



**AURORA THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES  
NEXT PHASE OF NEW WORK DEVELOPMENT  
ORIGINATE + GENERATE**

**Jonathan Spector and Beth Wilmurt** announced as first O+G artists

BERKELEY, Calif. (February 2, 2016) – Berkeley’s **Aurora Theatre Company** announces the company’s new works initiative to promote the creation of forward-looking theater, **Originate + Generate**. After a successful 10-year run, the Global Age Project festival of new works has evolved and shifted focus from discovery to development, including commissions, workshops, readings, and full productions of new plays. Every year, theater artists will be selected and given the opportunity to create new work via processes of their own devising. They will receive the financial support, resources, and physical space to create works specifically for Aurora’s stages. Special consideration will be given to local theater artists. Aurora Theatre Company is pleased to announce that the first O+G two artists are **Jonathan Spector** with *The State of Nature* and **Beth Wilmurt** with *Cabaret Olga*. During the creation process, audiences will be invited to attend various workshops and presentations as the works are being created as well as a series of pop-up readings by other theater makers.

“Aurora Theatre Company inaugurated the Global Age Project new play initiative and festival when I first became Artistic Director of Aurora,” said Tom Ross. “With the GAP, Aurora repositioned itself as a national leader in supporting new playwrights. Over the past 10 years \$42,000 was awarded directly to playwrights to help support their writing careers; with over 42 free public staged readings and post-show discussions, we forged new relationships not only with writers, directors, dramaturgs, GAP producers, and actors, but also introduced Aurora’s audiences to the excitement of new work in progress.”

Continued Ross, “With Originate + Generate, we are now focusing primarily on developing new work for the Aurora stages, putting an emphasis on supporting local theater makers, as is our mission. We are thrilled that our first two commissioned O+G artists are two time GAP winner Jonathan Spector, and Beth Wilmurt, who has appeared on the Aurora stage several times as an actor; both will receive initial commissions of \$5000 and then further support with creative processes of their own choosing. We look forward to this new phase of ushering work for the stage into fruition and watching them grow.”

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## AURORA THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES FIRST O+G WINNERS

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“*The State of Nature* focuses on the anti-vaccine movement in the Bay Area, what it means that people who hold the same worldview on most socio-political issues can have such passionately and viciously opposing points of view on this particular issue,” said Jonathan Spector. “Unlike an issue such as climate change, where beliefs correlate closely with party affiliation, region, and education level, the vaccine question deeply divides people of similar background. It’s both an issue about society in the largest sense and also the most personal issue of all: the health of our children. My interest is in the very human effects of disagreeing about something so profound and wide-reaching and personal.”

Jonathan Spector is a director and playwright based in Berkeley. He is the Co-Artistic Director of Just Theater. Original works for the stage include *Sandal Weather*, *Be What You Wish to Seem*, and *The World To Come*; his plays have been developed and produced by Just Theater, PlayGround, and The Source Theater Festival, among others. He is a former Associate Artistic Director of Playwrights Foundation in San Francisco. Spector was a director for Aurora’s GAP in 2011 and a prize-winning playwright in 2013 (*In From the Cold*) and 2015 (*FTW*).

Featuring a band of collaborators, Beth Wilmurt’s *Cabaret Olga* will be a devised piece incorporating music, mischief, mayhem, and an eclectic assemblage of songs. The piece can be thought of as a 21<sup>st</sup>-century vetting of the eldest sibling in Anton Chekhov’s play *The Three Sisters* seen through a prism of music and movement as delivered by a local cover band. “Throughout my time in the theater I have been drawn more than once to the cabaret form,” said Beth Wilmurt. “Inspiration usually starts with a character or idea in my head that can only be realized through song. For quite a while now I have had one of these characters with me; having lived with her for a long time both on and off stage, I am ready to bring her out.”

Beth Wilmurt has been making theater, performing, and teaching throughout the Bay Area and beyond for the past 25 years. She has appeared in over 60 plays, musicals, dance pieces, and cabarets, including *The Letters*, *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*, *Jack Goes Boating*, *Salome*, and *Bosoms and Neglect* at Aurora Theatre Company. Recent Bay Area theater credits include *New Electric Ballroom* and *Woyzeck* at The Shotgun Players, of which she is a company member, and *Beauty Queen of Leenane* at Marin Theatre Company. Other past performance highlights include *The Companion Piece*, which she conceived and performed for Z Space; *Edward Gant’s Amazing Feats of Loneliness*, which she directed for The Shotgun Players; and *Yes Yes to Moscow*, a dance-theater piece based on Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* that premiered at Deutsches Theater Berlin in Germany. She recently completed a residency with Deborah Slater Dance Theater to create a new performance piece called *TEN*.

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This year's new works initiative coincides with the company's World Premiere of *Little Erik*, written and directed by award-winning Bay Area auteur **Mark Jackson** (*The Letters, The Arsonists, Salomania*), playing **January 29-February 28**. Additionally, Aurora Theatre Company will present a series of staged readings of Henrik Ibsen's *Little Eyolf*, upon which *Little Erik* is based, at the Aurora Theatre, **Mondays, February 8, 15, and 22 at 7:30pm.**

In **LITTLE ERIK**, Joie brings in the big bucks from the tech industry. Her husband, Freddie, wants to write a great novel about human responsibility. On a weekend getaway to the new home they have built in the mountains north of San Francisco, their disabled son, Erik, drowns and their world turns upside down. This new play, developed at Aurora, grapples with the unsolvable mysterious forces that bind marriage, family, nature, and technology to our deepest hopes and dreams. Featuring **Marilee Talkington, Joe Estlack, Wilma Bonet, Greg Ayers, Mariah Castle, and Jack Wittmayer.**

Following the World Premiere of **LITTLE ERIK** is the West Coast Premiere of Sarah Treem's **THE HOW AND THE WHY** in March, directed by Joy Carlin and staged in the company's second stage performance space, Harry's UpStage, located in the Nell and Jules Dashow Wing. The season continues in April with the Bay Area Premiere of David Ives' **THE HEIR APPARENT** directed by Josh Costello. **Timothy Near** makes her Aurora directing debut with the company's season closer in June, Athol Fugard's modern classic "**MASTER HAROLD**"... and the boys.

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](http://auroratheatre.org)**.

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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 Matichak, and Hillary and Jonathan Reinis for their support.

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, East Bay Community Foundation, The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Thomas J. Long Foundation, The Sam Mazza Foundation, The Bernard Osher Foundation, The San Francisco Foundation, The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, The Shubert Foundation, Twanda Foundation, The Wood Foundation, and The Zellerbach Family Foundation.

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