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AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER'S MASTER OF FINE ARTS PROGRAM ANNOUNCES SPRING 2016 PERFORMANCES

Featuring students from A.C.T.'s acclaimed Master of Fine Arts Program, productions include Richard O'Brien's cult classic musical, *The Rocky Horror Show*; *Cardenio*, inspired by Stephen Greenblatt and Charles Mee's *The Cardenio Project*; and *Black Orpheus: Una Historia de Amor*, inspired by the play *Orfeu da Conceição*

SAN FRANCISCO (March 28, 2016) – American Conservatory Theater announced today the Spring 2016 Performances featuring students from A.C.T.'s Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) Program. The works are Richard O'Brien's cult classic musical, *The Rocky Horror Show* (May 12–15, 2016) in The Rembe Theater at A.C.T.'s Strand Theater and *Cardenio* (May 6–14, 2016), inspired by *The Cardenio Project* by literary scholar Stephen Greenblatt and playwright Charles Mee, in The Rueff at A.C.T.'s Strand Theater. In addition, as part of A.C.T.'s Stage Coach, the Master of Fine Arts Program will present *Black Orpheus: Una Historia de Amor* (beginning Sunday, May 8), inspired by the play *Orfeu da Conceição* by Brazilian playwright Vinicius de Moraes and adapted and directed by Stephen Buescher, at various locations throughout the Bay Area.

Meshing B-movie camp and black lingerie with a loving homage to 1950s sci-fi, costumed carnival *The Rocky Horror Show* is the original cult musical. It follows young lovers Brad and Janet as they tramp through the rain after their car breaks down. Seeking help at the castle of cross-dressing scientist Frank N. Furter, they stumble on a secret world of muscle men, transvestites, and aliens. Directed by two-time Tony Award nominee John Carrafa (choreographer for *Urinetown* and *Into The Woods* on Broadway), the actors of A.C.T.'s M.F.A. Program take on the spectacular show that spawned a subculture. Patrons are encouraged to come in costume. The performance schedule for *The Rocky Horror Show* is as follows: **Thursday, May 12 at 7:30 p.m.**; **Friday, May 13 at 7:30 p.m.**; **Saturday, May 14 at 2 and 7:30 p.m.**; and **Sunday, May 15 at 2 p.m.** *The Rocky*

Horror Show will be presented in cabaret-style seating. Tickets are \$30 and are available online at www.act-sf.org/mfashows or by calling the A.C.T. Box Office at **415.749.2228**.

When a young couple marries in San Francisco, love is in the air. A happy ending looks inevitable in ***Cardenio***—until the groom’s parents show up with an unexpected wedding present, an impromptu performance of Shakespeare’s lost play. With the arrival of an old flame, the best man, and a sneaky sister, the plot of our play-within-a-play thickens, and love’s gravity draws the star-cross’d lovers in very different directions. Inspired by *The Cardenio Project* by literary scholar Stephen Greenblatt and playwright Charles Mee (*Big Love*), ***Cardenio*** weds contemporary language to dramatic verse, creating a modern romantic farce that gives Shakespeare a shake-up. The performance schedule for *Cardenio* is as follows: **Friday, May 6 at 7 p.m.; Saturday, May 7 at 7 p.m.; Thursday, May 12 at 7 p.m.; Friday, May 13 at 7 p.m.; and Saturday, May 14 at 7 p.m.** Tickets are \$20 and are available at www.act-sf.org/mfashows or by calling the A.C.T. Box Office at **415.749.2228**. Purchase a ticket package for *The Rocky Horror Show* and *Cardenio* and save \$10.

As part of A.C.T.’s Stage Coach, students from A.C.T.’s Master of Fine Arts Program will present ***Black Orpheus: Una Historia de Amor*** at various locations throughout the Bay Area. After his beloved Eurydice is stolen by Death, guitar-toting poet Orpheus ventures into the underworld in an attempt to retrieve her. Set in a mythical barrio during Carnival, *Black Orpheus: Una Historia de Amor* is inspired by the play *Orfeu da Conceição* by Brazilian poet and playwright Vinicius de Moraes. Adapted and directed by Stephen Buescher, this Stage Coach production layers Afro-Latino rhythms with visual storytelling to bring this vivid story to life. As they tour communities of the Bay Area, A.C.T.’s M.F.A. Program actors create a classic love story with a Carnival heartbeat. The performance schedule for *Black Orpheus: Una Historia de Amor* is as follows: **Sunday, May 8 at 2 p.m.** at Persia Triangle in San Francisco’s Excelsior District; **Monday, May 9 at 7 p.m.** at La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley; **Friday, May 13 at 6 p.m.** at Mendell Plaza in San Francisco’s Bayview District; **Saturday, May 14 at 4 p.m.** at Stone Stage at San Francisco’s Yerba Buena Gardens. All performances are free and open to members of the public. For more information, visit <http://www.act-sf.org/mfashows> or call 415.439.2442.

These productions are made possible by generous grants from **The Bernard Osher Foundation** and **Jewels of Charity**. Additional support provided by donors to A.C.T.’s 2015 Season Gala. Stage Coach is supported by a grant from **The James Irvine Foundation**.

Ranked as one of the top programs in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*, the **A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) Program**—under the direction of **Melissa Smith**—is the only theater training program in the country that is accredited to award the master of fine arts degree, yet is not affiliated with a college or university. The essence of A.C.T.’s actor training lies in the interplay between the professional company and the Conservatory.

Student actors at A.C.T. perform frequently within the program in studio productions, as well as in cabaret and Shakespeare productions that tour the Bay Area. Third-year M.F.A. Program student actors perform in A.C.T.'s mainstage production of *A Christmas Carol* and also audition for roles in A.C.T. mainstage productions. In recent years, students have played roles in *Ah, Wilderness!*, *Love and Information*, *The Unfortunates*, and *A Little Night Music*, as well as performing in new and commissioned works. Many graduates of the program go on to distinguished careers in theater and film and include such celebrated actors as Elizabeth Banks, Annette Bening, Christopher Fitzgerald, Danny Glover, Omar Metwally, Dileep Rao, Anna Deavere Smith, and Denzel Washington. A.C.T. provides a wealth of talented actors for productions across the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond: graduates of the M.F.A. 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 M.F.A. Program functions as the cornerstone of the A.C.T. Conservatory, which also includes the Summer Training Congress, Studio A.C.T., the Young Conservatory, and the San Francisco Semester, and trains more than 3,000 students annually. For more information, visit act-sf.org/conservatory.

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