

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Alert for Theatre Editors, Reviewers and Calendar Listings

**Chance Theater launches its 22nd Season with**

# ***Fun Home***

**The groundbreaking, award-winning, multithematic musical  
is an ideal fit for our intimate theater home.**

January 2, 2020 ... Anaheim, California ... Chance Theater, Anaheim's official resident theater company, opens its 22nd season with ***Fun Home***, the brilliant, groundbreaking 2013 musical based on the intensely personal graphic novel by Alison Bechdel. Written by Jeanine Tesori (music) and Lisa Kron (book and lyrics), with direction by Marya Mazor and music direction by Lex Leigh, ***Fun Home*** previews from January 31 through February 7, 2020, with regular performances running February 8 to March 1 on the Cripe Stage at the Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center.

The 2013 musical is based on *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, a 2006 graphic memoir by American cartoonist Alison Bechdel, author of the comic strip "Dykes to Watch Out For." Both stage musical and graphic novel chronicle Bechdel's childhood and youth in rural Pennsylvania, and focus on her complex relationship with her brilliant but enigmatic father while addressing themes of sexual orientation, gender roles, suicide, emotional abuse, dysfunctional family life and the role literature plays in helping people understand themselves and those in their family. The story is related through a series of non-linear vignettes connected by narration provided by the character representing Allison Bechdel as an adult as she looks back on her life.

NOTE: ***Fun Home*** contains adult language, themes and content. Not recommended for those under the age of 13.

"A beautiful heartbreaker of a musical. *Fun Home* isn't just a coming out story or a coming-of-age story. Its universality comes from its awareness of how we never fully know even those closest to us – and of the undercurrent of grown-up secrets, intuited by children, that exists to some degree in every family. *Fun Home* finds a shining clarity that lights up the night." – *The New York Times*

"The best musical of the year... an emotionally-packed piece of theater, full of joy, heart, sorrow and uncomfortable reality." – *Playbill*

In 2009, Obie Award-winning playwright Lisa Kron wrote the book and lyrics and Tony Award-nominated composer Jeanine Tesori created the music for the adaptation of Alison Bechdel's 2006 "graphic memoir." The show was developed through an Ojai Playwrights Conference workshop, then further workshopped in 2012 at Sundance Theatre Lab and The Public Theater's Public Lab. The show premiered Off-Broadway in September, 2013 at The Public Theater,

where it enjoyed multiple extensions to its run. Directed by Sam Gold, the production was called “the first mainstream musical about a young lesbian.”

The piece was a finalist for the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and won the Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Musical, the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Musical, the Obie Award for Musical Theater, and the Off-Broadway Alliance Award. The Broadway production opened in April, 2015, and earned a dozen nominations for the 69th Tony Awards, winning five Tony Awards, including Best Musical. Following 582 regular performances on Broadway, the show’s national tour, which included Orange County’s Segerstrom Center, began in October, 2016.

The show garnered widespread critical acclaim, including *The New York Times*’ Ben Brantley calling it “a beautiful heartbreaker of a musical” and listing it as one of his top 15 shows of 2013. Joe Dziemianowicz of the *New York Daily News* called ***Fun Home*** “achingly beautiful,” saying that it “speaks to one family and all families torn by secrets and lies” and including it as the top/number one play of his Top 10 in Theater list for the year 2013. *The New York Times* music critic, Anthony Tommasini, praised the show’s score as “a masterpiece” that contains “Sondheim-influenced songs that unfold over insistent rhythmic figures and shifting, rich harmonies” and calling the show “complex yet texturally transparent” and “engrossingly dramatic.”

Locally, *Los Angeles Times*’ Charles McNulty wrote, “There have been plenty of new American musicals better put together than *Fun Home*, but I can’t think of one in recent years that has touched me as much with its tender, ironic and courageous vulnerability.”

Helming Chance’s production of this innovative slice of musical theater is Marya Mazor. Known for some of Chance Theater’s most hard-hitting productions, the veteran director said she’s “absolutely thrilled to direct this poignant, funny and groundbreaking story in the intimate Chance Theater space.” Mazor saw ***Fun Home*** on Broadway and said she was “immediately drawn to the wrenching honesty of Alison Bechdel’s memoir, which jumps unflinchingly from a daughter’s euphoric discovery of her lesbian identity to her father’s apparent suicide.”

Mazor elaborated further: “Unpacking the mysterious connection between these two life events in a highly theatrical journey – in which we see Alison at three different ages, played by three different actors – are *Fun Home*’s brilliant score and compelling lyrics, which tell both a specific story of sexual identity and more broadly question how we each define ourselves in sameness and difference from our parents.”

## MEET THE TEAM

**Alison Bechdel (graphic artist and subject of the play):** Born in Lock Haven, Penn., in 1960, Alison got her degree in studio arts and art history at Oberlin College in 1981. Moving to Manhattan, she applied to several art schools but was not accepted, instead taking office jobs in the publishing industry. She began the comic strip “Dykes to Watch Out For,” first published in feminist newspapers in 1983 and giving readers a look into the urban lesbian community. Her 2006 graphic memoir *Fun Home* brought her critical and commercial success, subsequently leading to the popular, critically acclaimed, award-winning stage version. Her second graphic memoir *Are You My Mother?* was issued in 2012, and in 2014 she received a MacArthur “Genius” Award.

**Jeanine Tesori (composer)** is history’s most prolific and most widely honored female theatrical composer, with a total of five Broadway musicals and five Tony Award nominations. Her major works include *Violet* (previously staged at Chance Theater), *Caroline, or Change*, *Shrek the Musical* and *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. She has also written movie music for

films such as “Shrek the Third,” “Mulan II” and “Nights in Rodanthe.” Her newest stage musical, with book and lyrics by David Henry Hwang, is *Soft Power*, opened Off-Broadway at Public Theater in September, 2019.

**Lisa Kron (book and lyrics writer)** is a playwright and lyricist but also an actor. Her two major works prior to *Fun Home* are *Well* and the Obie-winning *2.5 Minute Ride*. Both are stage works and both are critically acclaimed autobiographical plays. Her play *101 Humiliating Stories* chronicles some of her adventures during her early days in New York. *Fun Home* was Kron’s first musical and also her first work based on an existing work written by another artist.

**Marya Mazor (director):** A critically acclaimed, award-winning theater and film director whose work is known across the U.S., Marya recently directed Donald Margulies’ *The Model Apartment* at The Geffen Playhouse and *Ivy & Bean* at South Coast Repertory. Her fall 2013 production of *Time Stands Still* at Chance Theater garnered rave reviews and is among numerous Chance shows she has directed, including the critically acclaimed 2011 production of Edward Albee’s *The Goat or, Who is Sylvia?*, *Tribes* (2017), the world premiere of Brian Nelson’s *Overlooked* (2018) and *Tigers Be Still* (2019).

Other favorite stage productions include the West Coast premiere of Philip Kan Gotanda’s *Day Standing On its Head*, a co-production of the Berkeley Repertory Theatre and the Asian American Theater Company; Kia Corthron’s *Come Down Burning* at the Long Wharf Theater; and the world premiere of Cary Wong’s *Mirrors Remembered* at the New York Stage and Film Company. Her work has been seen, among other venues, at Nada, Dixon Place, The Main Street Theater, Boston Court, Circle X, The Open Fist, and the Williamstown Theatre Festival. Marya’s recent stage productions include Churchill’s *Mad Forest* at the Open Fist Theatre, which garnered critical acclaim, and the 2012 production of *Aladdin* for Walt Disney Imagineering Creative Entertainment. She spent six years as a show director for the Walt Disney Company and has written a feature film, “MOXIE,” that is in development with her attached to direct.

Marya founded the professional theater Voice & Vision in New York City and served as its artistic director for 10 years. She is the recipient of the National Endowment of the Arts/TCG Directing Fellowship and has taught at The New School, Pepperdine University and Fordham University, and holds an M.F.A. in directing from the Yale School of Drama.

Joining Mazor on the production team are **Lex Leigh** (music director), **Bradley Kaye** (scenic designer), **Ryan Brodwin** (sound designer), **Andrea Heilman** (lighting designer), **Bradley Lock** (costume designer), **Kelsey Somerville** (stage manager) and **Lindsey Alterman** (assistant director).

Starring in the Chance’s production of *Fun Home* are returning artists **Ron Hastings** (*Ragtime*) as **Bruce Bechdel** and **Matt Bolden** (*Big Fish*) as Roy, Mark, Pete, Bobby and Jeremy. They are joined by Chance newcomers **Ashlee Espinosa** as Alison Bechdel, **Madelyn Velazquez** as Medium Alison, **Holly Reichert** as Small Alison, **Jennifer Richardson** as Helen Bechdel, **Reese Hewitt** as Christian Bechdel, **Christopher Patow** as John Bechdel, and **Ketino Christopher** as Joan.

The Executive Producers for this production are The Family of Mary Kay Fyda-Mar, and Bette & Wylie Aitken are the Season Producers for the entire 2020 Season.

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 714-900-3284 or [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 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 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” 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, Orange County Theatre Guild, and LA Stage Alliance, Chance Theater continues to bring national attention to the Southern California and Orange County theater scenes.

## CALENDAR LISTING

### WHAT: **Fun Home**

We kick off our 22nd Anniversary Season with one of the most celebrated and groundbreaking musicals in the last decade. Enjoyed by play and musical lovers alike, *Fun Home* brings forward aspects of our society that do not often take center stage! Alison’s volatile and brilliant father has just died unexpectedly, sparking an achingly beautiful journey of self-discovery and her own journey as an LGBTQ writer, artist, and woman. Join us for this refreshingly honest, wholly original, and intimately emotional musical about seeing your parents through grown-up eyes that won just about every major New York award during its time on and off Broadway.

### WHEN:

**Preview Performances:** Jan. 31-Feb. 7, 2020. Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturday at 8 p.m., Sunday at 7 p.m.

**Regular performances:** Feb. 8-March 1, 2020.

Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m., Sundays at 3 p.m.

**REVIEWERS and OTHER PRESS PERSONNEL are encouraged to attend:**

**Opening Performance on Saturday, February 8th at 8 p.m.**

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

TICKETS: \$25.00 - \$49.00.

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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