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## PAM MACKINNON ANNOUNCES INAUGURAL SEASON AS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER

The 2018–19 season includes Lynn Nottage’s 2017 Pulitzer Prize–winning drama, *SWEAT*; Jaclyn Backhaus’s ingenious and provocative telling of 19th-century American explorers, *MEN ON BOATS*; Edward Albee’s wildly imaginative and satirical Pulitzer Prize–winning comedy, *SEASCAPE*; Mfoniso Udofia’s achingly poignant drama, *HER PORTMANTEAU*; Lauren Yee’s exploration of cultural identity, global politics, and basketball, *THE GREAT LEAP*; and Kate Hamill’s rollicking new stage adaptation of William Thackeray’s classic novel, *VANITY FAIR*

The final production of the 2018–19 season to be announced at a later date

*A Christmas Carol* returns after another successful run in 2017

SAN FRANCISCO (April 3, 2018)—Tony, Obie, and Drama Desk Award winner **Pam MacKinnon**, the incoming artistic director of **American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.)**, has unveiled her inaugural season at the helm of San Francisco’s premier nonprofit theater company. The 2018–19 season includes Lynn Nottage’s 2017 Pulitzer Prize–winning drama, ***SWEAT***; Jaclyn Backhaus’s ingenious and provocative telling of 19th-century American explorers, ***MEN ON BOATS***; Edward Albee’s wildly imaginative and satirical Pulitzer Prize–winning comedy, ***SEASCAPE***; Mfoniso Udofia’s achingly poignant drama ***HER PORTMANTEAU***; Lauren Yee’s exploration of cultural identity, global politics, and basketball, ***THE GREAT LEAP***; and Kate Hamill’s rollicking new stage adaptation of William Thackeray’s classic novel, ***VANITY FAIR***. The final production of the 2018–19 season will be announced at a later date.

Says MacKinnon: “Inspired by Carey Perloff’s amazing legacy, I am thrilled to share my inaugural season with San Francisco Bay Area audiences. Featuring diverse new voices alongside American master playwrights, this season is full of big stories, memorable characters, rich language, and bold leaps of imagination. Each production explores who we are, where we come from, and what we aspire to be, while also offering insight into lives beyond our own.”

The 2018–19 season kicks off with **SWEAT (September/October 2018)**, Lynn Nottage’s 2017 Pulitzer Prize–winning drama. In Reading, Pennsylvania—the blue-collar heart of America’s steel industry—a tight-knit group of factory workers has gathered in the local bar for generations to share laughs, hopes, and cold beers. But as recession looms and a union lock-out turns assembly line into picket line, lifelong friends find themselves pitted against each other in the struggle to survive. Inspired by the stories of Rust Belt workers, two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Lynn Nottage (*Ruined*) unites heart and humor to forge a searing drama of the grit, drive, and resilience of our conflicted American dreams. SWEAT will be directed by Loretta Greco.

Next, A.C.T. will present Jaclyn Backhaus’s hilarious historical and moving adventure, **MEN ON BOATS (October–December 2018)**. Spinning historical, theatrical, and gender conventions on their heads, this subversive tale of ten men, four boats, and two rivers contains *none* of the above. Pack your gear for this 21st-century telling of 19th-century American explorer and one-armed Civil War veteran John Wesley Powell, who assembles a brawny band of soldiers, trappers, and adventurers to explore Wyoming’s waterways. Inspired by Powell’s actual travel log from 1869, Jaclyn Backhaus’s nimble and ingenious script is provocative, laugh-out-loud theater, performed by a diverse cast of female-identifying and gender-fluid actors who infuse America’s historic myths of male conquest with a sly blast of subtext. With the speed and force of Powell’s white-water rapids, Backhaus conjures her epic story—in which simple materials are transformed into perilous canyons and death-defying cliffs—out of sheer imagination, shaping an innovative and innately theatrical play, which became an off-Broadway sensation. MEN ON BOATS will be directed by Tamilla Woodard.

Ring in 2019, A.C.T. will present Edward Albee’s Pulitzer Prize-winning play, **SEASCAPE (January/February 2019)**. In her A.C.T. debut, Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon continues her career-long exploration of American theater’s legendary playwright, Pulitzer Prize winner Edward Albee (*Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*; *The Goat or, Who is Sylvia?*). In this wildly imaginative and satirical comedy a newly retired couple picnic and squabble on a beach about their life together when they are interrupted by two human-sized, English-speaking lizards. Are they an evolutionary miracle, or a threat? And which couple is the greater risk to the other? As the two pairs begin to communicate, they come uneasily together, discovering how transitions in life can spark terror and restlessness in any creature of habit. Albee returns to The Geary for the first time in a decade, with a sparkling fantasy of growing up and growing old, fear and adventure, love and laughter. SEASCAPE will be directed by Pam MacKinnon.

Next, A.C.T. will present Mfoniso Udofia's **HER PORTMANTEAU (February–April 2019)**. From an extraordinary new voice in American theater comes this taut and achingly poignant drama exploring the multigenerational bonds of a Nigerian family living in the United States. Traveling from Lagos to visit her mother and American-born sister for the first time in two decades, thirty-something Iniabasi arrives to a snowy landscape, and even chillier truths inside a small Manhattan apartment. As Nigerian traditions clash with American realities, the family is forced to confront its literal and emotional baggage and its painful legacies across language, continents, and cultures. Playwright Udofia, a graduate of A.C.T.'s M.F.A. Program, won applause and acclaim in New York—now A.C.T. joins with Magic Theatre in presenting two, independent chapters from her sweeping nine-part saga about a family of Nigerian immigrants and their American-born children. Pulsing with humor and heartache, this tender and hopeful window into an evolving family is “a reminder that most Americans share a common origin story” (*The New York Times*). Magic Theatre will present Udofia's **IN OLD AGE** concurrently with A.C.T.'s production of **HER PORTMANTEAU**. HER PORTMANTEAU will be directed by **Victor Malana Maog**.

In Spring 2019, A.C.T. will present award-winning Bay Area playwright Lauren Yee's **THE GREAT LEAP (March 2019)**. When a college basketball team from San Francisco is invited to China for an exhibition game in 1989, a smack-talking American coach prepares to take on his protégé—now grown and bent on crushing the Westerners. But after a public high school star from Chinatown joins the American team, his actions in Beijing become the accidental focus of attention, escalating the fractured history between the coaches. Funny, urgent, and contemporary, this slam dunk of a sports drama from Yee—developed at A.C.T.'s New Strands Festival in 2017—explores cultural identity, global politics, and the collision of cultures and generations. Soaring through time and leaping across continents from the hardball courts of San Francisco's Chinatown to a Beijing on the brink of revolution, **THE GREAT LEAP** builds tension right up to the buzzer. THE GREAT LEAP will be directed by **Lisa Peterson**.

Hailed as “a masterpiece of creative compression that is at once arrestingly original and faithful to its source material” by the *Wall Street Journal*, A.C.T. will next present acclaimed playwright Kate Hamill's rollicking new stage adaptation of William Thackeray's classic 19th-century novel that pops with 21st-century spirit, **VANITY FAIR (April/May 2019)**. Ambitious Becky Sharp may not have been born with wealth or status, but she's determined to attain both—at any cost. Armed with fierce wit and calculating charm, Becky forges her own path through London's high society, dealing herself into a game she was never invited to play. Displaying the celebrated audacity and verve that she brought to her adaptation of *Sense &*

*Sensibility*, Hamill conjures an inventive and lively period drama featuring one of literature’s original “nasty women.” VANITY FAIR will be directed by Jessica Stone.

In addition to announcing six shows from the seven-play subscription season, A.C.T. is happy to welcome back the Bay Area’s favorite holiday tradition, **A CHRISTMAS CAROL (December 2018)**, after another successful run last season. Featuring a lively cast of dozens, delightful music, gorgeous costumes, and deliciously spooky ghosts, this version of *A Christmas Carol*, adapted by Paul Walsh and Carey Perloff, stays true to the heart of Dickens’s timeless story of redemption and brings a playful sensibility to his rich language. Now in its 42nd year, *A Christmas Carol* is a cornerstone of the A.C.T. repertory and has become a holiday tradition for families around the Bay Area. A CHRISTMAS CAROL will be directed by **Domenique Lozano.**

At this time, only full-season subscriptions are available for the 2018–19 season. To become a new subscriber, or renew a current subscription for the 2018–19 season, visit [act-sf.org/join](http://act-sf.org/join) or call the A.C.T. Subscriptions Office at 415.749.2250.

Full-season (7-play) subscriptions are available for **\$98–\$693** and offer incredible savings, unparalleled access, exclusive benefits, and personalized customer service. Subscribers save as much as 50% off single-ticket prices. Students and educators are eligible to save up to half-price on subscriptions, and senior discounts are available for certain series. To make subscriptions more affordable, A.C.T. also offers all subscribers an extended payment plan that allows payment in two easy installments. A.C.T.’s competitive subscriber benefits include free ticket exchanges up to the day of your scheduled performance, guaranteed best seating, ticket insurance, access to convenient prepaid parking one block away from the theater, discounts for neighborhood restaurants, and the opportunity to subscribe to *Words on Plays*, A.C.T.’s in-depth theater guide for each show.

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## AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER'S 2018–19 SEASON AT-A-GLANCE

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### **SWEAT**

by Lynn Nottage

Directed by Loretta Greco

September/October 2018

A.C.T.'s Geary Theater

"Brilliant . . . authentic . . . grippingly human"—*Deadline*

"*Sweat* offers a path toward healing for a nation riven by a torturous election."—*Los Angeles Times*

"A bracingly topical portrait of American dreams deferred"—*The New York Times*

A.C.T. kicks off the 2018–19 season with the Pulitzer Prize–winning drama that had Broadway critics and audiences on their feet. In Reading, Pennsylvania—the blue-collar heart of America's steel industry—a tight-knit group of factory workers has gathered in the local bar for generations to share laughs, hopes, and cold beers. But as recession looms and a union lock-out turns assembly line into picket line, lifelong friends find themselves pitted against each other in the struggle to survive. Inspired by the stories of Rust Belt workers, two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Lynn Nottage (*Ruined*) unites heart and humor to forge a searing drama of the grit, drive, and resilience of our conflicted American dreams.

### **MEN ON BOATS**

by Jaclyn Backhaus

Directed by Tamilla Woodard

October–December 2018

A.C.T.'s Strand Theater

"*Men on Boats* is off-the-canyon-walls funny"—*Chicago Tribune*

"A thrilling, gender-flipped slice of Manifest Destiny"—*Time Out New York*

Spinning historical, theatrical, and gender conventions on their heads, this subversive tale of ten men, four boats, and two rivers contains *none* of the above. Pack your gear for this 21st-century telling of 19th-century American explorer and one-armed Civil War veteran John Wesley Powell, who assembles a brawny band of soldiers, trappers, and adventurers to explore Wyoming's waterways. Inspired by Powell's actual travel log from 1869, Jaclyn Backhaus's nimble and ingenious script is provocative, laugh-out-loud theater, performed by a diverse cast of female-identifying and gender-fluid actors who infuse America's historic myths of male conquest with a sly blast of subtext. With the speed and force of Powell's white-water rapids, Backhaus conjures her epic story—in which simple materials are transformed into perilous canyons and death-defying cliffs—out of sheer imagination, shaping an innovative and innately theatrical play, which became an off-Broadway sensation.

## **A CHRISTMAS CAROL**

by Charles Dickens

Adapted by Carey Perloff and Paul Walsh

Directed by Dominique Lozano

Based on the original direction by Carey Perloff

Music by Karl Lundeberg

Choreography by Val Caniparoli

December 2018

A.C.T.'s Geary Theater

*"This is a **Carol** built to banish 'bah humbugs' for years to come!"—Oakland Tribune*

*"A smash hit! Holiday traditions don't get any better"—Stark Insider*

Featuring a lively cast of dozens, delightful music, gorgeous costumes, and deliciously spooky ghosts, this version of *A Christmas Carol*, adapted by Paul Walsh and Carey Perloff, stays true to the heart of Dickens's timeless story of redemption and brings a playful sensibility to his rich language. Now in its 42nd year, *A Christmas Carol* is a cornerstone of the A.C.T. repertory and has become a holiday tradition for families around the Bay Area.

## **EDWARD ALBEE'S SEASCAPE**

Directed by Pam MacKinnon

January/February 2019

A.C.T.'s Geary Theater

*"Of all Mr. Albee's plays, this is the most exquisitely written"—The New Yorker*

*"Wry, charming and surprisingly hopeful"—Los Angeles Times*

In her A.C.T. debut, Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon continues her career-long exploration of American theater's legendary playwright, Pulitzer Prize winner Edward Albee (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*; *The Goat or, Who is Sylvia?*). In this wildly imaginative and satirical comedy a newly retired couple picnic and squabble on a beach about their life together when they are interrupted by two human-sized, English-speaking lizards. Are they an evolutionary miracle, or a threat? And which couple is the greater risk to the other? As the two pairs begin to communicate, they come uneasily together, discovering how transitions in life can spark terror and restlessness in any creature of habit. Albee returns to The Geary for the first time in a decade, with a sparkling fantasy of growing up and growing old, fear and adventure, love and laughter.

## **HER PORTMANTEAU**

by Mfoniso Udofia

Directed by Victor Malana Maog

February–April 2019

A.C.T.'s Strand Theater

*"Powerful . . . moving . . . extraordinary"—The New York Times*

*"Mfoniso Udofia is a first-generation Nigerian-American playwright with a lot on her mind and a seriously compelling storytelling gift."—Deadline*

From an extraordinary new voice in American theater comes this taut and achingly poignant drama exploring the multigenerational bonds of a Nigerian family living in the United States. Traveling from Lagos to visit her mother and American-born sister for the first time in two decades, thirty-something Iniabasi arrives to a snowy landscape, and even chillier truths inside a small Manhattan apartment. As Nigerian traditions clash with American realities, the family is forced to confront its literal and emotional baggage and its painful legacies across language, continents, and cultures. Playwright Udofia, a graduate of A.C.T.'s M.F.A. Program, won applause and acclaim in New York—now A.C.T. joins with Magic Theatre in presenting two, independent chapters from her sweeping nine-part saga about a family of Nigerian immigrants and their American-born children. Pulsing with humor and heartache, this tender and hopeful window into an evolving family is “a reminder that most Americans share a common origin story” (*The New York Times*). Magic Theatre will present Udofia's IN OLD AGE concurrently with A.C.T.'s production of HER PORTMANTEAU.

## **THE GREAT LEAP**

**by Lauren Yee**

**Directed by Lisa Peterson**

**March 2019**

**A.C.T.'s Geary Theater**

“[This] imaginative vault over the decades . . . asserts a quiet, beautifully unexpected power”—*The Denver Post*

When a college basketball team from San Francisco is invited to China for an exhibition game in 1989, a smack-talking American coach prepares to take on his protégé—now grown and bent on crushing the Westerners. But after a public high school star from Chinatown joins the American team, his actions in Beijing become the accidental focus of attention, escalating the fractured history between the coaches. Funny, urgent, and contemporary, this slam dunk of a sports drama from award-winning Bay Area playwright Lauren Yee—developed at A.C.T.'s New Strands Festival in 2017—explores cultural identity, global politics, and the collision of cultures and generations. Soaring through time and leaping across continents from the hardball courts of San Francisco's Chinatown to a Beijing on the brink of revolution, THE GREAT LEAP builds tension right up to the buzzer.

## **VANITY FAIR**

**Adapted by Kate Hamill**

**Based on the novel by William Thackeray**

**Directed by Jessica Stone**

A coproduction with **Shakespeare Theatre Company**

**April/May 2019**

**A.C.T.'s Geary Theater**

“A gift to actors and a goody bag for its audience”—*The New York Times*

“A masterpiece of creative compression that is at once arrestingly original and faithful to its source material”—*The Wall Street Journal*

From acclaimed playwright Kate Hamill (2017 Playwright of the Year, *Wall Street Journal*) comes a rollicking new stage adaptation of William Thackeray's classic 19th-century novel that pops with 21st-century spirit. Ambitious Becky Sharp may not have been born with wealth or status, but she's determined to attain both—at any cost. Armed with fierce wit and calculating charm, Becky forges her own path through London's high society, dealing herself into a game she was never invited to play. Displaying the celebrated audacity and verve that she brought

to her adaptation of *Sense & Sensibility*, Hamill conjures an inventive and lively period drama featuring one of literature's original "nasty women."

## TBA Production

June/July 2019

A.C.T.'s Geary Theater

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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 Artistic Director Carey Perloff (through June 30, 2018) and Artistic Director Designate Pam MacKinnon (beginning July 1, 2018) and Executive Director Peter Pastreich, 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 320 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](http://act-sf.org).

### ABOUT PAM MACKINNON

Pam MacKinnon won the Tony and Drama Desk Awards and received an Outer Critics Circle nomination for her direction of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Arena Stage, Broadway) starring Tracy Letts, Amy Morton, Carrie Coon, and Madison Dirks. Her production also received the Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play. She won an OBIE Award for excellence in directing as well as Tony and Lucille Lortel nominations for Bruce Norris's *Clybourne Park* (Playwrights Horizons, Mark Taper Forum, Broadway). Currently running on Broadway is her production of Beau Willimon's *The Parisian Woman* starring Uma Thurman. Other Broadway productions include *Amélie, A New Musical*; the world premiere of David Mamet's *China Doll* with Al Pacino; Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles* with Elizabeth Moss; and Edward Albee's *A Delicate Balance* with Glenn Close and John Lithgow. Pam also serves as Executive Board President of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers (SDC).

Pam has directed extensively off Broadway and around the country. Her credits include Bruce Norris's *The Qualms* (Playwrights Horizons and Steppenwolf Theatre Company); Sarah Treem's *When We Were Young and Unafraid* (Manhattan Theatre Club); Donald Margolies's *Dinner With Friends* (Roundabout Theatre Company); Craig Lucas's *The Lying Lesson* (Atlantic Theater Company); Horton Foote's *Harrison, TX* (Primary Stages); David Bar Katz's *The Atmosphere of Memory* with Ellen Burstyn (LAByrinth Theater Company); Itamar Moses's *Completeness* (South Coast Repertory, Playwrights Horizons); David Wiener's *Extraordinary Chambers* (Geffen Playhouse); Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (The Old Globe); Victor Lodato's *3F, 4F* (Magic Theatre). She is a longstanding interpreter of the plays of Edward Albee. In addition to the productions mentioned above, she directed regional premieres of *The Play About the Baby* (Philadelphia Theatre Company and Goodman Theatre) and *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* (Alley Theatre and Vienna's English Theatre) and world premieres of *Peter and Jerry* (now titled *At Home at the Zoo*) (Hartford Stage and Second Stage Theater), *Occupant* (Signature Theatre), and *A Delicate Balance* (Arena Stage).

Pam has received nominations for a San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for *Amélie, A New Musical* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre), a Joseph Jefferson Award for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company), and a Helen Hayes Award for Bruce Norris's *Unmentionables* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company). She also received the Abe L. Binder Award from the Alliance of Resident

Theatres/New York for her “dedication to New York City’s non-profit theatre and exceptional vision as a director” as well as the inaugural Lilly Award for direction.

Pam is an alumna of the Drama League, The Women’s Project Theater, and Lincoln Center Theater’s Directors Labs. She is an Associate Artist of the Roundabout Theatre Company; and longstanding Affiliated Artist and Board member of Clubbed Thumb, a downtown New York theater company dedicated to new American plays.