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For immediate release.

**CENTER THEATRE GROUP PARTNERS WITH EAST WEST PLAYERS ON
THE WORLD PREMIERE OF “SOFT POWER”
BY DAVID HENRY HWANG AND JEANINE TESORI
AT THE AHMANSON THEATRE**

**The Two Organizations Will Hold Four Community Conversations
Exploring Themes of this Center Theatre Group Commission**

**Center Theatre Group’s “Soft Power” Begins
May 3, 2018 and Runs Through June 10, 2018**

Center Theatre Group will partner with East West Players on the upcoming world premiere of “Soft Power” at the Ahmanson Theatre May 3 through June 10, 2018, announced Artistic Director Michael Ritchie. Through the partnership, East West Players will add this new work created by Tony Award-winning artists David Henry Hwang and Jeanine Tesori as part of its 2017-2018 season and will also collaborate with Center Theatre Group on four Community Conversations leading up to the play’s premiere as part of the Ahmanson Theatre’s 2017-2018 season.

“When we started talking with our colleagues at East West Players about ways to collaborate, we quickly realized that ‘Soft Power’ was the perfect opportunity for us to continue a tradition of artistic partnership by bringing our audiences together once again for a unique new work from David Henry Hwang,” said Ritchie. “The last time we partnered was on ‘Yellow Face’ at the Mark Taper Forum, so it’ll be great to have East West Players’ subscribers join us in another fascinating journey into David’s imagination, this time at the Ahmanson.”

“It is an honor to partner with Center Theatre Group on the world premiere of David Henry Hwang’s ‘Soft Power,’” said Snehal Desai, East West Players’ Producing Artistic Director. “As the playwright that is the namesake of our theatre and whose work East West Players has produced more than any other, David’s prescience and ability to turn a mirror not only to our world as it is, but also where we are heading never ceases to astonish. With this production, our relationship with Center Theatre Group will continue to deepen as we initiate a series of joint Community Conversations on Asian American representation and storytelling. East West Players’ 52nd season is dedicated to community and partnerships, and we are proud to include Center Theatre Group as part of ‘The Company We Keep.’”

The four joint Community Conversations are scheduled to take place on October 26, 2017, January 18, 2018, March 15, 2018 and June 5, 2018. Locations, topics and

panelists will be announced at a later date. Center Theatre Group's Community Conversations are a series of panel discussions free and open to the public that feature local thought leaders in dialogue about the context, issues and ideas finding voice on our stages.

"The Community Conversations are that moment when we ask people in our community to help us make relevant the themes and ideas that are alive on our stage," said Leslie K. Johnson, Center Theatre Group's Director of Social Strategy, Innovation and Impact. "Asking thought leaders to come and spark that conversation is exciting. By inviting them into the room, we are able to hear someone who lives these topics every day discuss them in the context of the show."

"Soft Power" begins as a contemporary play before jumping 100 years into the future and exploding into a Chinese musical about present-day America. This seductive new work has play and lyrics by Hwang and music by Tesori. A beloved East-meets-West musical, China's 21st-century rise and a Presidential candidate's fundraiser collide to make mayhem—and some beautiful music. This show is inspired by the West's often ridiculously inauthentic portrayals of Asia, and China's quest for world cultural influence, also known as "Soft Power."

"Soft Power," directed by Leigh Silverman with choreography by Sam Pinkleton, is a Center Theatre Group commission and marks the first collaboration between Hwang and Tesori.

Hwang returns to Center Theatre Group where he premiered Pulitzer Prize finalist "Yellow Face" and his Tony-nominated revival of "Flower Drum Song." Hwang's other work includes the plays "M. Butterfly," "Chinglish," "Kung Fu," "Golden Child," "The Dance and the Railroad" and "FOB," and the Broadway musicals "Aida" (co-author, Ahmanson 2001-2002 season) and Disney's "Tarzan." He is also America's most-produced living opera librettist, and a writer/producer for the Golden Globe-winning television series "The Affair." Born and raised in Los Angeles, Hwang is a Tony Award winner ("M. Butterfly") and three-time nominee, a three-time Obie Award winner and a two-time finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Recent honors include the 2011 PEN/Laura Pels Award for a Master American Dramatist, the 2012 Inge Award, the 2012 Steinberg Distinguished Playwright "Mimi" Award, a 2014 Doris Duke Artist Award and the 2015 IPSA Distinguished Artist Award. He is Chair of the American Theatre Wing and sits on the boards of Young Playwrights Inc. and the Lark Play Development Center. Hwang was recently the Residency One Playwright at New York's Signature Theatre, and currently serves as head of playwriting at Columbia University School of the Arts. In 1998, East West Players named its new mainstage the David Henry Hwang Theater.

Tesori's Broadway credits include "Fun Home" (2015 Tony Award winner which played at the Ahmanson February 21 through April 1, 2017), "Violet," "Caroline, or Change," "Shrek The Musical," "Thoroughly Modern Millie," "Twelfth Night" (Lincoln Center Theater) and John Guare's "A Free Man of Color." Tesori also collaborated with Tony Kushner on "Mother Courage" starring Meryl Streep at the Delacorte. Her opera credits include "A Blizzard on Marblehead Neck" (libretto, Tony Kushner; Glimmerglass) and "The Lion, the Unicorn and Me" (libretto, J. D. McClatchy; Washington National Opera). Her songs are featured in the Netflix revival of "Gilmore Girls." She is the artistic director/co-founder of A Broader Way, an arts empowerment program for girls from

underserved communities; the founding artistic director of Encores! Off-Center; and a lecturer in music at Yale University and Columbia University. Tesori is a member of the Dramatists Guild.

East West Players, the nation's longest-running professional theatre of color and the largest producing organization of Asian American artistic work, was founded in 1965, at a time when Asian Pacific Islanders (APIs) faced limited or no opportunities to see their experiences reflected outside of stereotypical and demeaning caricatures in the American landscape. EWP not only ensures that API stories are told, but works to increase access, inclusion, and representation in the economy.

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation's preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles' leading nonprofit theatre company, programming seasons at the 736-seat Mark Taper Forum and 1600 to 2000-seat Ahmanson Theatre at The Music Center in Downtown Los Angeles, and the 317-seat Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City. In addition to presenting and producing the broadest range of theatrical entertainment in the country, Center Theatre Group is one of the nation's leading producers of ambitious new works through commissions and world premiere productions and a leader in interactive community engagement and education programs that reach across generations, demographics and circumstance to serve Los Angeles.

Bank of America is the season sponsor for Center Theatre Group's 2017-2018 season the Ahmanson Theatre and Delta airlines is the official airline sponsor.

Tickets for "Soft Power" are currently available through Center Theatre Group or East West Players season ticket membership. For information and to purchase Center Theatre Group season tickets by phone, call the Exclusive Season Ticket Hotline at (213) 972-4444. To purchase Center Theatre Group season memberships online, visit www.CenterTheatreGroup.org/Ahmanson. For East West Players subscriptions, call (213) 625-7000 or visit www.EastWestPlayers.org. Single tickets go on sale July 26, 2017, at the Center Theatre Group box office, by phone at (213) 972-4400 or online at www.CenterTheatreGroup.org.

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July 25, 2017; Updated November 13, 2017