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## AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER'S MASTER OF FINE ARTS PROGRAM ANNOUNCES 2020-21 SEASON

### Single Tickets Now On Sale For All Virtual Productions Through This Fall

SAN FRANCISCO (August 14, 2020)—Today, **American Conservatory Theater** (A.C.T.) announced the lineup that will make up the 2020-21 season for the acclaimed **Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program**. All MFA productions in 2020 will be performed virtually and are included as part of A.C.T.'s newly-announced **A.C.T. Anywhere** season pass which gives patrons discounted access to all InterACT at Home programming, including virtual live-streamed (fixed viewing dates), on-demand (flexible viewing dates) streaming theater, and more. To become a new A.C.T. season pass holder, visit [act-sf.org/join](https://act-sf.org/join) or call the A.C.T. Ticketing Office at 415-749-2228. Single tickets for InterACT at Home fall virtual offerings—including MFA productions and **Virtually Speaking**, an in-depth conversation with A.C.T. Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon and four-time Academy Award nominee and A.C.T. Conservatory alum **Annette Bening**—are available now by visiting [act-sf.org](https://act-sf.org) or calling 415-749-2228. Single tickets for *A Christmas Carol: On Air*, an enthralling radio play of the Bay Area's favorite holiday tradition available December 4–26, 2020, and all other 2021 virtual offerings will go on sale at a later date.

Says **A.C.T. Conservatory Director Melissa Smith**: “These are uncertain but exciting times for actors in training. Guided by our core values of artistry, imagination, and collaboration, we have adapted our curriculum to focus on what works best virtually. We are tremendously excited about the MFA season this year. Featuring a wide variety of genres—including some which we are inventing—these plays are timely, relevant, and speak to issues that resonate with our MFA actors and the larger Bay Area community.”

Following the success of the groundbreaking virtual live theater earlier this year that blazed a trail for new theater storytelling possibilities in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, A.C.T.'s Master of Fine Arts program will present a remounted virtual production of **Madhuri Shekar's *In Love and Warcraft*** [Live Streamed: September 4 at 6 p.m., September 5 at 8 p.m. (press night), September 11 at 11 a.m. (student matinee), September 12 at 8 p.m.; On-Demand: September 18–25, 2020]. College senior Evie prefers the online role-playing game *World of Warcraft* to real life. In the game, she's a fearless warrior with a boyfriend. In real life, she ghostwrites love letters for people, even though she's never been in love. When Evie becomes attracted to her client Raul, she must decide whether to let her powerful and sexy warrior character out in the real world. Directed by **Peter J. Kuo** and featuring students from **A.C.T.'s Master of Fine Arts program**, *In Love and Warcraft* is a cosplay-loving romantic comedy about intimacy and love in the digital age. *In Love and Warcraft* is a coproduction with Alaska's **Perseverance Theatre**.

Four white actors devise a play about the origins of Thanksgiving. What could go wrong? Drama teacher Logan wants to put on the most culturally sensitive and historically accurate Thanksgiving play the school's ever seen, but can she overcome the conservative schoolboard, overbearing parents, and her own well-meaning cast? Performative wokeness meets school pageant in the razor-sharp satire, ***The Thanksgiving Play*** [Live Streamed: September 24 at 7 p.m., September 25 at 11 a.m. (student matinee), October 1 at 7 p.m., October 3 at 2 p.m.; On-Demand: October 9–16, 2020], from playwright **Larissa FastHorse** from the Sicangu Lakota Nation. *The Thanksgiving Play* is directed by **Shannon R. Davis**.

While planning his mother's funeral, Spencer stumbles upon a letter revealing the truth about his estranged father, which sets him on a magical journey through time and space. Along the way, he falls for a woman he meets on the plane and encounters a mysterious astronaut stranded on the moon. From the Whiting Award-winning playwright **James Ijames**, ***Moon Man Walk*** [September 25 at 7 p.m., September 26 at 2 p.m., October 2 at 11 a.m. (student matinee), October 3 at 7 p.m.; On-Demand: October 9–16, 2020] is a poetic look at how the stories we learn as children shape us as adults. *Moon Man Walk* is directed by **Dawn Monique Williams**.

Polish immigrant Darja wants love and money, but none of the men in her life can afford her both. At a bus stop in New Jersey, over the course of two decades and three relationships, Darja must choose between the men she loves and the security she needs as she fights to find her place in America. From Pulitzer Prize winner **Martyna Majok**, *Ironbound* [September 26 at 7 p.m., September 27 at 2 p.m., October 1 at 11 a.m. (student matinee), October 2 at 7 p.m.; On-Demand: October 9–16, 2020] is a funny, intimate, and moving portrayal of a woman who never gives up. *Ironbound* is directed by **Jessica Holt**.

Can you burn with desire and remain silent? When a bride's former lover pays her a visit, she disappears before the ceremony. The vengeful groom follows them into the woods, unfazed by Death, Spirits, or the Moon. As passion and blood feuds converge, the fate of the three lovers hurtle toward the inevitable. By turn witty and gruesome, featuring texts in both Spanish and English, this new adaptation by **John Graham** of **Federico García Lorca's *Blood Wedding*** [October 22 at 7 p.m., October 23 at 7 p.m., October 29 at 11 a.m. (student matinee), October 30 at 7 p.m.; On-Demand: November 6–13, 2020] examines the bonds of tradition, the legacy of family, and the price of conformity. *Blood Wedding* is directed by **Christine Adaire**.

To close out the fall online productions, the MFA program will also be producing a video musical revue, directed by **Milissa Carey**, and a special virtual video variety show featuring music, clowning, comedic sketches, and more.

The A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts program season will continue in 2021 with four exciting productions. A wildly theatrical examination of crime and punishment, **Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*** tells the story of the first penal colony in Sydney, where the officers and convicts put on a play as an Aboriginal Australian observes. *Our Country's Good* will be directed by **Peter J. Kuo**.

Satirizing wealth and class, **Wendy MacLeod's *The House of Yes: A Suburban Jacobean Play*** is a black comedy about a family with creepy secrets and a woman who believes she's Jackie Kennedy. *The House of Yes* will be directed by **Lavina Jadhvani**.

Spanning across nine decades and three countries, **Rajiv Joseph's *Describe the Night*** is a thrilling ride through Russian history, conspiracies, and espionage. *Describe the Night* will be directed by **Jeffrey Lo**.

As part of the annual **Will On Wheels** program, A.C.T.'s Master of Fine Arts program will present a new hip hop adaptation of **William Shakespeare's *As You Like It***. This retelling of Shakespeare's story of romance, madness, and mistaken identity poses the question: does love conquer all? *As You Like It* will be directed by **M. Graham Smith** in collaboration with **Ryan Nicole Austin**.

Productions in 2021 may be performed virtually or in-person depending on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic. Performance schedules, creative teams, and ticketing information will be announced at a later date.

MFA Board of Directors members include **Norman Abramson, Carlotta Dathe, Frannie Fleishhacker, Dianne Hoge, Christopher Hollenbeck, Luba Kipnis, Linda Kurtz, Jennifer Lindsay, Toni Ratner Miller, Mary Ann Munro, Joseph Ratner, Toni Rembe, Abby Sadin Schnair, Lori Halveson Martin, Anne Shonk, Melissa Smith, and Patrick S. Thompson, Chair**.

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#### **ABOUT THE MASTER OF FINE ARTS PROGRAM**

Ranked as one of the top programs in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report* and *The Hollywood Reporter*, the Master of Fine Arts Program—under the direction of **Melissa Smith**—is the only theater-training program not affiliated with a US college or university accredited to award a Master of Fine Arts degree in acting. Student actors at A.C.T. perform frequently within the program in staged productions, as well as in cabaret and touring Shakespeare productions throughout Bay Area schools and communities. Third-year MFA Program actors perform in A.C.T.'s mainstage production of *A Christmas Carol* and also audition for roles in A.C.T. mainstage season productions. In recent years, students have played roles in *Gloria, Wakey, Wakey, Hamlet, The Hard Problem, Rhinoceros, Top Girls, and Ah, Wilderness!*, and have performed in new and commissioned works. Many alumni go on to distinguished careers in theater and film and include such celebrated actors as Elizabeth Banks, Annette Bening, Christopher Fitzgerald, Danny Glover, Anika Noni Rose, Anna Deavere Smith, and Denzel Washington. A.C.T. forges a wealth of talented actors for productions across the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond; graduates of the MFA Program have taken on leading roles in productions at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, Magic Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, San Jose Stage, and Shakespeare Santa Cruz, among others. The MFA Program functions as the cornerstone of the

Conservatory, which trains more than 2,000 students annually through its combined programs, including the San Francisco Semester, Summer Training Congress, Studio A.C.T., and Young Conservatory. For more information, visit [act-sf.org/conservatory](http://act-sf.org/conservatory).