's student in theater management at the Yale School of Drama. "TDF was speaking at the conference about [the TKTS booth](#) and different ways they were looking at technology to make the consumer experience better," Gaur recalled. "I remember, first of all, being blown away by an institution whose mission was just focused on audience and building new audiences. And I also remember thinking [about the technology], 'Wow, that's so forward thinking.'"

Now, after an exhaustive search and with the approval of the TDF board of trustees, Gaur will lead the organization that sparked her interest two decades ago. Gaur is looking forward to expanding on the work TDF has already achieved in the field of audience development.

"Over the course of my career, I have been just so deeply focused on bringing in new audiences," said Gaur. "It's always really been about: How do you build community? How do you invite people in? How do you make people feel like they belong?"

"I have so much learning to do, of course, and so much listening to do, which is how I start all my processes," she continued. "But I'm really interested in this idea of belonging: What does it mean to belong? What does it mean to consider yourself 'at home' versus a guest in someone's home? And so what does it mean for the diverse communities of New York that we serve to feel pride and ownership of the arts scene?"

Gaur plans to build on the education and access programs TDF already provides, such as its Wendy Wasserstein Project, Community Partnership Program, Create New York and Veterans Theatregoing Program. She wants to continue to build relationships, "and not just inviting them to you, but going to visit them and listening and hearing and seeing what they're doing already," she said.

Of course, Gaur is also bringing specific lessons from her recent Show-Score experience. "One of the things that I learned through doing Show-Score is that when you want to solve ecosystem-wide problems, you really need an ecosystem-wide view," she said. Gaur is excited that TDF provides that view — and not only in theater, but across performing arts.

Gaur aims to continue to give voice to audiences and provide practical resources to them. “People really want to understand the experience they’re going to have when they get [to the theater],” she said. “Being clear with audiences about what to expect, giving them good information ... engaging with people as humans rather than transactions, really understanding how to give them the best experience ever” is all top of mind for Gaur.

And she gives credit to [her predecessor, Victoria Bailey](#), for providing a solid and robust foundation. “What she has done in her last 22 years at TDF is just phenomenal,” Gaur said of Bailey. “This is a company that lives its mission and is always sort of looking for new ways to build access and remove barriers to access.”

For Gaur, her hope is to build upon that foundation. In addition to building access, she wants to build belonging. “This sense of belonging is at the heart of my own personal mission,” she said.

“In my head, the big hairy, audacious goal — the thing that you aim towards — is when every New Yorker can feel like they have participated in a meaningful way in the New York live arts scene,” Gaur added. “That feels like something to strive for.”

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