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For immediate release

**CENTER THEATRE GROUP TO HOST A FREE TEEN YOUTH SUMMIT ON MAY 4  
INSPIRED BY THE WORLD PREMIERE OF  
DAVID HENRY HWANG AND JEANINE TESORI'S "SOFT POWER"**

**"Soft Power" Runs May 3 – June 10, 2018 at the Ahmanson Theatre**

Center Theatre Group invites current high school students to attend **Reimagine Your American Dream**, a teen youth summit inspired by David Henry Hwang and Jeanine Tesori's "Soft Power." The free event will take place on Friday, May 4, 2018, from 4:30 – 10:30 p.m. (includes performance time for "Soft Power") at The Music Center Annex and the Ahmanson Theatre in Downtown L.A.

The teen youth summit will explore how much cultural influence teens have on the American Dream by discussing the themes addressed in "Soft Power." The event includes a talk with playwright David Henry Hwang, dinner and three workshops. The first workshop is "What's Our Story." In this workshop, participants work with a master storyteller to learn how to tell their arts education stories to create change within their schools and beyond. The second workshop – "What's Our Future" – is a physical theatre-based session that will encourage participants to explore their vision of future America. The final, writing-based workshop is "Cultural Appreciation vs. Appropriation," which teaches participants what an artist's responsibility is when portraying a culture that's not their own.

"The teen youth summit is a great opportunity to empower students to use theatre as a way to discuss themes of culture, identity and social responsibility," said Director of Education and Engagement Tyrone Davis.

Students who attend the teen youth summit will also receive a ticket to that evening's performance of "Soft Power" at the Ahmanson Theatre. However, students must attend the entire event to receive their complimentary ticket.

A contemporary comedy explodes into a musical fantasia in the first collaboration between two of America's great theatre artists: Tony Award winners David Henry Hwang ("M. Butterfly") and Jeanine Tesori ("Fun Home"). "Soft Power" rewinds our recent political history and plays it back, a century later, through the Chinese lens of a future, beloved East-meets-West musical. In the musical, a Chinese executive who is visiting America finds himself falling in love with a good-hearted U.S. leader as the power balance between their two countries shifts following the 2016 election.

As original as it is topical, "Soft Power" overflows with the romance, laughter and cultural confusions of the golden age of Broadway. "Soft Power" is inspired by the legacy of classic American musicals such as "The King and I" as well as China's current quest for international cultural influence, also known as "Soft Power."

"Soft Power" is a Center Theatre Group co-commission with The Public Theater. "Soft Power" is produced in association with East West Players.

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 in 2017), “Violet,” “Caroline, or Change” (also at the Ahmanson), “Shrek The Musical,” “Thoroughly Modern Millie” (also at the Ahmanson), “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.

The teen youth summit is planned by Center Theatre Group’s Student Ambassadors, a group of high school students participating in a yearlong leadership program. The summit and the Student Ambassadors program is led by the Center Theatre Group Education and Community Partnerships Department. As one of the most active theatre education programs in the country, Education and Community Partnerships reached roughly 34,000 students, teachers, patrons and community members throughout Southern California in the 2016-2017 season.

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation’s preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles’ leading nonprofit theatre company, which, under Artistic Director Michael Ritchie, programs 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 Air Lines is the official airline sponsor.

To RSVP to Reimagine Your American Dream, students can visit [CTGLA.org/YouthSummit](http://CTGLA.org/YouthSummit). RSVPs are available through Wednesday, May 2 by 5 p.m. or until the event is filled (whichever comes first).

Tickets for “Soft Power” are available by calling (213) 972-4400, online at [www.CenterTheatreGroup.org](http://www.CenterTheatreGroup.org) or at the Center Theatre Group Box Office located at the Ahmanson Theatre. Tickets range from \$30 – \$130 (ticket prices are subject to change). The Ahmanson Theatre is located at The Music Center, 135 N. Grand Avenue in Downtown L.A. 90012.

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April 13, 2018