

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Alert for Theatre Editors, Reviewers and Calendar Listings

Extended by popular demand thru March 11th

Roald Dahl's James and The Giant Peach

The classic literary adventure is adapted into a musical with original songs by the Tony and Academy Award-winning songwriters of *Dear Evan Hansen* and *La La Land*

February 13, 2018 ... Anaheim, California ... Chance Theater, Anaheim's official resident theater company, is pleased to announce the first show in its fourth season of our TYA Family Series... ***James and The Giant Peach***. With book by Timothy Allen McDonald, music and lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, based on the book by Roald Dahl, and directed by Darryl B. Hovis, ***James and The Giant Peach* will preview from February 16 through February 17; regular performances will begin February 18 and has just added five performances through March 11 at Chance Theater @ Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center on the Fyda-Mar Stage.**

The musical follows James Henry Trotter who 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.

"Magical sweetness... something that can make a theater lover squeal with delight" – *Broadway World*

James and the Giant Peach is a delightful and emotionally crafted story with heart and soul. This popular children's novel was first published in 1961 and British author, Roald Dahl's first classic novel for children. In the orchard at Roald's home in the Buckinghamshire countryside, there was cherry tree that lead him to wonder: what if, one day, one of those cherries just kept on growing bigger and bigger? (reference:

<http://www.roalddahl.com/roald-dahl/stories/f-j/james-and-the-giant-peach>) Thus, the inspiration for James' magical adventure inside of one giant peach. *James* was later adapted to a well-received live/stop-motion film in 1996 by Walt Disney Pictures. *James and the Giant Peach* tells a story of how a family comes together and shows that there's no such thing as a perfect family.

MEET THE TEAM

Timothy Allen McDonald (Book) is an award-winning playwright (Roald Dahl's *Willy Wonka*, *The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley*, *Jim Henson's Emmet Otter*) adaptor of over 65 musicals (highlights include *Guys and Dolls JR.*, *Getting to Know...The Sound of Music*, *The Wizard of Oz YPE*, and *Les Miserables* School Edition). McDonald is also an accomplished director (*Dear Edwina* produced by multi-Tony award winner Daryl Roth, and *The Phantom Tollbooth* at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts) and a leading authority on musical theater education. In 1996 McDonald was recruited by Freddie Gershon to develop Music Theatre International's Education Division, working side-by-side with theatrical greats including Cameron Mackintosh, Stephen Sondheim, Arthur Laurents, Stephen Flaherty, Lynn Ahrens, Stephen Schwartz and Sheldon Harnick to create age-appropriate adaptations of musicals. In 1997 McDonald founded iTheatrics to continue and expand the work he began at MTI by developing educational musical theatre adaptations and resources for Tams-Witmark, Rodgers and Hammerstein and Samuel French. McDonald is the founder of the Junior Theater Festival, the world's largest festival exclusively dedicated to young people performing musical theater which is held annually in Atlanta, GA over the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend. Believing that every child everywhere should have access to quality arts programs, Tim has developed several nationwide initiatives which build sustainable musical theater programs in underserved schools. These programs include NBC's *Smash Make A Musical*, Educational Theatre Association's JumpStart Theater, New York City's Department of Education's Shubert Foundation/MTI Broadway Junior Program and The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities' Turnaround Arts Initiative. Tim has had the unique honor of seeing Roald Dahl's *Willy Wonka* performed at the White House for President and Mrs. Bush and directing Sarah Jessica Parker and a troupe of the most wonderful girls at the first ever White House Talent Show for President and Mrs. Obama.

Benj Pasek And Justin Paul (Playwright) are the Tony, Oscar and Golden Globe-winning songwriting team behind the Broadway musicals *Dear Evan Hansen* (Tony Award, Drama Desk Award, Obie Award, Outer Critics Circle Award, Helen Hayes Award) and *A Christmas Story, The Musical* (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle Award nominations). Other musicals include *Dogfight*, (Lucille Lortel Award winner, Drama League, Outer Critics Circle, London Evening Standard Awards nominations), and *Edges*. Film projects include: *La La Land* (Lionsgate); *Trolls* (Dreamworks Animation); *The Greatest Showman* (FOX). Upcoming film projects include: *Snow White* (Walt Disney Pictures); *Medusa* (Sony Pictures Animation); *Aladdin* (Walt Disney Pictures). TV credits include *Smash*, *Sesame Street*, *The Flash* and *Johnny and the Sprites*, and Fox's upcoming *A Christmas Story* live musical. Additional honors: Richard Rodgers Award for Musical Theatre (American Academy of Arts and Letters); ASCAP Richard Rodgers New Horizons Award; Jonathan Larson Award. Both are graduates of the University of Michigan Musical Theatre program and members of the Dramatists Guild of America, Inc.

Darryl B. Hovis (Director/Sound Designer) is an actor, director, and designer, and is the Producing Associate of the Theater for Young Audiences Series at Chance Theater. He earned his MA in Theatre Production at Central Washington University and studied acting at the Professional Conservatory at UCSD under Anna Shapiro (Steppenwolf) as well as South Coast Repertory under Karen Hensel. He is the co-founder and former artistic director of the Culver City Academy of Visual and Performing Arts, where he developed an intensive arts program for high school students in theatre, film, music, and art, and has gone on to develop theatre programs at other Southern California high schools, as well as Theatre International at Leysin American School in Leysin, Switzerland. He has directed a multitude of productions, some of his favorites being *Therese Raquin*, *A History of the American Film* (Chance Theater), *Rent* and *The Threepenny Opera* (Samohi Theatre), *Machinal* and *Resurrecting Antigone* (UniTheatre), and *The Miracle Worker* and *Treehouses* (AVPA).

The production team for ***James and the Giant Peach*** also includes musical director Jason Liebson, choreographer Christine Hinchee (*A Chorus Line*), scenic and props designer Megan Hill (*The Little Prince*), lighting and projection designer McLeod Benson (*The Little Prince*), costume designer Alexandra McClain (*The Boy at the Edge of Everything*),

puppet designer Aaron McGee (*The Little Prince*), stage manager Courtney Greenough (*Claudio Quest*), and dramaturg Elizabeth Jones.

The cast of ***James and the Giant Peach*** includes resident artist Rachel Oliveros Catalano (*Little Women*), as well as returning Chance artists Christopher Diem (*The Secret Garden*), Holly Jeanne (*The Stinky Cheese Man*), Erica Schaeffer (*Parade*), Richard Comeau (*The Secret Garden*), and Miguel Cardenas (*Claudio Quest*). Making their Chance debuts are Tyler Marshall, Shannon Page, and Alex Allen.

Elizabeth Jones is the Executive Producer. Bette & Wylie Aitken are the Season Producers for the entire 2018 schedule.

Special “Relaxed Performance” on Saturday, February 24 at 11am

Continuing the initiative that started with the inaugural TYA Family Series, the Chance will be presenting a special “relaxed performance” on February 24 at 11am. This special performance is 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.

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: **JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH**

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.

WHEN:

Preview Performances:

February 16 - 18, 2017

Fridays at 7pm

Saturday at 5pm

Sunday at 2pm

Regular Performances

February 18 - March 11, 2017

Fridays at 7pm

Saturdays at 11am, 2pm, & 5pm

Sundays at 11am, 2pm, & 5pm

Our “Relaxed Performance” is on Saturday, February 24 at 11am.

REVIEWERS and OTHER PRESS are encouraged to attend:

Opening Performance on Sunday, February 18 at 2pm

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

TICKETS: \$16.00 - \$25.00. Call (888) 455-4212 or visit www.ChanceTheater.com.

Discounts available for children (ages 4+), seniors, students and military.

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