

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Alert for Theatre Editors, Reviewers and Calendar Listings

Chance Theater proudly presents the Regional premiere of the rock musical

# *Lizzie, The Musical*

**This musical retelling of the story of Lizzie Borden  
will kick off Chance Theater's 21st Anniversary Season on February 1st**

January 4, 2019 ... Anaheim, California ... Chance Theater, Anaheim's official resident theater company, is delighted to produce the Regional Premiere of *Lizzie, The Musical*. With music by Steven Cheslik-deMeyer and Alan Stevens Hewitt, lyrics by Steven Cheslik-deMeyer and Tim Maner, a book by Tim Maner, with additional music by Tim Maner, additional lyrics by Alan Stevens Hewitt, based on an original concept by Steven Cheslik-deMeyer and Tim Maner, this musical's orchestrations are done by Alan Stevens Hewitt. *Lizzie, The Musical* will preview from February 1st through February 8th; regular performances will begin February 9th and continue through March 3rd on the Cripe Stage at the Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center.

Our 21st Season kicks off with a punk-rock opera that explores the bloody legend of America's favorite axe-wielding sweetheart-diva-heroine-enigma-psychopath, Lizzie Borden. Accused of brutally killing her father and stepmother in 1892, Lizzie was eventually acquitted by a jury of her peers, leaving the horrific crime unsolved. What really happened on the fateful night of the dual killings? Journey into a wondrous exploration of this mysterious tale, inspired by the raucous and revolutionary rock spectacles of the '70s, and iconic women rockers like Patti Smith and Joan Jett.

NOTE: This show includes adult themes and language.

"A gothic ritual with a 'riotgirl' attitude... an eerie hybrid of rock club and a turn-of-the-century New England parlor... deliciously watchable" – *New York Times*

"The greatest American musical since *Sweeney Todd*" – *British Theatre*

"A furiously performed declaration of feminist strength and survivorship" -- *Chicago Tribune*

On a sweltering summer morning in 1892, in a small New England city, a prominent businessman and his wife -- Andrew and Abby Borden -- were brutally axed to death in their home. Their daughter, Lizzie, was the prime suspect. Lizzie's trial was a coast-to-coast media sensation, and her story has become an American legend. We all know the rhyme, but what do we really know about the story? What were the motivations behind the gruesome act? What secrets lived within the walls of the Borden household to have provoked such horror? What is the full story?!

**Lizzie, The Musical** began life as a four-song experimental theater/rock show hybrid sprung from Tim Maner and Steven Cheslik-deMeyer's love of musicals, Americana, women rockers, and late-80s queer politics. After a couple limited engagements that were more a concert than a fully-fleshed out musical, Steven and Tim recruited Alan Stevens Hewitt at the beginning of 2009 to do the musical arrangements in time for a staged reading. The wide-ranging combined experience of the three gives **Lizzie, The Musical** a sound that owes less to Andrew Lloyd Webber and Stephen Sondheim than it does to Heart, Nirvana, Led Zeppelin, the Beatles, Grace Slick, Radiohead, and the Runaways.

This phase of development culminated in a production (called *Lizzie Borden* at the time) that ran for six weeks in fall 2009 at The Living Theatre on New York's Lower East Side with sell-out crowds, great reviews, and received three Drama Desk Award nominations (for Featured Actress in a Musical, Costume Design, and Lighting Design).

The show would receive further development at the NAMT Festival of New Musicals, Village Theatre's Festival of New Musicals, in concert at Ars Nova, and a second production at Village Theatre, this time directed by Kent Nicholson.

The final version of the show debuted in the fall of 2013 at Theater Under the Stars in Houston, inaugurating their new "TUTS Underground" season of edgy musicals.

## MEET THE TEAM

**Steven Cheslik-deMeyer (Book, Lyrics, & Music)** Fresh out of art school in the early 80s, Steven bought a used guitar in a junk shop on St. Marks Place, learned three chords, and taught himself to write songs by listening to Dolly Parton records. He insinuated himself into a couple post-punk neo-folk bands in the East Village, but soon discovered the world of downtown theater. Through the late 80s and early 90s, he wrote and performed music in several experimental productions with tiny mythic theatre company and directors Kristin Marting and Tim Maner. In 1992, he and Jay Byrd created an act called Y'all, singing original songs and telling stories in the style of old-time country vaudeville. The act sprang from the downtown theater scene but went on to play in coffeehouses, churches, retirement homes, and rock clubs across the U.S., Canada, and Europe. In ten years, Y'all recorded four CDs, published two books, and appeared on MTV and Comedy Central. Their last two years together, they lived in a camper on the road with a third partner. Steven made a documentary about that relationship and the final years of Y'all, *Life in a Box*, which premiered in the San Francisco International Film Festival in 2005. Recently, Steven (with Tim Maner) has co-written a musical called *The Life & Hard Times of Hester Prynne*, based on *The Scarlet Letter*, and he is currently at work on a new musical based on his high school diary. Steven is a MacDowell Fellow and a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin with a degree in American Studies. He lives in New York City with his husband.

**Tim Maner (Book, Lyrics, and Music)** Right out of college, Tim co-founded the tiny mythic theatre company with a focus on developing the work of creator/directors and a mission to "disrupt the american living room / rearrange the furniture in the american mind". tiny mythic's work became a staple of the downtown alt-theatre scene of the early 90s, and just a few years later, the previously transient company transformed into the award-winning NYC arts center, HERE. His producing/presenting history at HERE spanned a decade with hundreds of productions brought to life by thousands of artists. (Though he no longer serves as a co-director, he remains an active founding board member working to expand opportunities for mid-career hybrid artists.) Tim has created over twenty original works as a creator/director including: *The Hawthorne Project*, a six-year collaboration with writer/adaptor Elizabeth Banks building a trilogy of multi-layered multi-media events adapted from Nathaniel Hawthorne's three American novels and *The Opera Project*, a five-year collaboration with writer Ruth Magraff and composers Matthew Pierce and Fred Ho creating a series of original New Wave Operas. He's also sung in some bands, arranged and conducted a Cowgirl Chorus, and originated roles in a couple

of Robert Wilson shows (one of which had him wearing Gianni Versace couture at La Scala in Milan, Italy). He is a graduate of NYU/Tisch/Playwrights Horizons.

**Alan Stevens Hewitt (Book, Lyrics, and Music)** ASH grew up in a musical family, the son of a professional oboist. He cut his teeth as a teenager recording for Ruffhouse/Columbia Records at Studio 4 in Philadelphia, and during the 90's as member of alt-folk band The Low Road (Caroline Records), touring with Los Lobos, Barenaked Ladies, and label-mates Ben Folds Five. He moved full-time to NYC in the late 90's to pursue his conservatory degree in composition at Mannes College of Music/The New School, where he studied with Robert Cuckson and Carl Schachter. In the mid-aughts, with partners, he opened The Coral Room, a nightclub in the Chelsea section of Manhattan, which featured a 10,000 gallon saltwater aquarium with live "mermaid" performances and hosted cutting edge bands, performance artists, events, and djs nightly. As an actively performing musician, his credits include Broadway's *Fun Home* (also 1st Natl. Tour), *Finding Neverland*, *Matilda*, *Sting's Last Ship*, *Rocky, Jekyll & Hyde*, *Lysistrata Jones*, *American Idiot*, *Spring Awakening* (also 1st Natl. Tour), Off-Bway's *Closer Than Ever*, *Rent*, tours in the U.S. and abroad, and numerous recordings as player, composer, arranger, and producer. His first score for theatre was for a production of Bertolt Brecht's *Baal* that the NYTimes thought was awful. He lives in the Hudson Valley and enjoys motorcycles and longboarding.

**Jocelyn A. Brown (Director)** has been a resident artist since 2001 and Associate Artistic Director since 2011. Chance directing highlights include: *Good People* (Ovation Recommended), *in a word* (Best in OC by *The Orange Curtain Review*), *The Big Meal*, various new works through Chance's On The Radar series, *Evita*, *Never In My Lifetime* (*Back Stage Critic's Pick*), *The Cherry Orchard* (OC Weekly nomination for Best Direction), and *Big Love*. Chance acting highlights include: writing and performing in *A Celtic Holiday with Craic in the Stone* (Best Special Event by *Examiner.com*), *The Laramie Project and Ten Years Later* (Ovation Recommended), Blitzen in *The Eight: Reindeer Monologues*, the Witch in *Into the Woods* (*Back Stage Critic's Pick*), Cathy in *The Last 5 Years* (Garland Award Nominee: Musical Performance), *Closer Than Ever* (*L.A. Times Critic's Choice*), Ann in *Goodnight Children Everywhere* (OC Weekly Theater Award Winner: Best Actress), and Woman in *Bash*. Jocelyn received an Outstanding Individual Artist nomination in 2003 by Arts Orange County.

In addition to Jocelyn, the production team for ***Lizzie, The Musical*** includes music director Robyn Manion (*Big Fish*, Chance Theater Resident Artist), choreographer Hazel Clarke (*A Chorus Line*), scenic designer Kristin Campbell (*Emma, The Musical*), lighting and projection designer KC Wilkerson (*Dogfight*), costume designer Rachael Lorenzetti (*Claudio Quest*), sound designer Ryan Brodtkin (*Big Fish*), stage manager Kelsey Somerville (*A Charlie Brown Christmas*), and dramaturg Jessica Johnson (*Big Fish*).

The cast includes Chance Theater Resident Artist Monika Peña (*Violet*) in the role of Lizzie Borden. She is joined by Chance Theater newcomers Jisel Soleil Ayon, Nicole Gentile, and Alli Rose Schynert.

The Executive Producer for this production is Guy W. Marr. Bette & Wylie Aitken are the Season Producers and for the entire 2019 Season.

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 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, OC 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: **LIZZIE, THE MUSICAL**

Our 21st Season kicks off with a punk-rock opera that explores the bloody legend of America’s favorite axe-wielding sweetheart-diva-heroine-enigma-psychopath, Lizzie Borden. Accused of brutally killing her father and stepmother in 1892, Lizzie was eventually acquitted by a jury of her peers, leaving the horrific crime unsolved. What really happened on the fateful night of the dual killings? Journey into a wondrous exploration of this mysterious tale, inspired by the raucous and revolutionary rock spectacles of the ‘70s, and iconic women rockers like Patti Smith and Joan Jett.

NOTE: This show includes adult themes and language

### WHEN:

#### **Preview Performances:**

February 1-8, 2019

Fridays at 3pm and 8pm; Saturday at 8pm; Sunday at 7pm

#### **Regular Performances**

February 9-March 3, 2019

Thursdays at 7:30pm; Fridays at 8pm; Saturdays at 3pm and 8pm; Sundays at 3pm

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

**Opening Performance on Saturday, February 9th at 8pm**

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

TICKETS: \$35.00 - \$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.

###