

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Alert for Theatre Editors, Reviewers and Calendar Listings

**Chance Theater proudly announces its  
20th Anniversary Season:  
A Season in Search of Truth**

**Anaheim's Official Resident Theater announces its 20th line-up:  
5-Show Main Series, 2-Show TYA Family Series, 1 Show for Holiday Literature Series,  
and a 5-Show OTR New Works Series**

January 4, 2018 ... Anaheim, California ... Chance Theater is thrilled to announce its 20th Anniversary Season, which will be the fourth to employ both stages in its home at the Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center. Next year will feature eight fully-staged productions, and two workshops and three staged readings of new plays still in development.

It has been an exciting journey since 1999, when a handful of young artists opened their first theater on La Palma Avenue in Anaheim. The founders believed that theatergoers deserved an alternative theater experience -- one that would focus on local artists, new plays, and strengthening community through the impact of live theater.

Almost 20 seasons later, Chance Theater has:

- Produced 156 plays and musicals, including 39 world premieres and an additional 59 regional premieres.
- Been named the Official Resident Theater of Anaheim by the City Council.
- Partnered with seven Resident Playwrights (eight, counting 2018) who represented emerging voices in the American Theater landscape, and worked with them on the development of their newest stories. These partnerships have resulted in award-winning productions at the Chance, as well as world premieres at theaters across the country, including Lincoln Center and Manhattan Theatre Club.
- Developed and maintained a Resident Company of local artists who are committed to supporting the Chance's mission of creating a more connected, compassionate, and creative community.
- Produced the first "Relaxed Performance" initiative in Orange County. Done in conjunction with our TYA Family Series, these performances are designed to make theater accessible to children and adults on the Autism

Spectrum, or who deal with sensory and communication disorders, or a learning disability. Because we have always believed that theater should be for everyone.

- Opened the Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center after completing a \$900,000 capital campaign. The venue has given our audiences a better theatergoing experience, allowed us to expand our education programs, and expand our programming due to now having two stages -- the 100-seat flexible Cripe Stage, and the 50-seat Fyda-Mar Stage.
- Kicked off an innovative summer education program, *Speak Up - Take a 'Chance'*. This six-week program empowers junior high and high school students to find their voice and speak up, resulting in public performances of original pieces of theater that is completely written and produced by the students. The program has been offered for free for the past 12 years thanks to generous support from foundations and individuals.
- Advanced the core belief that theater is one of the last remaining forums for communities to come together. Through our post-show discussions (offered after every performance), complimentary audience events, and the 24hr Chance-a-thon, the Chance has made increasing efforts to create opportunities for our audiences to connect during this increasingly digital age.
- Partnered with various organizations, including Arts Orange County, Veterans First, and Heroes Hall, on producing the Veterans Initiative in the Arts. This six-week program brings together veterans from multiple wars, backgrounds and beliefs to bond, share stories, and begin the healing process for themselves and each other.

And what's next? More of the same -- bold and personal theatrical experiences, innovative education programs, new voices in the American theater landscape, and more opportunities for audiences to connect with the artists and with each other.

And it all starts with....

# SEASON 20: A Season in Search of Truth

February 2 – March 4, 2018 on the Cripe Stage

## VIOLET

Book and Lyrics by Brian Crawley

Music by Jeanine Tesori

Based on *The Ugliest Pilgrim* by Doris Betts

Directed and Choreographed by Kari Hayter

Musical Direction by Robyn Manion\*

### ***What does it mean to be TRULY seen?***

The best Tony-nominated musical nobody's ever heard of... *Violet* has wowed critics and audiences with its powerful story and energetic gospel, rock, country and R&B score by Jeanine Tesori (*Fun Home* and *Caroline, or Change*). Set in the Deep South during the early days of the civil rights movement, this powerful musical tells the touching story of a young woman accidentally scarred on the face as a child. Hoping that a TV evangelist can cure her, Violet embarks on a long bus ride from her sleepy North Carolina town through Memphis to Oklahoma. Along the way, she meets two young soldiers who teach her about love, courage and the true meaning of beauty.

*NOTE: This show contains some adult language.*

\*Winner of New York Critics Circle Award for Best Musical

\*Winner of the Lucille Lortel Award for Best Musical

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April 20 – May 20, 2018 on the Fyda-Mar Stage

## ORANGE COUNTY PREMIERE

## GOOD PEOPLE

by David Lindsay-Abaire

Directed by Jocelyn A. Brown

### ***Is our present TRUTH defined by our past?***

The haves and the have-nots come face-to-face in this Broadway hit. Written by Pulitzer Prize winner David Lindsay-Abaire (*Rabbit Hole*), this Tony-nominated dramatic comedy finds struggling single mother Margie Walsh coming to terms with the reality that her South Boston neighborhood offers the same lack of opportunity it always has. For most people, it's a place where this month's paycheck covers last month's bills — and church bingo is a big night out on the town. Facing eviction, Margie's forced to turn to an old high school flame for help. But he's now a successful physician living in the suburbs ... and Margie is way out of her element there. With a keen eye for character and an uncanny sense

of humor, *Good People* explores the struggles, shifting loyalties, and unshakeable hope that comes with having next to nothing in America.

*\*Winner of New York Critics Circle Award*

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**May 4 – June 3, 2018** on the Fyda-Mar Stage

WEST COAST PREMIERE

## **ELEVADA**

by Sheila Callaghan

Directed by Nicholas C. Avila

### ***Does TRUE love need TRUTH?***

What kind of tango partner are you looking for — one that will glide with you above all of life's messiness, or someone who will stay with you on the ground? It's only their first date, but Ramona and Khalil's time is already running out.

Ramona has cancer. Khalil is selling his identity to a corporation. Typical relationship stuff. While they both seem set to vanish off this earth, they unexpectedly find themselves preparing to give love one more try. This warm, witty, and wise romantic comedy asserts that even in the potentially hazardous, high stakes game of love and relationships... the risk is worth it if it means finding your favorite dancing companion.

*NOTE: This show contains some adult language.*

*\* Winner of the Edgerton Foundation New Play Award*

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**June 29 – July 29, 2018** on the Cripe Stage

ORANGE COUNTY PREMIERE

## **BIG FISH**

Book by John August

Music and Lyrics by Andrew Lippa

Directed by Oanh Nguyen

Choreographed by Kelly Todd

Musical Direction by Robyn Manion

### ***How do you tell a TRUE story?***

Adapted from Daniel Wallace's novel and Tim Burton's acclaimed film, and featuring spine-tinglingly beautiful music and lyrics by Andrew Lippa (*The Addams Family* and *The Wild Party*), *Big Fish* is a fantastical musical that illustrates the larger-than-life anecdotes of Edward Bloom, a man nearing the end of his life. This fact has compelled his grown son Will

to embark on an adventure of his own — to unravel his real dad from the myths of his tall tales. Filled with magic, love, luck, and crazy coincidences, this rollicking fantasy set in the American South is a tribute to the power of dreaming big.

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**September 22 – October 22, 2018** on the Fyda- Mar Stage

ORANGE COUNTY PREMIERE

## **THE OTHER PLACE**

by Sharr White

Directed by Matthew McCray

***When we forget what we know, how do we remember what's TRUE?***

Juliana Smithton is a respected neurologist whose life has recently begun unraveling. Her husband is leaving her, her daughter has eloped with a much older man and even she's beginning to question her own good health. A compelling and acclaimed drama in which nothing is quite what it seems, *The Other Place* is an intimate mystery that blurs fact with fiction, past with present, and Juliana's perception with ever-elusive truth. An elaborately crafted theatrical work, this Outer Critics Circle Award nominee will likely keep you talking long after the curtain has closed.

*NOTE: This show contains adult language.*

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## TYA Family Series

**February 16 – March 4, 2018** on the Fyda-Mar Stage

ORANGE COUNTY PREMIERE

## **JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH**

Book by Timothy Allen McDonald

Music & Lyrics by Benj Pasek & Justin Paul

Based on the book by Roald Dahl

Directed by Darryl B. Hovis\*

James Henry Trotter lives with two ghastly hags — his odious aunts — and he's a very lonely little boy indeed. One day, something peculiar happens. At the end of the garden, a peach starts to grow and grow ... and grow. Inside that peach are seven very unusual insects, all waiting to take James on a magical adventure of enormous proportions. We invite you to crawl inside the giant peach and take a peek. Based on Roald Dahl's beloved book and featuring music by the Tony and Academy Award-winning songwriting team behind *Dear Evan Hansen*, *Dogfight*, and *La La Land*, this family musical takes you on an amazing voyage across the ocean.

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**October 5 – 28, 2018** on the Cripe Stage

ENCORE PRESENTATION

# **FANCY NANCY, THE MUSICAL**

Book & Lyrics by Susan DiLallo

Music by Danny Abosch

Based on the book *Fancy Nancy* by Jane O'Connor and illustrated by Robin Preiss Glasser

Directed by Angeline Mirenda

Musical Direction by Robyn Manion\*

## ***Back by popular demand!***

Fancy Nancy and her friends Bree, Rhonda, Wanda, and Lionel are going to be performing in their very first show, “Deep Sea Dances.” Nancy is positive, that’s fancy for 100 percent sure, that she and Bree will be picked to be mermaids. When another girl wins the coveted role of the mermaid, Nancy is stuck playing a dreary, dull tree. Can Nancy bring fancy flair to her role, even though it isn’t the one she wanted?

## Holiday Literature Series

**November 23 – December 23, 2018** on the Cripe Stage

ORANGE COUNTY PREMIERE

# **JANE AUSTEN’S EMMA – THE MUSICAL**

Book, Lyrics & Music by Paul Gordon

Based on the novel by Jane Austen

Directed by Casey Long

Jane Austen’s enduring love story is brought to life as a romantic-comedy musical. The story revolves around Emma, a well-meaning, but disaster-prone matchmaker, who ignores her own romantic feelings while setting out to find a suitor for her friend Harriet. Her efforts go awry, of course, leading to comic complications. We invite you to fall in love again with one of Jane Austen’s most adored characters, featuring an intelligent and buoyant score from Tony-nominated composer Paul Gordon (*Jane Eyre*).

## **2018 RESIDENT PLAYWRIGHT**

# **JOANNA GARNER**

We are very proud to have Joanna as our 8th Resident Playwright. Her work has been developed nationally and internationally, including at the Banff Playwrights Colony, Tofte Lake Center, the New York and Hollywood Fringe Festivals, and many others. Her political drama about Iran, *The Orange Garden*, was a winner of the 2016 Keene Prize for Literature and included on the 2016 Kilroys List. An accomplished songwriter and musician, Joanna's original country musical, *100 Heartbreaks*, was workshopped in Seattle Rep's New Play Program, with the Northwest Playwrights Alliance, and was presented at the country's largest arts and culture festival, Bumbershoot. It was later nominated for an Austin Critics' Table Award for Outstanding Musical. Her short play, *Cat Cafe*, was a finalist for the 2017 Humana Festival of New Plays Heideman Award.

Joanna's daring spirit and skilled language makes her an emerging voice in the American theater landscape, and we are truly excited to support the development of her work for our 20th Anniversary Season.

In 2018, Joanna will have two of her shows featured in the OTR Series -- a staged reading of a brand new play that she's still writing, and a LAB Workshop of *The Orange Garden*.

## **2018 SEASON PRODUCERS**

# **BETTE & WYLIE AITKEN**

True and hearty supporters of the Chance, we are honored to have Bette & Wylie Aitken return as Season Producers for our 2018 schedule.

The Aitkens played an integral role in helping the Chance move into its new home by contributing a major gift to the "Bold New Home" Capital Campaign. As an acknowledgement of their humbling support, the Chance officially named their new home the "Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center."

As *Coast Magazine* wrote, "Alone, Wylie is known for his legal prowess and keen litigation skills, but when he is with Bette, his wife of over 50 years, they are known as the power couple of philanthropy and the arts."

"When we first happened upon the Chance, it was already making a big impact in the community," said Bette and Wylie in a joint message. "And it appears that the ripple from that impact only continues to grow. Beyond the major works they produce on the stage, the Chance continues its mission of strengthening the bond between neighbors, fostering creativity in our children, and investing in the growth and development of local young and professional talent."

## ABOUT CHANCE THEATER

Proud to be one of the leading ensemble-driven theatre companies in Southern California, CHANCE THEATER recently received a National Theatre Company grant from American Theatre Wing. The Chance has won six Ovation Awards, including two for Best Production of a Musical – Intimate Theater for its West Coast premiere of *Triassic Park – The Musical* and Southern California premiere of *Jerry Springer – The Opera*, as well as four LADCC Awards, including the Polly Warfield Award for Outstanding Season. The Anaheim City Council named Chance Theater “the official resident theater company of Anaheim”, and Arts Orange County has twice named the Chance as “Outstanding Arts Organization”. Known for using bold and personal storytelling to promote dialogue and connection within the Southern California theatrical landscape, the Chance is committed to contributing to a more compassionate, connected and creative community. As a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group, Network of Ensemble Theaters, and the LA Stage Alliance, Chance Theater continues to bring national attention to the Southern California and Orange County theater scenes.

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