

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Alert for Theatre Editors, Reviewers and Calendar Listings

Chance Theater proudly announces its

25th Anniversary Season

The award-winning theater company is back with a full slate of plays and musicals that are vital, significant, and – most importantly – speak to the human experience.

ANAHEIM, CA: Chance Theater, Anaheim’s official resident theater company, proudly announces its 2023 Season, which includes four musicals, three plays, and five staged readings of new shows. This compelling season includes two world premieres (both of which were developed as part of Chance’s New Works Program), a California premiere, and a Tony and Pulitzer-winning musical that defined a generation of musical theater.

Kicking off in January at the Bette Aitken theater arts Center, Chance Theater’s 25th Main Series will include the Off-Broadway hit musical “Ride the Cyclone,” the seminal generation-defining “Rent,” two world premieres – “Colonialism is Terrible, But Pho is Delicious” and “Matinicus: The Story of Abigail Burgess” – as well as the Tony Award-winning mystery, “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time.” The Chance’s popular TYA Family Series will return with “Fancy Nancy, The Musical” and the Holiday Series will feature the return of “The Secret Garden, The Musical” on the Cripe Stage and the return of a soon-to-be-announced family musical on the Fyda-Mar Stage.

The entire 2023 Season is being produced by community leaders, Bette & Wylie Aitken, with the Family of Mary Kay Fyda-Mar as the season’s associate producers.

First up in 2023 is the California Premiere of **“Ride the Cyclone.”** Strap yourself in for a bracingly funny, supremely inventive musical journey with more twists and turns than the rickety roller coaster that sends six teenagers prematurely into the afterlife. Now trapped in a fantastical carnival-like purgatory, a mechanical fortune teller invites the teens to tell their stories of life interrupted with the promise of a prize like no other – the chance to return to life. Already being lauded as a contemporary musical masterpiece, this quirky, smart,

and darkly hilarious show reveals the resilience of the human spirit with a riveting score that skillfully mixes cabaret, hip-hop, gospel and Broadway.

This off-beat musical racked up a lot of nominations from both the Lucille Lortel Awards and Drama League Awards, including “Outstanding Musical” for both. It was also named by *The New York Times* as one of the Best Shows of 2016, with Charles Isherwood proclaiming that the “supremely witty book” provided “the kind of thrills we look for in all musical comedies. This oddball charmer radiates warmth and wit from spooky start to surprisingly sob-worthy conclusion. If purgatory were really this much fun, I’d be happy to spend a lifetime there.”

Directed by Associate Artistic Director Jocelyn A. Brown (“Lizzie, The Musical”), musical directed by Lex Leigh (“Striking 12”) and choreographed by Miguel Cardenas (“Green Day’s American Idiot”), Chance’s production runs January 27 through February 26, 2023 on the Cripe Stage at the Bette Aitken theater arts Center. Robert Berman is the show’s Executive Producer. Laurie Smits Staude, Elizabeth Jones, and Susan Bowman & Freddie Greenfield are its Associate Producers.

Next up, the rolling world premiere of Dustin H. Chinn’s “**Colonialism is Terrible, But Pho is Delicious.**” This biting comedy spans centuries, continents, and cultures in its three-part vignette structure. Beginning in 1880’s Hanoi, the capital city of French Indochina, where a Vietnamese cook finds herself in the kitchen of aristocratic French settlers. Then in 1999 Vietnam, American diners get their first taste of authentic local cuisine. And finally, in present-day, gentrifying Brooklyn, you’ll witness a simmering argument around culture, ownership, and authenticity as it comes to a roaring boil.

Chance Theater’s Artistic Director Oanh Nguyen (“Skylight”) will be directing all three productions presented in this rolling world premiere. Nguyen also directed the virtual staged reading (a co-production with Aurora Theatre Company) that took place on February 13, 2021, in the midst of the theater shutdown. Rehearsals for the reading took place entirely over Zoom with talent from around the country (including playwright Dustin H. Chinn, who resides in New York). The response was so positive that Nguyen has just finished directing the show at Aurora Theatre Company in Berkeley, CA. The reviews have called the show “a biting and scrumptious three-part treat of a play... a layered comedy melange with ingenious insights, excellent acting, and fine direction.” (*Berkeleyside*)

“Colonialism is Terrible, But Pho is Delicious” runs March 31 through April 30 on the Cripe Stage at the Bette Aitken theater arts Center. Laurie Smits Staude is the Executive Producer and Susan Bowman & Freddie

Greenfield are its Associate Producers. After its Chance production, the final leg of the rolling world premiere will be at Oregon Contemporary Theatre in May 2023, once again directed by Nguyen.

In the next slot, the Chance will present another world premiere – **“Matinicus: The Story of Abigail Burgess.”** Following a popular OTR staged reading in 2022, this world premiere of a Chance-commissioned one-woman play is based on the true legend of Abigail Burgess, a young lighthouse keeper’s daughter, who has been the inspiration for several books and is a standout heroine in the lighthouse community. Chance’s 2016 Resident Playwright Jenny Connell Davis was commissioned to adapt this powerful story for the stage.

Starring Aubrey Saverino (“Cry It Out”), “Matinicus: The Story of Abigail Burgess” will run May 5 - June 4, 2023 on the Fyda-Mar Stage at the Bette Aitken theater arts Center. Rachele Menaker and Eddie Schuller are the production’s Executive Producers.

In the summer, Chance will present an intimate revival of the Pulitzer Prize winning musical **“Rent.”** Set in the East Village of New York City, “Rent” is about falling in love, finding your voice and living for today. Winner of the Tony Award for Best Musical and a slew of other awards, “Rent” remains a pop culture phenomenon, with songs that rock and a story that continues to resonate with audiences of all ages. Based loosely on Puccini’s “La Boheme,” the musical follows a year in the life of a group of impoverished young artists and musicians struggling to survive and create in New York’s Lower East Side. This is theater at its best – exuberant, passionate and joyous.

“Rent” will be directed by Matthew McCray (“Next to Normal”) and runs July 21 through August 20, 2023 on the Cripe Stage at the Bette Aitken theater arts Center. Linda & Tod White are the Executive Producers and Laurie Smits Staude, Rachele Menaker & Eddie Schuller are its Associate Producers.

Wrapping up the 2023 Main Series is the Tony Award Winner for Best Play, **“The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time.”** The story follows fifteen-year-old math whiz Christopher Boone who has been falsely accused of killing a neighbor’s dog. Christopher is brilliant but has difficulty dealing with the sounds and stresses of everyday life—decides to investigate the crime. The secrets he unearths prompt him to leave his trusted teacher and the familiar streets of his hometown for a life-changing train trip to London. Based on Mark Haddon’s best-selling 2003 novel, “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time” is a thrilling and heartwarming adventure story featuring an unforgettable young hero.

Directed by Darryl B. Hovis (“A Wrinkle in Time”), Chance’s production will play on the Cripe Stage at the Bette Aitken theater arts Center from September 22 through October 22, 2023. Linda Maggard is the Executive Producer and Elizabeth Jones is the Associate Producer.

Chance Theater’s beloved Holiday Series returns with a revival of **“The Secret Garden - The Musical.”** Based on the popular children’s book of the same name, “The Secret Garden” follows the story of Mary Lennox, a young British girl born and raised in Colonial India. When the 11-year-old’s parents die in a cholera outbreak, she is sent to Yorkshire to live with a reclusive uncle, his invalid son — and a host of ghosts, spirits, and lost souls inhabiting Mary’s new home. With the help of the spirits, Mary and a young gardener uncover the mystery of the manor’s magical garden, bringing life to the neglected estate as Mary’s own personality blossoms alongside the flowers. Filled with amazing music, elegant choreography, and a heartwarming story of forgiveness and renewal, “The Secret Garden” is the quintessential holiday musical for all ages.

Co-Directed by Casey Long and KC Wilkerson, “The Secret Garden - The Musical” will be enchanting Chance audiences November 24 - December 23, 2023 on the Cripe Stage at the Bette Aitken theater arts Center.

To schedule press interviews, arrange for press comps, request press photos, or for any additional information regarding this production, please contact Casey Long, the Chance’s managing director, at (626) 523-7151 or casey@chancetheater.com.

ABOUT CHANCE THEATER

Proud to be one of the leading ensemble-driven theatre companies in Southern California, CHANCE THEATER has received the National Theatre Company grant from American Theatre Wing for “nurturing a community of artists in ways that strengthen and demonstrate the quality, diversity, and dynamism of American theatre.” The Chance recently won eight OC Theatre Guild Awards, including Outstanding Production of a Musical for its intimate revival of *Fun Home*. Previously, Chance Theater won eight Ovation Awards, including four for Best Production of a Musical (Intimate Theatre), 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” in 2014, 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, Theatrical Producers League of Los Angeles, and OC Theatre Guild, Chance Theater continues to bring national attention to the Southern California and Orange County theater scenes.

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