



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Kevin Kopjak, Charles Zukow Associates
415.296.0677 | kevink@charleszukow.com

AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER'S MASTER OF FINE ARTS PROGRAM AND YOUNG CONSERVATORY ANNOUNCE THE 2018–19 PRODUCTION LINEUP AND SCHEDULE

SAN FRANCISCO (September 12, 2018) — American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.) Conservatory Director **Melissa Smith** and Young Conservatory Director **Jill MacLean** announced today the 2018–19 production lineup and schedule for the **Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) Program** and **Young Conservatory**. Tickets for all performances are available online at www.act-sf.org/csvshows or by calling the A.C.T. Box Office at **415-749-2228**.

Says Conservatory Director **Melissa Smith**: “We aimed for diversity and breadth in the 2018–19 Master of Fine Arts season. In addition to a wide range of genres, styles, and cultures, we are especially pleased to have a lineup of five accomplished and innovative directors—all of whom identify as women and/or artists of color—working with our students. It is a panoply of theater that will challenge and grow the students in each year of the program.”

The Master of Fine Arts Program 2018–19 season kicks off with Russian playwright **Anton Chekhov’s** tragicomic masterpiece, ***Three Sisters* (September 27–29, 2018)**. If you had the opportunity to live your life again, would you make the same choices? Stuck in a provincial town and working jobs they don’t enjoy, sisters Olga, Masha, and Irina are leading lives they never could have imagined. From former Oregon Shakespeare Festival artistic director **Libby Appel** comes a translation that “opens [Chekhov] up to modern audiences” and brings to life the everyday moments that inspire and bind us. *Three Sisters* will be directed by **Lavina Jadhvani**. Performances of *Three Sisters* will take place in The Rembe at A.C.T.’s Strand Theater.

It’s fun to gossip, until the gossip becomes about you. Next, the M.F.A. Program will present **Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s *School for Scandal* (November 8–10, 2018; November 15–17, 2018)**. In a society that’s fueled by scandal, the slightest look or whisper can turn a spark into a flame. Husbands suspect wives, uncles question nephews, and no one is safe when the slightest rumor can make or break you. Filled with illusion and intrigue,

this fast-paced, contemporary adaptation of Sheridan's most famous play pits truth against fiction and reveals that virtue can hide all manner of sins. *The School for Scandal* is adapted and directed by **Christine Adaire**. Performances of *The School for Scandal* will take place in The Rueff at A.C.T.'s Strand Theater.

The M.F.A. Program will next present **Susan Soon He Stanton's *Both Your Houses* (February 21–23, 2019; March 1–2, 2019)**. Romances blossom, resentments fester, and rumors spread at the last performance of Theater Right Now's *Romeo and Juliet*. And that's just onstage. Last minute changes and inflated egos—as well as the artistic director's inappropriate advances—reveal that in the 21st century, accountability and complicity are the two warring factions. In this co-commission with Crowded Fire Theater that was workshopped at the 2018 New Strands Festival, playwright Susan Soon He Stanton shines a spotlight on life in a regional theater, the #MeToo movement, and how risky it can be to speak up. *Both Your Houses* will be directed by **Mina Morita**. Performances of *Both Your Houses* will take place in The Rueff at A.C.T.'s Strand Theater.

In spring 2019, the M.F.A. program will present William Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* as part of A.C.T.'s **Will on Wheels** program, which tours works of William Shakespeare to schools around the San Francisco Bay Area. Love is complicated. Helena loves Demetrius, but he loves Hermia, who is in love with Lysander but is being forced to marry Demetrius. And if that isn't convoluted enough, just wait until mischievous fairies, love potions, and bumbling actors get involved. A comedic, fantastical take on the affairs of the heart from western theater's most esteemed playwright. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will be directed by **Dawn Monique Williams**. Performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will take place on **March 8, 2019** in The Rueff at A.C.T.'s Strand Theater. The Will on Wheels tour of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will commence on **March 11, 2019** and conclude on **March 22, 2019**.

Closing out the 2018–19 season, the M.F.A. Program will present **Kate Hamill's** adaptation of ***Sense and Sensibility* (May 8–11, 2019)**. The Dashwood sisters—sensible Elinor and starry-eyed Marianne—have very different approaches to finding love. But when their father's death leaves them penniless, homeless, and vulnerable to gossip, they must rely on each other to discover what it takes to follow their hearts. Playwright Kate Hamill (*Vanity Fair*) celebrates the power of sisterhood in this joyful, witty adaptation of the beloved Jane Austen novel. *Sense and Sensibility* will be directed by **Pirronne Yousefzadeh**. Performances of *Sense and Sensibility* will take place in The Rueff at A.C.T.'s Strand Theater. Hamill's rollicking new stage adaptation of *Vanity Fair*, William Thackeray's classic 19th-century novel, will be presented at A.C.T.'s Geary Theater April 17–May 12, 2019. A second spring repertory production directed by A.C.T.'s new associate conservatory director Peter J. Kuo will be announced at a later date.

Says Young Conservatory Director **Jill MacLean**: “The 2018–19 Young Conservatory season provides opportunities for students to work with two contemporary playwrights who create worlds that turn out to be not quite what we originally thought. I am particularly excited for the two professional directors coming in to lead our YC actors. It is through the tremendous collaboration of these professional artists along with our production resources at A.C.T. that our students improve their acting craft, increase their understanding of the larger theater industry and practice the professional standards that the YC strives to model at every level of training.”

The Young Conservatory 2018–19 season begins with **Lauren Yee’s *Hookman* (October 24–27, 2018)**. College freshman Lexi thinks the Hookman legend is just a cautionary tale her paranoid mom tells her so she’ll stay alert. But what if it’s not just a story? From Bay Area playwright Lauren Yee (*The Great Leap*) comes a psychological thriller about grief, guilt, and growing up. *Hookman* is a 21st-century slasher comedy that will have you hunting for the truth . . . and unsure if you ever find it. *Hookman* will be directed by **Allie Moss**. Performances of *Hookman* will take place in The Rueff at A.C.T.’s Strand Theater. Yee’s exploration of cultural identity, global politics, and basketball, *The Great Leap*, will be presented at A.C.T.’s Geary Theater March 6–31, 2019.

Next, A.C.T.’s Young Conservatory will present **Sarah DeLappe’s *The Wolves* (April 17–20, 2019)**. Try to keep up with teenage soccer team the Wolves as they stretch, run drills, and size up the opposition. But in between their passes are performance anxieties, family tensions, and complex conversations . . . *Left lunge*. Global genocide. Tampons. Do they have Skype in Cambodia? *Right lunge*. She got Plan B? There’s the college recruiter! You’re coming to the party this weekend? For these nine young women, becoming an adult doesn’t always come with a game plan. *The Wolves* will be directed by **Jessica Holt**. Performances of *The Wolves* will take place in The Rueff at A.C.T.’s Strand Theater.

In addition to the 2018–19 season productions, the Master of Fine Arts Program and Young Conservatory will present a series of unique cabarets throughout the season.

The 2018–19 season M.F.A. Program cabarets include:

Songs in Living Color

Presented by the Third-Year M.F.A. Actors

October 18–20, 2018

Directed by **Milissa Carey**

The Garret at A.C.T.’s Geary Theater

Fascinating Rhythms—Jazz and Blues on Broadway

Presented by the Second-Year M.F.A. Actors

December 13–15, 2018

Directed by **Darryl Jones**

A.C.T.'s Costume Shop Theater

The 2018–19 Young Conservatory's High School Cabaret Program and Actors Ensemble season include:

The Last Hundred Years: Musical Theater Through the Decades

November 1–4, 2018

High School Cabaret & Musical Ensemble

November 9–10, 2018

Middle School Cabaret

***Love and Information* by Caryl Churchill**

November 10, 2018

High School Actors Ensemble

Directed by **WD Keith**

Sharing the Spotlight: Broadway Duets & Trios Take the Stage!

March 7–10, 2019

High School Cabaret & Musical Ensemble

April 5–6, 2019

Middle School Cabaret

April 6, 2019

Spring Actors Ensemble Performance

#HotOffTheKeyboard: A Night of New Musical Theater

May 9–12, 2019

High School Cabaret & Musical Ensemble

Best of the Best, One Night Only: All Three Cabaret Ensembles Celebrate the Season

June 2019

Directors: Jill MacLean & Kimberly Braun

Music Directors: Kimberly Braun & Krista Wigle

Accompanist: Thaddeus Pinkston

All Cabaret & Actors Ensemble performances will be held in The Garret at A.C.T.'s Geary Theater.

#

ABOUT A.C.T.'S MASTER OF FINE ARTS PROGRAM

Ranked as one of the top programs in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*, the Master of Fine Arts Program is the only theater training program in the country accredited to award the master of fine arts degree, yet is not affiliated with a college or university. The essence of A.C.T.'s actor training lies in the interplay between the professional company and the Conservatory. Student actors at A.C.T. perform frequently within the program in studio productions, as well as in cabaret and Shakespeare productions that tour throughout the larger Bay Area. Third-year M.F.A. Program student actors perform in A.C.T.'s mainstage production of *A Christmas Carol* and also audition for roles in A.C.T. mainstage productions. In recent years, students have played roles in *Hamlet*; *The Hard Problem*; *The Unfortunates*; *Ah, Wilderness!*; *Love and Information*; and *A Little Night Music*, as well as performing in new and commissioned works. Many alumni of the program go on to distinguished careers in theater and film and include such celebrated actors as Elizabeth Banks, Annette Bening, Christopher Fitzgerald, Danny Glover, Anna Deavere Smith, and Denzel Washington. A.C.T. provides a wealth of talented actors for productions across the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond: graduates of the M.F.A. Program have taken on leading roles in productions at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, Magic Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, San Jose Stage, and Santa Cruz Shakespeare, among others. The M.F.A. Program functions as the cornerstone of the A.C.T.

Conservatory, which also includes the Summer Training Congress, Studio A.C.T., the Young Conservatory, and the San Francisco Semester, and trains more than 3,000 students annually. For more information, visit act-sf.org/conservatory.

ABOUT A.C.T.'S YOUNG CONSERVATORY

The Young Conservatory (YC) at A.C.T. is an internationally recognized professional theater training program for young people between the ages of 8 and 19. Young actors from throughout the Bay Area (and often other states) who attend the Young Conservatory develop their creative talent, perform in professional-caliber productions, and learn confidence and communication skills. Under the direction of Jill MacLean, the Young Conservatory offers dynamic courses throughout the year for both beginners exploring acting for the first time and young actors with previous experience. Classes are designed to develop imagination, concentration, character, professionalism, and technique, and to strengthen the student's command of their body and voice. For more information, visit www.act-sf.org/yc.

ABOUT A.C.T.'S EDUCATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Under the leadership of Director of Education & Community Programs Elizabeth Brodersen, A.C.T.'s community-based educational efforts bring diverse groups of young people and adults from across the Bay Area together with the A.C.T. community to experience firsthand the transformative potential of dramatic storytelling. The ACTsmart arts education programs—which serve 15,000 students each year—include our Student Matinee (SMAT) program, which offers low-cost and complimentary tickets to mainstage and A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program performances; Will on Wheels, the annual tour of a Shakespeare classic performed in schools and community venues; ACTsmart workshops and tours for school and community groups; and the ACTsmart Intensive Residency program, which provides instruction in writing and performance for youth with the least access to theater education. A.C.T. also offers Back to the Source, an immersive summer institute for educators who use theater techniques in the classroom, as well as ongoing professional development throughout the school year. In addition, A.C.T.'s community programs connect with communities that have historically had the least access to theater performance and education, particularly the Bayview and Tenderloin neighborhoods, to offer a variety of opportunities to experience live theater: workshops, free tickets to mainstage and M.F.A. Program shows, community dinners and events with cast members, and other special events. The annual *Every 28 Hours* Black Arts Festival brings community members and students in our ACTsmart Intensive Residencies together with students in A.C.T.'s Young Conservatory and M.F.A. Program to highlight police brutality and oppression against Black communities and celebrate the resilience of the Black community. The Citizen Artist curriculum, a partnership with the A.C.T. M.F.A. Program, trains M.F.A. students to be socially conscious teaching artists and provides them direct experience working in our various school and community programs. For more information, visit www.act-sf.org/education.