



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chance Theater

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Orange County Asperger's Support Group

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**Chance Theater and Orange County Asperger's Support Group
are Teaming Up again for the Free Summer Theater Camp...**

Spectrum Speak Up

**Teens on the Autism Spectrum harness their unique talents and
present an empowered original piece of theater and find their voice**

ANAHEIM, CA: The Orange County Asperger's Support Group (OCASG) and Chance Theater will be working together again this summer to present the Spectrum Speak Up outreach program. The workshops are held twice a week, from June 11 through July 27, 2024 culminating in two public performances – Saturday, July 27 at 11:00 am and 1:00 pm at the Bette Aitken Theater Arts Center on the Cripe Stage. The program is offered free-of-charge and registration is open thru June 4, 2024.

Since 2018, Spectrum Speak Up has focused on empowering teens (ages 13-19) on the Autism Spectrum to find their unique voice and talent, culminating in an original show that they write and perform over the summer. Thanks to the generous support of foundations, corporations, and individuals, the program is offered entirely free-of-charge to all participants. This program is part of Chance Theater's award-winning Speak Up program, which includes separate programs for Teens and Veterans.

The Orange County Asperger's Support Group (OCASG) and Chance Theater are working together to present a new version of our award-winning Speak Up program, crafted specifically for teens who have been diagnosed with high functioning Autism, Asperger's or PDD-NOS. During the course of the six-week program, students will create new connections, learn the fundamentals of storytelling, have fun, express themselves, and create an original play!

"OCASG is thrilled to be working with the Chance," said Judi Uttal, president of OCASG. "Teens who have been diagnosed with ASD struggle with bullying and establishing their identity during their high school years because of their social and communication deficiencies. We think that the Spectrum 'Speak Up' Program will give these individuals an opportunity to develop confidence, enhance their communication skills, and develop friendships by leveraging theater techniques."

Chance Theater Education Director Karen O'Hanlon, who also runs the summer program, cannot hold back her emotion when she says "Every year I am amazed at the level of talent and bravery. These students are not just acting and putting on a great show, they are digging deep and working collaboratively to create an original play that offers us valuable insight into their world. This in turn is educating us all and helping to build a more empathetic community"

The Spectrum Speak Up program would not be possible without the transcendent support of The Marc Chessen Scholarship Fund, The Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation, The Orange County Community Foundation, The Robert J. and Doreen D. Marshall Fund, Katheryn Baker, Brad Feldman, Robin Preiss Glasser & Robert Berman, The Orange County Asperger's Support Group, Linda & Tod White, Anaheim Hills Rotary Club, The Bunteman Family, Kiwanis Club of Greater Anaheim, and Rachel & Todd Martinez.

MEET THE INSTRUCTORS

Karen O'Hanlon, a Philadelphia area native, is Chance Theater's Education Director and a proud resident artist. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from East Stroudsburg University and has worked as a teaching artist, actress, and director throughout Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Delaware. At the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey, she spent several years teaching and directing for the First Stage program, as well as their in-school residency program. Karen was the regional director for Creative Theatre, where she worked to bring after-school and summer camps to children throughout the east coast. In addition, she has worked with several outreach programs designed to help at-risk youths and teens find their voice through

creative expression. In California, Karen taught Theatre at Fairmont Private School, where she produced student-driven new work. Karen is also a coach and judge for the Orange County middle school debate program.

To schedule press interviews, arrange for press comps, request press photos, or for any additional information regarding this production, please contact Shinshin Tsai at (888) 455-4212 or stesai@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 won 22 OCTG Theatre Awards, including two for Outstanding Production of a Musical (“Next to Normal” and “Fun Home”) and one for Outstanding Production of a Play (“Cry It Out”). Previously, Chance Theater won eight Ovation Awards, including four for Best Production of a Musical (Intimate Theatre), and 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, The 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.

ABOUT THE ORANGE COUNTY ASPERGER’S SUPPORT GROUP (OCASG)

OCASG was founded in 2003 by parents seeking to provide support for local families and adults dealing with Asperger’s. The organization has grown to over 1000 member families throughout Orange County, and now also includes families affected by High-Functioning Autism (HFA) and Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD-NOS). Monthly support group meetings for individuals and family members are held in Newport Beach and Placentia, often with guest speakers. Monthly social activities encourage social integration. An online discussion board allows members to ask questions and share information. The Orange County Asperger's

Calendar Listing

WHAT: **SPECTRUM SPEAK UP**

This six-week summer theater camp focuses on empowering teens on the Autism Spectrum by helping them to find their unique voice and talent. Through traditional ensemble-building techniques, improvisation, and playwriting exercises, participants will be guided in the creation of an original play. Everyone will learn the basics of script analysis, objectives, actions, and character analysis, and apply this to their playwriting and acting with the goal of cultivating the ability to honestly listen and respond on stage while making dynamic choices. Through exercises, teens will also grow their concentration and awareness, emotional freedom and connection, and self-confidence. This program will provide a safe place for students to be part of an ensemble giving a voice to their generation, creatively exploring storytelling, and leaving with a strong acting foundation taught by professional Chance Artists. No matter where their curiosity and talent lies, the theater has an outlet for everyone.

Registration Deadline: June 4, 2024

Registration: www.ChanceTheater.com/Spectrum

Workshops: June 11 – July 27 (Tuesday & Thursday 10:00 am – 3:00 pm)

Tech Week: July 22 – 26 (Monday- Friday 10:00 am – 3:00 pm)

Performances: Saturday, July 27 at 11:00 am and 1:00 pm

WHERE: Chance Theater @ Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center on the Cripe Stage
5522 E. La Palma Ave., Anaheim, CA 92807

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