



**PRESS RELEASE  
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**AURORA THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES  
NEW PLAN FOR 2020/2021 SEASON**

*Shifts from Traditional Subscriptions to Membership Model*

**BERKELEY, CA (June 10, 2020)** Aurora Theatre Company Artistic Director **Josh Costello** and Managing Director **Julie Saltzman Kellner** announced last week that the Berkeley theatre company will shift its focus to a membership program for the 2020/2021 season, with online offerings replacing live productions until conditions allow for audiences to gather safely.

“For so many of us, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a roller coaster of disbelief, despair, denial, and determination. One of the most difficult challenges for theatres -- in addition to the sorrow we all feel for those directly affected by the virus, and the ongoing longing to practice our art -- is the inability to know how long this will last and when it will be safe for us to open our doors and welcome you all back in,” Costello said in a statement.

He continued, “Aurora announced our 2020/2021 Season early in the shelter-in-place, when we still believed we’d be back to normal in a few short weeks. Clearly that is no longer the case -- we will never go back to the normal that existed before, and it will be a long time before we can gather together again in a new and better normal that we’re collectively building for the future.”

Aurora will reopen once conditions are safe for its artists, staff, and patrons. In the meantime, Aurora will continue to fulfill its mission as storyteller to the community. They’ve commissioned

three local playwrights -- Lauren Gunderson, Cleavon Smith, and Jonathan Spector (*Eureka Day*) -- to collaborate on a brand-new audio drama, with a story set in Berkeley and a theme that addresses a new world post COVID-19. They will continue their new play development, including Brit Frazier and Margo Hall's *Laveau*. And Aurora will continue to strengthen and deepen the theatre's community partnerships, such as its ongoing work with Berkeley High School.

Last week's statement also announced a pivot away from traditional subscriptions to a membership model, something entirely new for Aurora.

"Memberships are a way for our audience to participate in the wide variety of programming we're putting together to share online during the coming season," said Costello. "If we're able to reopen for live performances in our space before July 2021, memberships will include tickets to all those performances. Otherwise, our members will still be able to be a part of the Aurora community and enjoy meaningful work from wonderful Bay Area artists."

Some membership benefits will include virtual tickets to the brand new audio drama in the fall from Lauren Gunderson, Cleavon Smith, and Jonathan Spector, directed by Josh Costello; plus another audio drama directed by Dawn Monique Williams to be produced in the spring if Aurora is not able to produce live theatre in its space by then; access to a Zoom reading of a new play in development; admission to monthly interactive webinars for in-depth discussions with Josh Costello and featured artists, designers, and theatre makers; and a monthly book club hosted by Dawn Monique Williams exploring the complete works of August Wilson.

"This is not what I expected in my first year as Artistic Director!" said Costello. "That said, I'm so glad to be able to find new ways to create and share relevant stories with our community."

For more information about Aurora's new memberships visit [auroratheatre.org/memberships](https://auroratheatre.org/memberships).

## **ABOUT AURORA THEATRE COMPANY**

Aurora Theatre Company is known for work that invigorates audiences and artists through a shared experience of professional, intimate theatre. Aurora challenges itself and the broader community to do better, think deeper, laugh louder and cast wider nets of empathy toward the world. Through its productions of both classic and new works, it supports the Bay Area community by hiring local artists and

artisans. It has an operating budget of just over \$2 million.

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