

## The Power Of Theater

An Interview with Lauren Reid, President, John Gore Organization

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Lauren Reid, President of the John Gore Organization (JGO), is a 27-year entertainment industry veteran who has built her career out of her lifelong passion for live entertainment. Driven by a commitment to extend the reach of Broadway, Reid has helped steer JGO, through its various subsidiaries, to become the leading presenter, distributor, and marketer of commercial theater. Reid first joined the JGO family in 1992, beginning a 13-year tenure during which she held a range of leadership positions. She left the company in 2006 to help launch, and serve as COO of, BASE Entertainment, where she managed worldwide operations, produced live music acts and Broadway shows, and oversaw the construction and operation of multiple venues in Las Vegas, China, and Singapore. In 2010, she returned to JGO and began her steady ascent up the ranks, before being named COO in 2017. Reid began her career as a talent manager and booker in the then-still-burgeoning Austin, Texas music scene, before going on to serve as national publicist for magician David Copperfield. Reid is an active member of The Broadway League, where she was named Chair, and currently serves on its Executive Committee and its Board of Governors. She also serves on the boards of trustees for The Entertainment Community Fund and The Hobby Center in Houston. She teaches "The Business of Entertainment" at her alma mater, The University of Texas. She first fell in love with theater at age 10 while attending a touring production of Annie in Houston, Texas.*



Lauren Reid

**Will you discuss the history of the John Gore Organization (JGO) and how the organization has evolved?**

Originally known as Key Brand Entertainment, the John Gore Organization (JGO) grew through the following acquisitions:

- In 2008, Key Brand acquired Broadway Across America, along with its theatrical productions and distribution network, which included the theatrical entities of Live Nation.
- In 2010, Key Brand acquired Theater Direct International from

Hollywood Media Corp., which owned and operated the following content-driven e-commerce websites: Broadway.com, Theater.com, Theatre.com and Theatre.co.uk.

- In 2012, Key Brand acquired Group Sales Box Office (GSBO), the largest group sales agency on Broadway and BroadwayBox.com, the leading website for discount theatre tickets in New York.

- In 2015, Key Brand acquired The Broadway Channel, a media company that produces and distributes television programming.

- In 2016, Key Brand rebranded itself as the John Gore Organization.

- In 2021, JGO acquired Broadway Brands, a media company focused on the latest breaking news for theater insiders with its portfolio of publications including *Broadway Briefing* and *Broadway News*.

Today, JGO is the leading presenter, distributor, and marketer of Broadway theater worldwide. Under the leadership of theater producer and owner John Gore, its productions and presentation span Broadway, Off

Broadway, London's West End, Japan, Canada, and 48 markets in North America. JGO has won Tonys in every producing category, as well as numerous other Drama League, Drama Desk, and Olivier awards. Presentations include Disney's *The Lion King*, *Wicked*, *The Book of Mormon*, and *Hadestown*. Current productions include *É Juliet*, *Hamilton*, *Kimberly Akimbo*, *MJ: The Musical*, and *Moulin Rouge*.

JGO is the leading editorial content creator for Broadway, with the ability to reach approximately 60 million fans annually through Broadway.com, *The Broadway Show with Tamsen Fadal*, *Broadway News*, *Broadway Briefing*, and The Broadway Channel. JGO also remains steadfast and committed to supporting theater access and education programs that introduce Broadway to the next generation of audiences and theater professionals.

**How do you define JGO's mission and purpose?**

At JGO, we believe that live theater is for everyone. Our purpose is to bring Broadway to fans and fans to Broadway. We want to increase access and participation – both on and off the stage, and behind the curtain.

We also believe that theater has the power to change the world. Stories told live on stage not only entertain, but can inspire, educate, and bring people of all backgrounds and beliefs together for a shared experience unlike any other.

Our goal is to be the most trusted name in delivering first-class Broadway shows around the globe with unparalleled customer experience.

**ORGANIZATION BRIEF** *The John Gore Organization (jobngore.com) is the leading presenter, distributor, and marketer of Broadway theater worldwide. Under the leadership of theater producer and owner John Gore, its family of companies includes Broadway Across America, Broadway.com, The Broadway Channel, BroadwayBox.com, and Group Sales Box Office. Its productions span Broadway, Off Broadway, London's West End, Japan, and 48 North American markets. It has won Tonys in every producing category as well as numerous other Drama League, Drama Desk and Olivier awards. The John Gore Organization is committed to supporting theater access and education programs that introduce Broadway to the next generation of audiences and theater professionals.*

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*Broadway League Chair Lauren Reid addresses the 2022 Tony nominees at the Rainbow Room*

Our family of companies provides fans with a 360-degree view of Broadway to expand the reach and grow the audience for live theater worldwide. The passion we each share for Broadway is reflected in our culture of excellence, connection, and creativity. We are committed to supporting the greater theater community and building long-term relationships with our audience, partners, and team.

**What have been the keys to JGO's strength and leadership in the industry?**

We have the privilege of working with the best and brightest talent in the industry – both within our organization and through our external relationships with shows and theaters. We collaborate with producers and venues to bring the magic of live theater and its significant economic impact to local communities.

We recently announced a new executive team for the theater division, Broadway Across America (BAA). The team represents a combined 150 years of experience, all of whom have been a part of the company for many years. To build and maintain a stellar team for the long term, we must provide growth opportunities at every level. As the members of our team move up and step into larger roles, so too does the next generation of leaders. It is our special blend of deeply experienced leadership and passionate young talent that ensures not just JGO's success today, but also its enduring position for tomorrow.

**Will you highlight JGO's commitment to philanthropy?**

Through our family of companies, JGO is deeply committed to supporting the theater community with a particular focus on education, access and supporting new work and artists. Some of the ways we are realizing these goals are through the funding of theater education programs, providing access to Broadway for

underserved communities, and investing in new artists and shows. We also believe in community outreach – our local Broadway Series support local food and clothing drives, arts initiatives in schools, social service agencies, our military families and so much more.

Over the years, we've remained steadfast partners with the Entertainment Community Fund, Arthur Miller Foundation, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, the Theatre Leadership Project, Princess Grace Foundation USA, and many others. Most recently, JGO's endowment gift to Julliard has made it possible for first year MFA Drama candidates to attend completely tuition free starting in 2024.

On a personal level, I've always been an advocate of early career training and mentorship programs and launched the Broadway League's Rising Stars program, which identifies and mentors current middle-level managers to help create the next generation of industry leaders. We have also forged a partnership between Broadway Across America and Black Theatre Coalition to create the BTC/BAA Fellowship program, which offers paid fellowships at JGO focusing on underrepresented, aspiring professionals.

**You worked with JGO before leaving to pursue other opportunities, and then returned to the organization. Will you discuss this journey?**

I first joined the JGO family in 1992, beginning a 13-year tenure in a variety of leadership positions. I left the company in 2005 to launch BASE Entertainment, an international entertainment company. As COO of BASE, I managed worldwide operations, produced live music acts and Broadway shows, and oversaw the construction and operation of multiple venues in Las Vegas, China, and Singapore. It was an incredible experience which provided me with

new skills and perspective, and positioned me to return "home" to the company I love. In 2010, I returned to JGO as COO, Theatre Division, and served in various roles until being named President of the parent company, the John Gore Organization, in 2021.

**How do you focus your efforts leading JGO?**

It all comes back to one core mission: expanding the reach of Broadway so that as many people as possible have the chance to engage with this art form. Anything that doesn't move us closer to that goal is probably not worth doing. This means fostering a culture of innovation, inclusivity, and excellence.

Innovation is key so that we can stay ahead of industry trends and remain artistically relevant and economically viable in a rapidly evolving world. Only then can we continue to generate new content and reach more people. Inclusivity means making every single person feel like they are welcomed and embraced at every touchpoint. We need to let everyone know that they have a place in the theater, whether that place is in the audience, on the stage, or behind-the-scenes. This ethos extends to nurturing talent and investing in the professional development opportunities that keep our pipeline full. And, equally important, we must continuously strive to enhance the theatrical experience for our audiences, ensuring that every performance is a cherished life memory.

**What are your priorities for JGO as you look to the future?**

My priorities for the future of JGO center around three core areas: support our art form, create more access, and inspire innovation.

First, we seek to support live theatre, our art form. We invest in shows and artists, not only in New York, but also in productions around the country and worldwide. This includes investing in stories that reflect a wide range of experiences and perspectives, sharing them on stages and promoting them across all of our platforms.

Continuing our commitment to promote access, we are focused on extending the reach of Broadway by bringing shows and theater news to as many people as possible. Theater is for everyone; we want to meet people where they are – no matter their geographic location or socioeconomic background. We wish to cultivate new audiences and captivate current fans. To do this, we must provide entry level and VIP offerings, bring the best shows, and deliver best-in-class service.

And, finally, we need to embrace – rather than fear – technological advancements in our field. Yes, the theater is a decidedly "analogue" artform, but that doesn't mean there aren't huge opportunities for us in this increasingly digital world. The questions we must constantly ask ourselves are: How can we stay ahead of the technological curve while also amplifying everything that makes the live, in-person theatrical event so special? What areas of our industry need disruption and which traditions must remain untouched? This can be a tricky balancing act to be sure, but it's one in which we can find harmony. ●