



AURORA THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES FIFTH ANNUAL GLOBAL AGE PROJECT FINALISTS

Playwrights and directors explore present and future through new works

BERKELEY, Calif. (01 December, 2009) – Berkeley’s acclaimed **Aurora Theatre Company** announces the four plays chosen as finalists by a committee of local directors for the **Global Age Project (GAP)**, the company’s new works initiative that promotes the creation of forward-looking theater: ***A Guide for the Perplexed*** by Joel Drake Johnson; ***The Serving Class*** by Garret Jon Groenveld; ***Miss Lily Gets Boned*** by Bekah Brunstetter; and ***Collapse*** by Allison Moore. The selected plays will be presented as staged readings in a four-week festival at the Aurora Theatre, **Mondays, February 1-22, 7:30pm**, coinciding with the company’s fully-staged World Premiere of Joel Drake Johnson’s ***The First Grade (January 22-February 28)***. ***The First Grade*** originated as one of last season’s GAP finalists and is the first main stage production to develop from the Global Age Project. Each GAP reading will be followed by an audience discussion of the contemporary issues raised in each work. For information on GAP events (free and open to the public) and ***The First Grade***, the public may call **(510) 843-4822** or visit **auroratheatre.org**.

The Global Age Project is funded in part by a generous grant from the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation; each of the four winners will be awarded a \$1,000 honorarium and will be in attendance for their respective reading.

Aurora Theatre Company’s Artistic Director Tom Ross states, “This, our fifth year of the GAP, will be a stimulating one. We like to think of the submitted plays as showing the pulse of what’s happening in the hearts of contemporary North American playwrights; this year’s crop of over 200 plays seemed to have a somewhat domestic sensibility, investigating and focusing on issues faced on the home front. Frequent topics included a crumbling national economy, religion, prison life, childcare, and gay marriage.

Coincidentally, Joel Drake Johnson, one of last year’s finalists and the author of this season’s World Premiere production of ***The First Grade***, was named a GAP finalist for a second year in a row with his new play ***A Guide for the Perplexed***; we are proud to have the opportunity to present his new work and thrilled to welcome him back to the Aurora.”

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AURORA THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES GLOBAL AGE PROJECT WINNERS

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The Global Age Project is a discovery and developmental vehicle established to encourage playwrights to address important issues affecting our present and future at the dawn of this global age. Seeking forward-thinking work from both established and emerging playwrights, Aurora Theatre Company requested submissions that passionately challenged audiences to examine issues and concerns of the 21st century. Writers were encouraged to submit works that explored the current and future state of the global community and/or examined the changing state of human relationships in this new century.

The lineup for the GAP festival is as follows:

Monday, February 1, 2010

A Guide for the Perplexed

By Joel Drake Johnson (Chicago, IL)

Directed by Matthew Graham Smith

What roles do men and women really play in shaping a household? In *A Guide for the Perplexed*, Doug is released from prison and his sister insists he come and stay at her home, then she promptly flees the scene. Doug's genius gay nephew and his unemployed, anxious brother-in-law serve as his hosts and "caretakers" while his sister is away, but within 24 hours of Doug's arrival, the idea of caretaker changes the way all three regard their feelings for one another in this uniquely modern story of male bonding. **Joel Drake Johnson** is a member of Chicago's Victory Gardens Playwrights Ensemble, where his plays *Four Places*, *Before My Eyes*, and *The End of the Tour* were first produced. Steppenwolf Theatre produced his plays *The Fall to Earth*, *A Blameless Life*, and *Tranquility Woods*; his work has also been seen at Chicago Dramatists Theatre. Additionally, Johnson taught playwriting at Northwestern University and DePaul University, and is currently working on a third commission from Steppenwolf. *A Guide for the Perplexed* will receive its main stage World Premiere next season at Victory Gardens, starring Kevin Anderson.

Monday, February 8, 2010

The Serving Class

By Garret Jon Groenveld (San Francisco, CA)

Directed by Margo Hall

In *The Serving Class*, an interior decorator gets roped into planning the wedding of his wealthy client's daughter; in the process, he ends up caught in a love triangle, arrested, and married! In three breathless acts without an intermission, this comedy about love and commitment makes a serious comment about the lives of gay men (who cannot get married), without whom many marriages would never happen. San Francisco playwright **Garret Jon Groenveld's** plays have been seen at New Conservatory Theatre, Theatre Rhinoceros, and PlayGround, among others. A five-time winner of the PlayGround Emerging Playwrights Award, Groenveld was the co-creator and lead writer for the successful live action soap opera *The Duboce Triangle*; his work has been featured twice in the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, and in the San Francisco Fringe Festival (2005 Winner Best Short Plays).

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Monday, February 15, 2010

Miss Lily Gets Boned

By Bekah Brunstetter (Brooklyn, NY)

Directed by Mark Routhier

In *Miss Lily Gets Boned* (nominated for the 2008 L. Arnold Weissberger Award), Miss Lilly, a Sunday school teacher, has been waiting patiently for God to drop a man in her lap. When a new student, a young Indian boy whose mother was killed by an elephant, disturbs the harmony of her classroom and his father disturbs the harmony of her heart, Miss Lilly is forced to re-examine her own sense of faith and self.

Bekah Brunstetter is the 2009 playwright in residence at Ars Nova. Her plays have received readings and productions at the Babel Theatre Project, Rattlestick Playwright's Theater, Ohio Theater (Think Tank), Old Vic/New Voices, Boston Theatre Works, Manhattan Theatre Source, and The Alliance Theater, among others. She is currently working on a commission for the Roundabout Underground; she made her off-Broadway debut in September 2009 with *Oohrah!* at the Atlantic Theater.

Monday, February 22, 2010

Collapse

By Allison Moore (Minneapolis, MN)

Directed by Jessica Heidt

In *Collapse*, Hannah tries desperately to hold the façade of her perfect life together, even as her husband, David, mysteriously calls in sick to work day after day, they struggle with infertility, and Hannah herself is on the verge of being laid off. When Hannah's sister appears on their doorstep, she brings with her a renegade attitude and an illicit package that send David and Hannah on a 12-hour odyssey into the heart of their deepest fears. Will they survive? Will their relationship? **Allison Moore's** work has been developed or produced at the Guthrie Theater, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Marin Theatre Company, The Lincoln Center Director's Lab, and The Playwrights Center, among others. Her play *American Klepto* was developed at the 2006 TheatreWorks New Works Festival and was nominated for the Susan Smith Blackburn Award. She is currently penning a stage adaptation of Willa Cather's novel *My Antonia* for Illusion Theater, to be produced in the spring of 2010.

Handpicked by Tom Ross, the GAP Directors' Council is comprised of esteemed local and nationally recognized directors. This year, two directors from previous GAP readings were invited to return, along with two directors who have yet to work at Aurora; additionally, this is the first year the GAP reading process utilized a roster of professional script readers. This year's GAP Directors' Council is comprised of: **Matthew Graham Smith** (GAP Producer, founder and Artistic Director of Precarious Theatre), who returns to the GAP to direct Joel Drake Johnson's *A Guide for the Perplexed*; **Margo Hall** (award winning actor/director/playwright, founding member of Campo Santo), who directs *The Serving Class* by Garret Jon Groenveld; **Jessica Heidt** (Artistic Director of Climate Theater, former Associate Artistic Director at the Magic Theatre) who returns to the GAP to direct *Collapse* by Allison Moore; and **Mark Routhier** (former Dramaturg at Magic Theatre; directing credits include productions at Encore Theatre, Golden Thread, and Magic Theatre) who directs *Miss Lily Gets Boned* by Bekah Brunstetter.

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AURORA THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES GLOBAL AGE PROJECT WINNERS

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The First Grade, which originated as one of Aurora Theatre Company's Global Age Project winners last season, follows the sometimes comic, sometimes frightening journey of a woman whose attempts to save her physical therapist from harm lead her into a chaos that includes a class of first graders, her depressed daughter, and an ex-husband with whom she still shares a home. Following *The First Grade*, Aurora Theatre Company continues its 18th season in April with Henrik Ibsen's rarely produced masterwork *John Gabriel Borkman*, directed by founding Artistic Director Barbara Oliver. Closing the season is the Bay Area Premiere of Stephen Karam's innovative comedy *Speech & Debate*, directed by Robin Stanton in June.

Aurora Theatre Company continues to offer challenging, literate, intelligent stage works to the Bay Area, each year increasing its reputation for top-notch theatre. Located in the heart of the Downtown Berkeley Arts District, Aurora Theatre Company has been called "one of the most important regional theaters in the area" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, while *The Wall Street Journal* has "nothing but praise for the Aurora." The *Contra Costa Times* stated, "perfection is probably an unattainable ideal in a medium as fluid as live performance, but the Aurora Theatre comes luminously close," while the *San Jose Mercury News* affirmed "[Aurora Theatre Company] lives up to its reputation as a theater that feeds the mind," and the *Oakland Tribune* declared "it's all about choices, and if you value good theater, choose the Aurora." For tickets or more information about Aurora Theatre Company, the public can call **(510) 843-4822** or visit **auroratheatre.org**.

The **Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation** supports both fine arts and the performing arts in San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland, and Marin County, California. The Foundation seeks to support smaller, independent arts organizations that present challenging and cutting-edge works.

Aurora Theatre Company gratefully acknowledges the following foundations and government agencies for their support: Actors' Equity Foundation, Alameda County Arts Commission, Berkeley Civic Arts Program & Civic Arts Commission, Dramatists Guild Fund, The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Koret Foundation, Norway House Foundation, The Bernard Osher Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, The Tournesol Project, Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation, The Wood Foundation, and The Zellerbach Family Foundation.

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AURORA THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES GLOBAL AGE PROJECT WINNERS

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FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT:

Berkeley's acclaimed **Aurora Theatre Company** announces the four plays chosen as finalists for the fifth **Global Age Project** (GAP), the company's new works initiative that promotes the creation of forward-looking theater: ***A Guide for the Perplexed*** by Joel Drake Johnson; ***The Serving Class*** by Garret Jon Groenveld; ***Miss Lily Gets Boned*** by Bekah Brunstetter; and ***Collapse*** by Allison Moore. The selected plays will be presented as staged readings in a four-week festival at the Aurora Theatre, **Mondays, February 1-22, 7:30pm**, coinciding with the company's fully-staged World Premiere of Joel Drake Johnson's ***The First Grade*** (**January 22-February 28**). ***The First Grade*** originated as one of last season's GAP finalists and is the first main stage production to develop from the Global Age Project. Each GAP reading will be followed by an audience discussion of the contemporary issues raised in each work.

SCHEDULE:

January 22-February 28, 2010

The First Grade

By Joel Drake Johnson

Directed by Tom Ross

Monday, February 1, 2010

A Guide for the Perplexed

By Joel Drake Johnson (Chicago, IL)

Directed by Matthew Graham Smith

Monday, February 8, 2010

The Serving Class

By Garret Jon Groenveld (San Francisco, CA)

Directed by Margo Hall

Monday, February 15, 2010

Miss Lily Gets Boned

By Bekah Brunstetter (Brooklyn, NY)

Directed by Mark Routhier

Monday, February 22, 2010

Collapse

By Allison Moore (Minneapolis, MN)

Directed by Jessica Heidt

WHERE:

Aurora Theatre Company, 2081 Addison Street, Berkeley, CA

TICKETS:

For tickets to ***The First Grade*** or more information, call **(510) 843-4822** or visit **auroratheatre.org**. GAP events are free and open to the public.