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AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER NAMES ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON AS NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

OBIE Award-winning director, producer, dramaturg, and adapter brings more than a decade of artistic leadership experience to A.C.T.

SAN FRANCISCO (October 6, 2026)—Following an extensive nationwide search, led by Barbara Messing and an engaged search committee, **American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.) Board of Trustees** today announced the appointment of OBIE Award winner **Elizabeth Williamson** as the new Artistic Director of San Francisco's premier nonprofit theater organization. Williamson will assume the position on January 4, 2027.

An internationally recognized theatermaker, Williamson has worked on Broadway, London's West End, Off-Broadway, at leading regional theaters across the United States, and internationally. Her Broadway and West End credits include serving as dramaturg and commissioner on Matthew López's Tony and Olivier Award-winning production, *The Inheritance*; dramaturg on the Tony Award-winning musical, *Some Like It Hot*; artistic producer and dramaturg on the Tony Award-nominated musical, *Anastasia*; and dramaturg on the Tony Award-winning musical, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*. Her film work includes serving as dramaturg on Amazon Studio's *Red, White & Royal Blue*, and her production with Jared Mezzocchi of Sarah Gancher's *Russian Troll Farm* live online during the COVID pandemic was recognized with a special OBIE.

Williamson comes to A.C.T. from Geva Theatre in Rochester, New York, where she has served as Artistic Director since 2022. During her tenure, she has been celebrated for her inclusive leadership, launching the ROC Geva Pass with the City of Rochester, raising the company's national profile with shows transferring off-Broadway and around the country, expanding the company's engagement initiatives, and building multiple ongoing partnerships with artists, audiences and the Rochester communities.

"Elizabeth is a well-respected artist and leader whose career reflects the qualities that are at the heart of A.C.T.'s mission and purpose," said **Jeff Minick, Chair of A.C.T.'s Board of Trustees**. "From developing groundbreaking new work to leading one of the country's prominent regional theaters, she brings a deep passion for the Bay Area and its local artists, along with strong relationships with artists across the industry."

"As a gifted theater maker, Elizabeth brings the depth, sensitivity and experience necessary to expand our audiences, nurture our connections to our youth, students and diverse communities, and secure the resources and partnerships essential for a thriving arts organization. It's especially necessary when so many of us are seeking connection in a rapidly developing digital society," adds **Joaquín Torres**,

President of A.C.T.'s Board of Trustees. "We're excited to welcome Elizabeth and her talent for developing new voices that speak to our times and bringing out the best in artists and the people who make theater possible in San Francisco and across the Bay Area."

"From the beginning of this search, we were looking for an artistic leader who could honor A.C.T.'s extraordinary history while boldly imagining its next chapter," said **Barbara Messing, Search Committee Chair.** "Elizabeth Williamson stood out for the clarity of her artistic vision, her deep commitment to artists and new work, her passion for training the next generation, and her belief in theater's power to engage and inspire an entire community. We can't wait for San Francisco to experience the energy, ambition, and artistry she'll bring to A.C.T.'s stages."

"A.C.T. is both one of our country's great flagship companies, and my hometown theatre. I have always admired its extraordinary mission and programming, connecting international, national and regional artists, communities and students through a body of work spanning the classics, great new work, and major revivals," said **Elizabeth Williamson.** "I started my career here (both my wife and I grew up in the Bay Area) and I couldn't be more honored to be coming home to A.C.T. as its new Artistic Director."

Williamson is particularly known for her work developing and premiering new plays and musicals. Her collaborations have included artists such as Matthew López, Bess Wohl, Jeffrey L Page and Stew, DeLanna Studi, Harrison David Rivers, Sarah Gancher, Dan O'Brien, Kaneza Schaal, Doug McGrath, Robert Freedman, Terrence McNally, Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, Octavio Solís, Baron Vaughn, Lauren Yee, and others. Some credits include *The Body of an American*, *Newtown*, *Murder on the Orient Express*, *JACK &*, *Reverberation*, *Somewhere*, *Make Believe*, *Rear Window*, and *The Flamingo Kid*.

Before joining Geva, Williamson spent nearly eight years at Hartford Stage, where she served as Associate Artistic Director and Director of New Play Development. While at Hartford, she worked alongside then-Artistic Director Darko Tresnjak to program and produce the theater's seasons, led new-play development and commissioning, founded and led Hartford Stage's community engagement initiatives, and oversaw the educational partnership with the BFA program at the Hartt School.

As a director and adapter, Williamson's work includes her adaptations of Molière, Marivaux, and most recently her adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, which has been seen at theaters including Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Alley Theatre, Geva Theatre, and Hartford Stage; her productions of *And Then There Were None* at Alley Theatre; *A Christmas Carol* at Geva; *Henry V* and *Cloud Nine* at Hartford Stage; and numerous new works and world premieres.

Williamson's appointment marks a return to the San Francisco Bay Area, where earlier in her career she worked with A.C.T., Aurora Theatre Company, Magic Theatre, the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Cal Shakes, PlayGround, AlterTheater, and Berkeley Rep's School of Theatre.

Williamson earned her M.St. from Oxford University and B.A. from Bennington College and trained at the École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq. She is a recipient of an NEA Fellowship in Literary Translation and a member of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society and Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas.

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ABOUT AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER

American Conservatory Theater is a Tony Award–winning theater and educational institution dedicated to nurturing the art of live theater through dynamic productions, intensive actor training in its conservatory, and an ongoing engagement with its community. Under the leadership of Interim Executive Director David Schmitz, A.C.T. embraces its responsibility to conserve, renew, and reinvent our relationship to the rich theatrical traditions and literatures that are our collective legacy, while exploring new artistic forms and new communities. A commitment to the highest standards informs every aspect of A.C.T.'s creative work. Founded by pioneer of the regional theater movement William Ball, A.C.T. opened its first San Francisco season in 1967. Since then, A.C.T. has performed more than 400 productions to a combined audience of more than seven million people. A.C.T. reaches more than 250,000 people through its productions and programs every year. For more information, visit act-sf.org.