



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Kevin Kopjak, Charles Zukow Associates | 415-296-0677 | kevink@charleszukow.com

AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER ANNOUNCES UPDATED LINEUP AND PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE FOR UPCOMING SEASON

Obie-Award winning playwright Christopher Chen to pen world premiere virtual work

A.C.T. to produce its first immersive theatrical event with
María Irene Fornés's groundbreaking *Fefu and Her Friends*

SAN FRANCISCO (March 23, 2021)—Today, American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.) Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon and Executive Director Jennifer Bielstein announced an updated lineup and performance schedule that will comprise San Francisco's premier nonprofit theater organization's upcoming season.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the West Coast premiere of Obie Award-winning Bay Area playwright Christopher Chen's *The Headlands*—originally scheduled to perform at A.C.T.'s Strand Theater May 27–June 20, 2021—will be replaced with a world premiere virtual play written by Chen, commissioned by A.C.T, and directed by Pam MacKinnon, set to debut late May 2021. Beginning in January 2022, the updated season will include the previously-announced *Freestyle Love Supreme*, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Thomas Kail, and Bay Area-based Anthony Veneziale's hip-hop improv sensation; the world premiere of the pre-Broadway musical, *Soul Train*; and the critically-acclaimed, smash-hit production, *The Lehman Trilogy*. In addition, A.C.T. will present María Irene Fornés's landmark immersive play, *Fefu and Her Friends*, replacing the previously-announced William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*.

"I so look forward to welcoming patrons back into our theaters, feeling the anticipation of a story about to begin, and then being part of an audience together participating in making the story complete," says MacKinnon.

"Whether it's by laughing, or throwing a prompt to the performers, or creating the spaces around the action, or actively listening so hard that the actors literally feel your energy, or clapping along and stomping your feet to the music, the audience makes the art form. I cannot wait."

"The arts are essential to our recovery as a community for many reasons - ranging from the positive impact on social cohesion to the economic impact on individuals and related businesses," adds Bielstein. "As we look

forward to the return of in-person performances, I am encouraged and heartened by the messages of support we have received from the community. We applaud the artists, staff, donors, subscribers, and single ticket buyers who have graciously supported A.C.T. over the past year, and look forward to sharing in a collective experience together soon.”

COVID-19 protocols will be in place in accordance with the City and County of San Francisco regulations for all in-person productions.

Christopher Chen’s world premiere virtual play will premiere as the cornerstone event of A.C.T.’s Season Gala on May 22, 2021, and will have a limited run **May 28–June 27, 2021**. In this yet-to-be-titled work, audiences will be invited to “connect” with a celebrated Bay Area actor looking to commune, live, with a select few via the Zoom video conferencing platform. The tale she has to tell is from the heart—but can you trust a person whose professional career has been spent making you believe she is someone that she is not? Is she at a crossroads, or is this a confession? The play will be performed live Tuesdays through Sundays, with only a limited number of attendees per performance. The title, and the singular Bay Area artist making their return to A.C.T. in this thrilling theatrical event will be announced at a later date. This world premiere is commissioned by A.C.T. and made possible in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. Press nights will be held June 2–8, 2021.

Kicking off 2022 with a beat, with major support from lead sponsor **Salesforce**, A.C.T. will present the hip-hop improv sensation, ***Freestyle Love Supreme (January 21–February 13, 2022)***. Before *Hamilton*, before *In the Heights*, there was *Freestyle Love Supreme*, the critically acclaimed Broadway hit from the minds of longtime friends **Thomas Kail, Lin-Manuel Miranda**, and Bay Area artist **Anthony Veneziale**. Launching its American tour at the Geary Theater, *Freestyle Love Supreme* pays homage to John Coltrane’s improvisational musical style as it takes audiences on a freestyle, never-before-seen-and-never-to-be-seen-again hip-hop comedy ride. Hailed as “a hugely entertaining dream of a show” by *Time Out*, no two shows will be alike as performers—and surprise guest artists—take suggestions from the audience and spin them into instantaneous riffs and full-length musical numbers. Conceived over 15 years ago and as fresh as today’s Twitter feed, Bay Area audiences will be the very first to see this slam-dunk hit from today’s most celebrated theater makers. The highly acclaimed recent Broadway engagement of *Freestyle Love Supreme (New York Times Critics’ Pick)* played to sold-out houses during its strictly limited engagement and recouped its investment after only 14 weeks. The recently-released Hulu documentary, “We Are Freestyle Love Supreme,” earned rave reviews when it premiered at Sundance Film Festival in early 2020, and was nominated for a 2021 Grammy Award. Performances of *Freestyle Love Supreme* will take place at A.C.T.’s Geary Theater. Press night for *Freestyle Love Supreme* will be held on Wednesday, January 26, 2022.

Next, Tony Award winner and A.C.T. Artistic Director **Pam MacKinnon** will direct María Irene Fornés's *Fefu and Her Friends* (March 24–May 1, 2022). Hailed as game-changing, provocative, and genius, *Fefu and Her Friends* is one of the most influential—and invisible—plays of the 20th century. An innovation of immersive theater, Cuban-American playwright María Irene Fornés's rapturous comedy-drama allows the audience to be a fly on many walls in this unconventional tale of eight women gathering at a New England country home in 1935. Utilizing the multi-storied, multi-roomed Strand Theater as non-traditional theater space, audiences will be broken up into four groups that independently tour Fefu's home. Stories and histories come into play as you happen across conversations as Fefu's bohemian and raucous cohorts gossip, question, flirt, provoke, and ultimately reveal (or hide?) the universal understandings between women. As muscular and searing in her deliberate use of language as Albee and Miller at their best; as acidic as Clare Boothe Luce's iconic play *The Women*; and patron saint to blockbuster hits like *Sleep No More*—Fornés's *Fefu and Her Friends* is A.C.T.'s fifth all-female cast in less than three years, and an invitation to a theatrical experience like none other. Performances of *Fefu and Her Friends* will take place at A.C.T.'s Strand Theater. Press nights for *Fefu and Her Friends* will be held on Wednesday, April 6 and Thursday, April 7, 2022.

A.C.T. will also present the National Theatre and Neal Street Productions' international theatrical sensation, *The Lehman Trilogy* (April 20–May 22, 2022). Written by **Stefano Massini**, adapted by Olivier Award–nominated **Ben Power** and directed by multiple Olivier Award, Tony Award, and Academy Award winner **Sam Mendes** (*Cabaret*, *The Ferryman*, *Skyfall*, 1917), *The Lehman Trilogy* is the epic story of a family and a company that changed the world. On a cold September morning in 1844, a young man from Bavaria stands on a New York dockside dreaming of a new life. He is soon joined by his two brothers and an American epic begins with a small store in Alabama. One hundred and sixty-three years later, the firm they establish—Lehman Brothers—spectacularly collapses into bankruptcy and triggers the largest financial crisis in history. Told in three epic parts over one evening, *The Lehman Trilogy* is a modern theatrical classic. Performances of *The Lehman Trilogy* will take place at A.C.T.'s Geary Theater. Press night for *The Lehman Trilogy* will be held on Wednesday, April 27, 2022. A.C.T.'s production of *The Lehman Trilogy*, in memory of Nancy Livingston Levin, is made possible by Anonymous; Jerome L. and Thao Dodson; The Ray and Dagmar Dolby Family Fund; Frannie Fleishhacker; Priscilla and Keith Geeslin; Fred M. Levin, in honor of Nancy Livingston Levin, The Shenson Foundation; Rusty and Patti Rueff; and Kay Yun and Andre Neumann-Loreck.

A.C.T. will close its season with the world premiere of the pre-Broadway musical, *Soul Train* (September 16–October 23, 2022). Get ready for “the hippest trip in America” with the world premiere of *Soul Train*, the Broadway-bound musical based on the iconic TV show that brought Black music, dance, and style into every

living room in America. Journey back to 1971 Chicago, when Black entrepreneur and radio DJ Don Cornelius transformed the pop culture landscape by recognizing the lack of Black musical artists on television. Within a year, his local dance show went national and became one of the longest running shows in television history. Elegant, determined, and complicated, Cornelius set trends for nearly 40 years by giving a stage—and a camera—to the artists who created the soundtrack of *multiple* generations, and to the dancers, including Rosie Perez and Jody Watley, who became superstars.

Launching fall of 2022 at A.C.T.'s historic Geary Theater, the acclaimed, trailblazing creative team of *Soul Train*—the first Broadway-bound musical with an all-black, female creative team—includes Tony Award nominated playwright and MacArthur Genius **Dominique Morisseau** (Broadway's *Ain't Too Proud*; *The Detroit Project*; "Shameless"), Tony Award nominated choreographer **Camille A. Brown** (A.C.T.'s *Toni Stone*; Broadway's *Once on This Island*, "Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert!" on NBC), and acclaimed director **Kamilah Forbes** (Apollo Theater's Executive Director, Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* on HBO; *By The Way, Meet Vera Stark*) as director. The musical is produced by Tony Award nominee **Matthew Weaver** (*Rock of Ages*), **Jeffrey Tick** (former owner of Broadway's Helen Hayes Theater), and **Richard Gay** (5Pack Entertainment founder, Superfly COO, and former executive at Viacom's Music Networks & BET Networks). Serving as executive producers are four-time Grammy Award-winning artist and author of *Soul Train: The Music, Dance and Style of a Generation* **Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson**; Don Cornelius's son **Tony Cornelius**; Emmy Award nominated *CSI* creator **Anthony E. Zuiker**; Live Nation Urban president **Shawn Gee**, and Broadway veteran **Devin Keudell** (*Tina: The Tina Turner Musical*), along with co-producers **Nick Stern** and **J. Todd Harris**. Performances of *Soul Train* will take place at A.C.T.'s Geary Theater. Press night for *Soul Train* will take place on Wednesday, September 28, 2022.

Season subscriptions range in price from **\$95–\$385** and are available now by visiting act-sf.org or calling the A.C.T. Ticketing Office at 415-749-2228. Single tickets will go on sale to the general public at a later date.

A.C.T. would like to acknowledge its Season Presenters **Mrs. Barbara Bakar; Jerome L. and Thao N. Dodson; Frannie Fleishhacker; Priscilla and Keith Geeslin; James C. Hormel and Michael P. Nguyen-Hormel; Kenneth and Gisele Miller; Barbara Ravizza and John S. Osterweis; Toni Rembe and Arthur Rock; Robina Riccitiello; Jeff and Laurie Ubben; Jay Yamada; Kay Yun and Andre Neumann-Loreck;** and Company Sponsors **Lesley Ann Clement and Karl Lukaszewicz; The Ray and Dagmar Dolby Family Fund; Kevin and Celeste Ford; Kirke and Nancy Sawyer Hasson; Fred M. Levin, in honor of Nancy Livingston Levin, The Shenson Foundation; The Marymor Family Fund; Burt and Deedee McMurtry; David and Carla Riemer; Patti and Rusty Rueff; Abby and Gene Schnair; and Nola**

Yee. Additional support provided by **The Bernard Osher Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, and San Francisco Grants for the Arts.**

#