

50
YEARS

A.C.T.
AMERICAN
CONSERVATORY
THEATER

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**American Conservatory Theater artistic director Carey Perloff
will depart after 25 years at the helm**

SAN FRANCISCO (March 23, 2017) – After 25 years at the helm, **Carey Perloff**, artistic director at **American Conservatory Theater** (A.C.T.), announced today that she will be departing the Bay Area’s premier nonprofit theater organization following the conclusion of the 2017–18 season.

"Serving as artistic director of A.C.T. for the past 25 years has been the greatest joy of my life," says **Perloff**. "It never occurred to me when I arrived in San Francisco in 1992 that I would love this job, this city, this audience, and this staff so much that I would stay here for a quarter of a century. I feel incredibly gratified that over the past five years we have realized the long-held dream of creating a second stage for A.C.T. in which new work and new artists can flourish, and where our brilliant students can be more visible. I am equally gratified that our epic commission and production of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* has been met with such acclaim and is going to have a life long after I leave A.C.T. It is that kind of ambitious, culturally-diverse work which I believe best represents the A.C.T. I have worked to build."

Adds Perloff: "Twenty-five years ago, The Geary Theater lay in ruins and much of this astonishing organization had to be rebuilt from the ground up. A.C.T. now has multiple state-of-the-art performance spaces, a significant endowment, the only freestanding M.F.A. Program in the country, and a legacy of renowned classics and ambitious new work to look back upon. Most of all, it has an audience that any artistic director could only dream of: adventurous, supportive, diverse, generous, and loyal. I will miss them enormously. At the same time, I am truly excited to finally have the chance to explore my own work—as a director, playwright, and book author—without carrying all of the administrative burdens of an institution. It's a great moment in the American theater to do the work one most believes in. That I get to direct Pinter's *The Birthday Party* with Marco Baccelli, Scott Wentworth, and Judith Ivey—and another soon-to-be announced favorite classic—during my final season is icing on the cake."



Nancy Livingston, Chair of A.C.T.’s Board of Trustees, adds: "Carey Perloff’s 25-year legacy at A.C.T. is nothing short of phenomenal. Not only is she an extraordinary artistic director, but also a gifted playwright, author, producer, director, teacher, mentor, and consummate fundraiser. Her combined passion for A.C.T. and the community it serves are revered throughout the Bay Area, as well as nationally and internationally. As a personal friend and devoted colleague, I am thrilled to celebrate her many accomplishments throughout the next season."

Considered one of the nation's most prolific artistic directors, Perloff has had an accomplished and storied 25 years at A.C.T. marked by several distinguished milestones, including a commitment to new work that includes countless world premiere productions and the creation of the New Strands Festival and commissioning program, the rebuilding of the earthquake-damaged Geary Theater, the purchase and renovation of The Strand Theater, the revitalization of A.C.T.'s acclaimed Master of Fine Arts Program, and the commissioning of the Women's Leadership in Residential Theaters research study.

Perloff began as artistic director of A.C.T. in 1992. Throughout her tenure, Perloff forged intimate and important working collaborations with legendary playwrights (Tom Stoppard, Harold Pinter, Philip Kan Gotanda, Timberlake Wertenbaker), distinguished directors (John Doyle, Mark Lamos, Irene Lewis, Mark Rucker, Loretta Greco, Robert Wilson), acclaimed actors (David Strathairn, Bill Irwin, Olympia Dukakis, John Douglas Thompson, BD Wong), and renowned theater companies (Theatre Calgary, Guthrie Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Stratford Festival), making A.C.T. internationally recognized for its groundbreaking productions of classical works and bold explorations of contemporary playwriting.

Throughout the past 25 years Perloff has directed more than 50 mainstage productions at A.C.T., including *Antigone* (1993), *Arcadia* (1995 & 2013), *Elektra* (2012), *The Homecoming* (2011), *Hecuba* (1995 & 1998), *Indian Ink* (1999 & 2015), *The Invention of Love* (2000), *The Orphan of Zhao* (2014), *Phèdre* (2010), *The Tempest* (1996), *The Threepenny Opera* (1999), *Travesties* (2006), *Underneath the Lintel* (2013), and *Waiting for Godot* (2003).

Known for her passionate dedication to the development and presentation of new works and new translations of foreign and classical plays, Perloff created A.C.T.'s First Look series in 2003, expanding A.C.T.'s commitment to the commission, development, and production of new works by local, national, and international artists. In 2016, A.C.T. launched the New Strands Festival, which featured new theatrical pieces, works in progress, readings, and experimental work by A.C.T.-commissioned local and national playwrights, renowned dance companies, musicians, animation artists, and more. The second annual New Strands Festival will take place in May 2017. In November 2016, A.C.T. launched the New Strands Residency Program which gives emerging and established American playwrights the opportunity to create and develop new works in residence at A.C.T.'s Strand Theater.

Perloff is an enthusiastic proponent of classical plays, keeping alive an international repertoire that includes works by Sophocles, Euripides, Gorky, Chekhov, Gogol, Brecht, Schiller, Moliere, Racine, Pirandello, Lorca, and many more, most of them in newly commissioned translations and/or adaptations.

In addition, Perloff continues to be an active champion for new works, presenting countless world premiere productions at A.C.T., including the recent record-breaking and critically acclaimed production of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2017), which she also commissioned and directed. During the six-year process from conception to stage, Perloff directed multiple workshops with adaptor Ursula Rani Sarma and musician David Coulter to explore script changes, choreography, and soundscapes; and met with countless members of the Bay Area Afghan community, inviting them to observe and respond to pieces of the play before it was released to the public in January 2017. In March 2017, Perloff also directed the production in Canada with long-time collaborator Theatre Calgary.

Other world premiere productions presented and commissioned under Perloff include a new adaptation of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (2010), *Chester Bailey* (2016), *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* (2002), *High Society* (1997), *Monstress* (2015), *Stuck Elevator* (2013), *Tales of the City: A New Musical* (2011), and *The Tosca Project* (2010).

One of the first triumphs of Perloff's tenure at A.C.T. was the reconstruction of The Geary Theater after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, which caused extensive damage to the theater's roof and proscenium. Under Perloff's leadership, A.C.T. raised \$30 million for the Geary Theater Capital Campaign, which, at the time, was the largest capital campaign ever undertaken by an American regional theater. The reopening celebration in 1996 included an open house attended by five thousand members of the community and Perloff's production of *The Tempest* starring David Strathairn.

Perloff also played a pivotal role in the purchase and renovation of The Strand Theater, located in San Francisco's Central Market neighborhood. The venue, which opened in May 2015, has allowed A.C.T. to present new work and emerging artists, expand education programs, and produce theater in versatile and innovative ways.

In 1996, Perloff continued A.C.T.'s dedication to excellence in actor training by expanding A.C.T.'s two-year Advanced Training Program to a three-year program granting a master of fine arts degree in acting. And in 2000, she renewed A.C.T.'s commitment to the relationship between training, performance, and audience by casting M.F.A. actors in the annual production of *A Christmas Carol*—adapted by Perloff and Paul Walsh in 2005—a tradition that still continues today. Consistently ranked as one of the top master of fine arts programs in the country by *U.S. News & World Report* and *The Hollywood Reporter*, A.C.T.'s Master of Fine Arts Program alumni include Elizabeth Banks, Annette Bening, Benjamin Bratt, Anika Noni Rose, and Denzel Washington.

A committed champion of women artists and leadership in the field, Perloff—with former A.C.T. executive director Ellen Richard—commissioned the Women's Leadership in Residential Theaters research study. Conducted by Wellesley Centers for Women, the Women's Leadership in Residential Theaters research study sought to identify why there were so few women in leadership roles in America's nonprofit theater organizations. The preliminary findings of the study were presented at a Women's Leadership Conference held on August 22, 2016, at A.C.T.'s Strand Theater in San Francisco. The Women's Leadership in Residential Theaters research study findings were also shared as the keynote at the Statera Foundation Conference held in Colorado October 14–16, 2016, and were presented at the TCG Fall Forum on Governance held November 11–13, 2016 in New York City.

In 2015, Perloff released *Beautiful Chaos: A Life in the Theater*, a lively and revealing memoir of her years at A.C.T. Perloff's personal and professional journey—her life as a woman in a male-dominated profession, as a wife and mother, a playwright, director, producer, arts advocate, and citizen in a city erupting with enormous change—offers a behind-the-scenes perspective on how theater happens, as well as a serious think-piece about the challenges facing live theater in the 21st century. *Beautiful Chaos*, published by City Lights Foundation Books, was San Francisco Public Library's 2016 "One City, One Book" selection.

Perloff is also an award-winning playwright. Her new play, *Fit*, recently had a reading at A.C.T. with Bill Pullman. Her play *Kinship* premiered at the Théâtre de Paris in October 2014 in a production starring Isabelle Adjani and Niels Schneider and was produced at the Williamstown Theater Festival last summer, starring Cynthia Nixon and directed by Jo Bonney. *Waiting for the Flood* has received workshops at A.C.T., New York Stage and Film, and Roundabout Theatre Company. *Higher* was developed at New York Stage and Film, won the 2011 Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation Theatre Visions Fund Award, and received its world premiere in February 2012 at A.C.T. *Luminescence Dating* premiered in New York at The Ensemble Studio Theatre, was coproduced by A.C.T. and Magic Theatre, and is published by Dramatists Play Service. *The Colossus of Rhodes* was workshopped at the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, premiered at Lucille Lortel's White Barn Theatre, and was produced at A.C.T. in 2003.

Before joining A.C.T., Perloff was artistic director of Classic Stage Company (CSC) in New York, where she directed the world premiere of Ezra Pound's *Elektra*, the American premiere of Pinter's *Mountain Language*, and many classic works. Under Perloff's leadership, CSC won numerous OBIE Awards, including the 1988 OBIE for artistic excellence. In 1993, she directed the world premiere of Steve Reich and Beryl Korot's opera *The Cave* at the Vienna Festival and Brooklyn Academy of Music. Perloff received a B.A. Phi Beta Kappa in classics and comparative literature from Stanford University and was a Fulbright Fellow at Oxford. She was on the faculty of the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University for seven years, and teaches and directs in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program.

Perloff is the recipient of France's Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres and the National Corporate Theatre Fund's 2007 Artistic Achievement Award.

In May 2017, Perloff will receive an Honorary Doctorate from the University of San Francisco. In October 2017, she will receive the Tao House Award for Sustained Excellence.

Perloff is on the board of the Hermitage Artist Retreat in Sarasota, Florida.

Peter Pastreich will remain as A.C.T.'s executive director and will assist the search committee, currently being formed, to find Perloff's successor, as well as in the search for a new executive director to succeed him.

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