

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Alert for Theatre Editors, Reviewers and Calendar Listings

**Chance Theater proudly presents an encore of the classic Peanuts story**

# ***A Charlie Brown Christmas***

**Everyone's favorite holiday TV classic returns December 6-29**

**at Chance Theater @ Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center on the Fyda-Mar Stage**

November 12, 2019 ... Anaheim, California ... Chance Theater, Anaheim's official resident theater company, is excited to present an encore presentation of our 2018 production of ***A Charlie Brown Christmas*** as part of our 2019 Holiday Series! Created by Charles M. Schulz, based on the television special by Bill Melendez and Lee Mendelson, this stage adaptation by Eric Schaeffer is presented by special arrangement with Arthur Whitelaw and Ruby Persson, and will be directed by Resident Artist James McHale. ***A Charlie Brown Christmas* will preview from December 6th through 8th; regular performances will begin December 12th and continue through December 29th on the Fyda-Mar Stage at Chance Theater @ Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center.**

Join Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Lucy, Linus, and the whole Peanuts gang as they produce their own Christmas play and ultimately learn the true meaning of the season. *A Charlie Brown Christmas* is a present the whole family can enjoy! Adapted from Charles M. Schulz's timeless story, this holiday treat features the unforgettable music of Vince Guaraldi, as well as beloved holiday carols performed by the Peanuts characters. There's no better way to discover the magic of the season!

"It's like watching the television special come to life!" – *Around The Town Chicago*

"A sweet and touching, live action version that is itself an instant holiday classic" – *Broadway World*

"I was excited to direct this show because of the honesty and directness of the story and the positive and uplifting message," said director James McHale. "It's important to tell stories about acceptance and goodwill. One of the reasons Schultz' Christmas Special was such a hit (despite the producers being positive that it would flop) was because he spoke directly to feelings so many people relate to during the holidays. Despite it being a time that's supposed to be filled with cheer, Charlie Brown feels disillusioned by the commercialism of the holiday, something many of us can feel from time to time. And it's not until his community show him real kindness and goodwill that he finally finds that Christmas spirit he was looking for."

But... how do you put a TV special onstage? "I wanted to find a unique approach for bringing this story to the stage," McHale continues. "When I watched the cartoon I loved the quirkiness of the characters' movements -- the way they bounced when they walked -- and the stilted very two-dimensional life they had on screen. We aimed to bring that oddness to life with a unique and bold physicality by the actors. The goal of the production design was to make the show

feel as much like a cartoon as possible. Rather than seeing a fully realized version of Lucy's psychiatry booth, let's see a flat, two-dimensional version that comes out of nowhere, almost like a children's pop up book. Let's transform the space and surprise the audience in a very theatrical way."

*A Charlie Brown Christmas* premiered on CBS on December 9, 1965. The road to television was not an easy one, and the premiere was preceded by a sense of dread from the network. The program was contradictory to all the trends at the time -- no laugh track, a jazz score, a sad tone, slower pacing, and featuring a voice cast of children. Most people expected it to be a disaster. And those people were very wrong. *A Charlie Brown Christmas* was a ratings smash hit (over 15 million households tuned in -- nearly half of the television sets in the US), and went on to win both an Emmy and the Peabody Award. It is now broadcast every year.

The production team for *A Charlie Brown Christmas* includes Chance Theater resident artists McHale and **Masako Tobaru** (production designer), as well as production designer **Megan Hill**, costume designer **Christina Marie Perez**, and stage manager **Kelsey Somerville**.

The cast of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* includes Chance Theater resident artists **Laura M. Hathaway** (*Big Fish*) and **Karen O'Hanlon** who are sharing the role of Lucy, as well as returning cast members **Matt Takahashi** (*Ragtime*) as Charlie Brown, **Dimithri Perera** (*Stinky Cheese Man*) as Snoopy, **Juston Gonzalez-Rodholm** as Linus, **Nathan Shube** as Pig Pen, **Jennifer Noce** (*Goosebumps*) as Frieda, and **Hannah Schill** as Patty. They are joined by returning Chance artist **Christopher Diem** (*James and The Giant Peach*) as Schroeder, and Chance newcomer **Shai Culver** as Sally.

## MEET THE TEAM

**Charles M. Schulz (Creator)** born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on November 26, 1922, launched his comic strip Peanuts in 1950. Featuring hero Charlie Brown, over the years the strip would run in more than 2,000 newspapers and in many languages. Peanuts also expanded into TV specials like the Emmy-winning *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, as well as books and a huge merchandise collection. Schulz died on February 12, 2000.

**James McHale (Director)** is a Resident Artist and Artistic Council Member of Chance Theater where he recently performed as John Dodge in the SoCal Premiere of *Middletown*, and as the titular character in *The Little Prince*. He has appeared in many other Chance productions including *Dogfight* (LA/ OC Premiere), *Samsara* (West Coast Premiere), *Maple and Vine* (OC Weekly's Best Play of the Year), *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* (Ovation Recommended; LA Times Critic's Choice), and *The Laramie Project & Laramie Project: 10 Years Later* (LA Stage Times' Top 10 of 2013). Recently, he played Hamlet in *Hamlet* and *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* in repertory at American Coast Theater Company where his theater credits also include *All My Sons*, and the West Coast Premiere of *The Hiding Place*. James received his B.A. in Theater Arts Performance from CSU Long Beach, and has studied with the Michael Chekhov Association and The Actor's Center (NYC). James also works as a director and teaching artist. His recent directing credits include the World Premiere of *Comedy of ERRORS* (ACTC), and *The Eight: Reindeer Monologues* (Chance Theater). He has taught and directed for local middle-schools, Musical Theater Playground, and for Chance Theater's *Speak Up* youth program.

Bette & Wylie Aitken are the Season Producers for the entire 2019 schedule.

## **Special “Relaxed Performances” on Sundays, December 16 & 23 at 1:00pm**

Continuing the initiative that started with our inaugural season for the TYA Family Series, the Chance will be presenting two special “relaxed performances” on December 16th and 23rd at 1pm. These special performances are specifically designed to welcome people that will benefit from a more relaxed environment, including children under 4 years of age, people with an Autism Spectrum Condition, sensory and communication disorders, or a learning disability. There will be minor alterations made to some technical elements, and the house lights will be left on at a dim level to create a conducive environment for all audiences to enjoy the story. There is also a designated “relaxing and activities area” set up in the lobby for any audience members who may need to take a break during the performance.

To schedule press interviews, request photos, schedule press comps or for any additional information, please contact Casey Long at (714) 900-3284 or by e-mail at [casey@chancetheater.com](mailto:casey@chancetheater.com)

## **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.

## **CALENDAR LISTING**

### **WHAT: A Charlie Brown Christmas**

Everyone’s favorite holiday classic comes to life in the all-new stage adaptation! Join Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Lucy, Linus, and the whole Peanuts gang as they produce their own Christmas play and ultimately learn the true meaning of the season. *A Charlie Brown Christmas* is a present the whole family can enjoy! Adapted from Charles M. Schulz’s timeless story, this holiday treat features the unforgettable music of Vince Guaraldi, as well as beloved holiday carols performed by the Peanuts characters. There’s no better way to discover the magic of the season!

### **WHEN:**

#### **Preview Performances:**

December 6 - 8, 2019

Friday at 7:30pm, Saturday at 1pm and 4pm, Sunday at 4pm and 7pm

#### **Regular Performances**

December 12 - 29, 2019

Thursdays and Fridays at 7:30pm;

Saturdays and Sundays at 1:00pm, 2:30pm, 6:00pm, and 7:30pm

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

TICKETS: \$21.00 - \$35.00. Call (888) 455-4212 or visit [www.ChanceTheater.com](http://www.ChanceTheater.com).  
Discounts available for children (ages 4-12), seniors, students and military.

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