

LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES INITIAL PROGRAMMING FOR 2019 WITHOUT WALLS (WOW) FESTIVAL AT ARTS DISTRICT LIBERTY STATION

POPULAR BIENNIAL FESTIVAL TO FEATURE IMMERSIVE AND SITE-SPECIFIC PROJECTS FROM AUSTRALIA, FRANCE, MEXICO, POLAND; PLUS LIBERTY STATION-BASED COMPANIES AND PLAYHOUSE-COMMISSIONED WORKS BY RENOWNED COMPANIES: THIRD RAIL PROJECTS AND DAVID ISRAEL REYNOSO/OPTIKA MODERNA

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse announces initial programming for its acclaimed biennial **Without Walls (WOW) Festival**, a four-day explosion of site-based and immersive performances, taking place **October 17 – 20** at **ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station**, in partnership with the NTC Foundation.

The 2019 WOW Festival line-up will feature three Playhouse-commissioned projects: ***Ikaros***, by the internationally-renowned, New York-based **Third Rail Projects** (*Then She Fell*); ***Las Quinceañeras***, by acclaimed local designer and ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station resident artist **David Israel Reynoso/Optika Moderna** (2017 WOW Festival's *Waking La Llorona*, *Punchdrunk's Sleep No More*); and ***Written in Stone***, a series of five 10-minute, site-specific plays, produced by the Playhouse's 2019 Resident Theatre **Backyard Renaissance**.

The WOW Festival will also include several pieces by preeminent international companies: ***Boats*** by Australia's **Polyglot Theatre** (2013 WOW Festival's *We Built This City*); ***¡Vuela!***, by Mexico's **Inmigrantes Teatro** (Playhouse's *Kikiricaja*); ***Hidden Stories*** by France's **Begat Theatre**; and ***Peregrinus***, by Poland's **Teatr KTO**; as well as works by acclaimed local artists, including ***Senior Prom***, by the ARTS DISTRICT-based **San Diego Dance Theater** (2015 WOW Festival's *Dances With Walls*) and ***Hall Pass***, by **Blindspot Collective**. Additional projects, including many family-friendly offerings, will be announced at a later date. Tickets for WOW Festival performances, ranging from free to \$20, will go on sale this summer. For more information, please visit LaJollaPlayhouse.org/wow-festival-2019/.

"This initial WOW Festival line-up showcases a myriad of extraordinary artists from around the globe who will offer audiences a series of intriguing and transformative experiences that place the audience right in the center of the action," said **Playhouse Artistic Director Christopher Ashley**. "And I couldn't be happier that these experiences will all take place at ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station – an iconic San Diego gathering place and an ideal location for this community-wide celebration of immersive and site-inspired work."

The 2019 WOW Festival will be curated and produced by Playhouse Associate Producer Teresa Sapien. Similar to past festivals, this exciting event will serve as a cultural and artistic hub, centered around the **Show Imaging Festival Stage**, where patrons can gather to experience WOW performances, hear live music, engage in lively discussions about the work, and enjoy the many food and drink options on offer at Liberty Station.

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“The ARTS DISTRICT is looking forward to hosting all these creative artists from around the world at our beautiful campus in Point Loma,” said **Alan Ziter, Executive Director of the NTC Foundation**. “Programs like La Jolla Playhouse’s WOW Festival are what the community envisioned for the former Navy base’s new mission as a vibrant new San Diego center for arts, culture and creativity. We’re excited about our partnership with La Jolla Playhouse and for what the community will see at the Festival.”

Since its inception in 2011, **Without Walls (WOW)** has become one of San Diego’s most popular and acclaimed performance programs. This signature Playhouse initiative is designed to break the barriers of traditional theatre, offering immersive and site-inspired works that venture beyond the physical confines of the Playhouse facilities. Over the last nine years, the Playhouse has been commissioning and presenting a series of immersive and site-specific productions at locations throughout the San Diego community, including *Susurrus* (2011), *The Car Plays: San Diego* (2012), *Sam Bendrix at the Bon Soir* (2012), *Accomplice: San Diego* (2013), *El Henry* (2014), *The Grift at the Lafayette Hotel* (2015), *The Bitter Game* (2016), *What Happens Next* (2018), as well as the 2013, 2015 and 2017 WOW Festivals.

The WOW Festival is made possible in part through the generous support of the Wallace Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the San Diego Commission for Arts & Culture, FACE Foundation, Show Imaging and Delta Airlines.

ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station is San Diego’s largest Arts & Cultural District, located in historic buildings at the former Naval Training Center in the Liberty Station neighborhood, near Downtown on San Diego Bay. With 100 park-like acres, the ARTS DISTRICT is home to nearly 145 museums and galleries, artist studios, dance companies, fine dining, creative retail and other organizations that showcase San Diego’s creative community and provide innovative experiences for the public.

The **NTC Foundation** was established in 2000 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit foundation to enrich the lives of San Diegans by renovating 26 historic buildings at the former Naval Training Center to create, facilitate and operate a broad-based complex focused on experiencing the arts, culture and creativity that are the hallmark of the San Diego region.

La Jolla Playhouse is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what’s new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Currently led by 2017 Tony Award-winning Artistic Director Christopher Ashley and Managing Director Debby Buchholz, the Playhouse was founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer. Playhouse artists and audiences have taken part in the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 101 world premieres, commissioning 50 new works, and sending 32 productions to Broadway – including the currently-running hit musical *Come From Away* – garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, including the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. For more information, visit LaJollaPlayhouse.org.

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WOW Festival Projects

Boats

By Polyglot Theatre (Australia)

At a central mooring place, large lightweight boats wait patiently for children's imagination and energy. Once aboard, the boats are propelled by a flurry of feet, with kids working as a crew for their own voyage across the high seas. As the boats journey, Polyglot artists float as castaways to be rescued or as mysterious elements of the urban ocean. Together artists and children guide their boats to safe harbor, ready for new crew and the next adventure!

Hall Pass

By Blindspot Collective (San Diego)

Hall Pass is a collection of short plays and musicals by rising talents, including Emily Kaczmarek (2018 Jonathan Larson Grant Recipient), Trevor Bachman (2019 Joe's Pub Residency Artist) and Elizabeth Irwin (*My Mañana Comes* at San Diego Rep). Set and performed throughout a high school, the show offers a glimpse of the world young people navigate every day. Brimming with moments any former teenager will recognize and relish – as well as those they might rather forget – audiences choose their own adventure as they experience the trials and triumphs of the class of 2022.

Hidden Stories

By Begat Theater (France)

Hidden Stories is an invisible performance, a site-specific event that blends itself into the urban landscape. Supplied with headphones, the audience is temporarily endowed with the power to hear the thoughts of certain passers-by and to follow them into the unknown. The city is transformed into a sound stage, the audience's eye is the lens of a camera, and the spectator is the editor, choosing which images to synchronize to the sound track being played in their ears. A single rule of thumb: follow an ordinary object (an orange, a newspaper, a box of matches, a pen) as it makes its way through the streets of the city.

Ikaros

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

By Third Rail Projects (New York)

Commissioned by the Playhouse, *Ikaros* is an experiential collection of dreams, myth, film, poetry, dance and performance – an audience-centered narrative framed as an audio “walking tour” through a desert path, on the grounds of a former naval base – which sits across from, and shares the sky with, an active international airport. All of these layers fold into one another to create a series of vignettes and rites of passage that follow a cartography of flight and failure, and an odyssey of transformation.

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Peregrinus

By Teatr KTO (Poland)

A 45-minute roaming spectacle, inspired by the poetic universe of T.S. Eliot, *Peregrinus* depicts a single day in the lives of people whose existence is summed up by the journey between home and work. A mischievous and wildly kinetic examination of 21st century office-workers that illuminates the unpredictability of the mundane.

Las Quinceañeras

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

By David Israel Reynoso/Optika Moderna (San Diego – Liberty Station)

From the creators of the groundbreaking *Waking La Llorona*, *Las Quinceañeras* offers a surreal, immersive, multisensory exploration of the famed rite of passage undertaken by many Latinas on their 15th birthday. The mysterious OPTIKA MODERNA opens its doors once again after years of secrecy and seclusion, inviting participants to undergo their latest procedure "Proyecto (15)." Those interested can book an appointment to meet with OPTIKA MODERNA's staff of trained paranormal opticians. Within the lab, patients will experience a hallucinogenic journey into the early 1990s as they relive the fateful events surrounding the celebrations of multiple Quinceañeras.

Senior Prom

San Diego Dance Theater (San Diego – Liberty Station)

Senior Prom is a production of San Diego Dance Theater's (SDDT) Aging Creatively senior dance program. SDDT Artistic Director Jean Isaacs has created a fun evening to highlight this innately humorous, immersive, inter-generational event. Forty dancers perform in a wide variety of prom-like activities, including line dancing, spiking the punch bowl, and crowning the King & Queen. In addition to Isaacs, choreographers include John Diaz, Yvonne Gagliardo, Betzi Roe and Kathryn Scheidegger. The evening is hosted by Ms. Tendu (played by Patti Coburn) and Wolfman Jack (played by Steve Baker). Take a walk down memory lane and join the party! Prom attire encouraged!

¡Vuela!

By Inmigrantes Teatro (Mexico)

¡Vuela! The title alone is a nod to the seemingly impossible. Four battered and crippled birds desperately beat their wings in an attempt to return to flight alongside their flock as they flee the arrival of a hurricane. Not able to lift themselves more than a palm's length, they helplessly contemplate their luck at being abandoned by the rest, the model birds, the healthy and strong. Instantly, the most basic questions arise: How will they fetch water? Or food? Will they really be able to survive without the help of their tribe? This is a play about solidarity, teamwork and the ability to adapt and put on a brave face despite life's difficulties.

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Written in Stone

La Jolla Playhouse Commission

By Backyard Renaissance Theatre (San Diego)

Hidden corners of Stone Brewing's Liberty Station Bistro & Gardens serve as the setting for five new site-specific 10-minute plays. Audiences will travel to five locations and witness stories that were inspired there and penned by La Jolla Playhouse commissioned playwrights Mashuq Deen, Shairi Engle, Frank Katasse (*They Don't Talk Back*, presented by Native Voices during their Playhouse residency), Daria Miyeko Marinelli and Marisela Orta..

WOW Festival Biographies

Backyard Renaissance presents theatre with an "art to the gut" sensibility and believes that exceptional storytelling is rooted in a sense of joyful play, human connection, and gutsy intensity. The company was founded in 2015 by artistic director Francis Gercke and executive director Jessica John Gercke. With the addition of producing director Anthony Methvin, the company has produced nine productions including the San Diego Premiere of *Parlour Song* by Jez Butterworth, *The Elephant Man* by Bernard Pomerance, the San Diego Premiere of *Gutenberg: The Musical* by Scott Brown and Anthony King, *Abundance* by Beth Henley, the San Diego Premiere of *Bachelorette* by Leslye Headland, *The Zoo Story* by Edward Albee, *Mr. & Mrs. Fitch* by Douglas Carter Beane and the world premiere of *Tarrytown* by Adam Wachter, which was named Best Original Musical by the San Diego Critics Circle in 2017. Backyard Renaissance also presented the San Diego premiere of Noah Haidle's *Smokefall* while in Residence at La Jolla Playhouse and is proud to present Shelagh Stephenson's *An Experiment with an Air Pump* as its next La Jolla Playhouse Production in Residence this August.

Founded in 1992, **Begat Theater** uses public space as a venue to explore private and subjective experiences. Recognized for its innovative and contemporary performances, the company has been touring for 25 years in France and abroad. Recent works include *Les Demeurees*, a theatrical installation; *Hidden Stories*, an invisible performance; and *La Disparition*, which places portable media devices in the hands of an active audience. *Askip**, an immersive show is currently touring French middle schools allowing students and adults to follow and hear the thoughts of an 8th grader, her teacher, and a janitor on one particular day. The company develops its work and operates a Residency Center for the Arts in Gréoux-les-Bains in the south of France. *Hidden Stories* is supported by FACE Contemporary Theater, a program developed by FACE Foundation and the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States with the support of the Florence Gould Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Institut français-Paris, the French Ministry of Culture, and private donors.

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Blindspot Collective develops radically inclusive programming that cultivates new work, emerging artists, and diverse audiences. The company has collaborated with The Old Globe, Diversionary Theatre, UC San Diego Department of Theatre and Dance, and other community partners since being founded in 2017. Their inaugural projects were two site-specific and immersive musicals: *Last Night in Town*, based on the songs of Ben Folds; and *Hall Pass*, commissioned by New York University and produced in partnership with Playwrights Horizons Theatre School as part of the Future of Storytelling Festival. The company has received acclaim for its original work, including *Untold*, a verbatim play about mental illness that won the Dunn-Rankin Award for New Work at the 2017 San Diego Fringe Festival; *The Magic in this Soul*, another verbatim play about discrimination and resilience that won the Audience Favorite Award at the 2018 San Diego Fringe Festival; and *Qulili*, a documentary play based on the stories of local refugees supported by the Critical Refugee Studies Collective. The company also develops Forum Theatre for youth audiences, including *Safa's Story* and *Danny's Story*, which allow young people to consider the complexities of difference and prejudice. Combined, those two productions have been seen by over 6,500 students in the 2018-19 academic year.

Inmigrantes Teatro is an independent group of experienced creatives in the Mexican theatre field. Based in Baja, California. Their goal is to create productions geared to audiences on both sides of the Mexico-United States border. Founded in 2005 by Raymundo Garduño, the company debuted with the play *Naufragios* (Shipwreck). The improv show *Los Improductivos* (*The Improductives*) followed in 2007. *Inmolación* (Immolation) opened in the summer of 2010, with book by Enrique Olmos and directed by Raymundo Garduño. The piece was selected by CECUT (Centro Cultural Tijuana) as part of their Education Series Program and it represented Baja California in the International Borders Theatre Festival (2012) and FESARES Baja California State Theatre Festival (2013). *Kikiricaja* debuted in 2011 and ran at La Jolla Playhouse in 2015. With a state government grant called PECDA, Inmigrantes Teatro was able to put together *No Tocar* (*Do Not Touch*) by Enrique Olmos in 2013. In 2014 they premiered two plays also by Enrique Olmos, *Hazme un hijo* (*Make Me a Child*), and their latest play *Dios es un bicho* (*God Is a Bug*) which had its world premiere at the Children's Theatre festival.

Optika Moderna is a ground-breaking, immersive company led by San Diego's **David Israel Reynoso**, the Obie Award-winning costume designer for the Off-Broadway runaway hit *Sleep No More* (Punchdrunk/Emursive). At La Jolla Playhouse, he designed *Queens*, *Tiger Style!*, *Waking La Llorona* (2017 WOW Festival), Liz Lerman's *Healing Wars* (2015 WOW Festival) 2015 and *The Darrell Hammond Project*. His other regional scenic and costume design credits include The Old Globe, American Repertory Theater, Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, Lyric Stage and Gloucester Stage, among many others. He is the recipient of the Elliot Norton Award in Costume Design and a multiple nominee for the IRNE and BroadwayWorld awards.

Polyglot Theatre is Australia's leading creator of interactive and participatory theatre for children and families. Their distinctive artistic philosophy has placed them at the international forefront of contemporary arts experiences for babies and children up to 12 years of age. Inspired by artwork, play and ideas of children, Polyglot Theatre creates imagined worlds where audiences actively participate in performance through touch, play and encounter. Polyglot Theatre is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria and the City of Melbourne.

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San Diego Dance Theater is led by Artistic Director Jean Isaacs, an award-winning choreographer whose work has been presented in Switzerland, Germany, China, Mexico, Guatemala, Canada and Poland, as well as on both coasts of the US. She is the originator of the annual site-specific project Trolley Dances and co-founder of the San Diego Dance Alliance, Three's Company and Dancers, and Isaacs/McCaleb & Dancers. Her work has been commissioned by the San Diego Opera, La Jolla Playhouse, The Old Globe, Goodman Theatre, San Diego Rep, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, and for Brooklyn Academy of Music. She collaborates frequently with numerous cross-border partners, creating the Festival of Mexican Contemporary Dance at San Diego State University. Recent awards include the San Diego Critics Circle Award, Bay Area Theatre Critics Award, two California Arts Council Choreography Fellowships, Distinguished Teaching Award at UC San Diego and the California Dance Educators Associate Artistic Award. Isaacs taught technique, choreography, and improvisation at UC San Diego's Department of Theatre and Dance for 25 years. San Diego Dance Theater is in residence at ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station.

Teatr KTO was established in 1977. In the company's 42nd year of operation, over 30 productions have been performed indoors and outdoors in Poland and around the world, which have been seen by more than three million people. The group has visited nearly 250 cities in over 40 countries on five continents. Since January 2005, the Teatr KTO has had the status of a municipal theatre in Krakow. For 42 years now the company has been managed by its current director Jerzy Zon.

Third Rail Projects has been hailed as one of the foremost companies creating site-specific, immersive and experiential performance. The company is led by Artistic Directors Zach Morris, Tom Pearson and Jennine Willett, and is dedicated to re-envisioning ways in which audiences engage with contemporary performance. The company's currently running, award-winning immersive hit, *Then She Fell*, was named as one of the "Top Ten Shows of 2012" by Ben Brantley of *The New York Times*. They have made work in New York and nationally since 2000, with projects including *Ghost Light* at Lincoln Center Theater, the immersive theater hit *The Grand Paradise* in Brooklyn, *Sweet & Lucky* with Denver Center for the Performing Arts, and *Learning Curve* in Chicago with Albany Park Theater Project, as well as internationally through the Global Performance Studio (GPS), which combines the company's creative and educational offerings through a program of cultural listening and exchange. Third Rail Projects has been the recipient of several prestigious awards, including two New York Dance and Performance (Bessie) Awards; a Chita Rivera Award for Choreography; two CEC Artslink Back Apartment Residencies (Russia); a Theater Fellowship from the Bogliaco Foundation (Italy); an IllumiNation Award from the Ford Foundation and National Museum of the American Indian; and more. Third Rail Projects' artistic directors were recently named among the 100 most influential people in Brooklyn culture by *Brooklyn Magazine*. Visit thirdrailprojects.com to learn more.

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