



## **AURORA THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES NEW ORIGINATE + GENERATE COMMISSION**

Playwright Christopher Chen newest O+G artist

BERKELEY, Calif. (September 8, 2016) – **Aurora Theatre Company** announces the company’s newest **Originate + Generate** (O+G) artist commission, **Christopher Chen**. Chen has been commissioned for the company’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary season to create a new play specifically for the Aurora stage; the working title for the new piece is *Secretary of State*. As with current O+G artists **Jonathan Spector** (*The State of Nature*) and **Beth Wilmurt** (*Cabaret Olga*), Chen will have the opportunity to create new work via a process of his own devising and will receive financial support in the form of a \$5000 grant. During the O+G creation process, audiences will be invited to attend various workshops and presentations as well as a series of pop-up readings by other theater makers.

“I have been an ardent fan of Christopher Chen’s work since I saw the Crowded Fire production of his brilliant, unique play *The Hundred Flowers Project* in 2012,” said Aurora Theatre Company Artistic Director Tom Ross. “Since then, Chris and I have met numerous times discussing theatrical ideas that might coalesce into a project for Aurora. Finally, under the auspices of our new commissioning program, Originate + Generate, he has proposed a piece about a fictitious female Secretary of State. Research will begin this spring and I can’t wait to discover what puzzles, dramas, and conundrums Chris will create for us.”

A Bay Area native, **Christopher Chen** is an international award-winning playwright whose full-length works have been produced and developed across the United States and abroad at companies including American Conservatory Theater, Arcola Theatre (London), Asian American Theater Company, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Beijing Fringe, Berkeley Rep/Ground Floor, Central Works, Crowded Fire, Cutting Ball Theater, Edinburgh Fringe, Fluid Motion, hotINK Festival, Impact Theatre, InterAct Theatre, Just Theatre, Lark Play Development Center, Magic Theatre, Playwrights Foundation, San Francisco Playhouse, Shotgun Players, Silk Road Rising, Sundance Theatre Lab, Theatre Mu, U.C. Berkeley/Zellerbach Playhouse and The Vineyard.

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Chen's honors include: the 2015-2016 Sundance Institute/Time Warner Foundation Fellowship for theater; the Paula Vogel Playwriting Award; the Barrymore Award; the Glickman Award; the Rella Lossy Playwriting Award; MAP Fund Grant; a Ford Foundation Emerging Writer of Color Grant; finalist for the PONY and Jerome Fellowships. In addition to Aurora Theatre Company, current commissions include American Conservatory Theater, S.F. Playhouse, Crowded Fire and Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Aurora Theatre Company's 25<sup>th</sup> season opens in September with **DEAR MASTER**, directed by Joy Carlin. The season continues in November with the West Coast Premiere of Keith Josef Adkins' **SAFE HOUSE**, helmed by **L. Peter Callender**, followed by Tom Stoppard's **THE REAL THING** in January, directed by Timothy Near. Jon Tracy helms the Bay Area Premiere of Sarah Greenman's **LENI** in March. Steve Waters' **TEMPLE** makes its' U.S. Premiere at Aurora in April, directed by Artistic Director Tom Ross. Abi Morgan's **SPLENDOR**, directed by Barbara Damashek, closes the season in June.

Voted Best Theater Company in 2012 by *SF Weekly*, Aurora Theatre Company continues to offer challenging, literate, intelligent stage works to the Bay Area, each year increasing its reputation for top-notch theater. Located in the heart of the Downtown Berkeley Arts District, Aurora Theatre Company, declared "one of the best regional theaters around" by *7x7* magazine, has been called "one of the most important regional theaters in the area" and "a must-see midsize company" 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 is "arguably the finest small theater in the Bay Area," and the *Oakland Tribune* stated "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**.

Aurora Theatre Company gratefully acknowledges Originate + Generate sponsors The Fleishhacker Foundation, The Bernard Osher Foundation, The Kenneth Rainin Foundation, The Tournesol Project, The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, Jill Hunter Matchak, and Hillary and Jonathan Reinis for their support.

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