

A.C.T. AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER

CAREY PERLOFF, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | ELLEN RICHARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A.C.T. Honors Graduates Harry Hamlin, Heidi Armbruster, Peter Freidrich at Conservatory Awards Luncheon

Ceremony also to honor A.C.T. Conservatory donors
Joan W. Sadler and Wells Fargo

The star-studded event will take place Monday, October 28, 2013

SAN FRANCISCO (October 14, 2013)—American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.) is proud to announce the recipients of the 2013–14 **Conservatory Awards**, which recognizes and honors outstanding alumni of A.C.T.'s award-winning actor training program and pays tribute to donors and organizations who have provided significant support to the Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) Program Scholarship Fund. The third annual Conservatory Awards luncheon raises necessary funding for M.F.A. Program scholarships while celebrating A.C.T.'s accomplishments with award winners and current M.F.A. Program students. The winners of the five awards to be presented are Emmy Award–nominated actor and A.C.T. M.F.A. Program honorary graduate **Harry Hamlin**, who receives **The Edward Hastings Career Achievement Award**; actress of stage and screen **Heidi Armbruster**, who receives **The Rising Star Award**; actor and Shakespeare Iraq drama teacher **Peter Friedrich**, who receives the **Contribution to the Field Award**; **Joan W. Sadler**, who receive **The Benefactor Award**; and **Wells Fargo**, which receives **The Champion Award**. The star-studded event will take place **Monday, October 28, 2013, at 11:30 a.m.** in the Veranda Ballroom at San Francisco's Four Seasons Hotel. Tickets and table sponsorships are now available. For information about the event, visit <http://www.act-sf.org/conservatoryawards>, or contact Luz Perez, Director of Special Events, at 415.439.2470 or lperez@act-sf.org.

Says **Melissa Smith**, Conservatory Director at A.C.T.: "A.C.T. is a multi-faceted artistic and educational community, and the awards this year reflect the range and reach of our training as well as the dreams and ambitions of those we train and those who support that training. Harry, Heidi and Peter have distinguished themselves in television and film, onstage and in the educational realm, respectively, with Peter going the extra mile to teach for a number of years in Iraq. Joan Sadler has been involved with A.C.T. since its earliest days – as a trustee and board chair, providing financial support to many MFA projects through the years. Much of what we do would not be possible without the sustained support of Wells Fargo. We're tremendously proud of the accomplishments of our graduates and deeply grateful for the largesse of our benefactors. It's an honor and a pleasure to celebrate these stars at the annual award luncheon."

Harry Hamlin '76

Harry Hamlin has been working in television, film, and stage for three decades. In 1979 he received his first Golden Globe nomination for Best Motion Picture Acting Debut in the musical comedy *Movie Movie*. He

currently appears on AMC's *Mad Men* for which he received an Emmy nomination, and was most recently seen on Showtime's *Shameless* and *Army Wives*, as well as memorable guest appearances on HBO's *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and TNT's *Franklin and Bash*. In 2006, Hamlin followed wife Lisa Rinna's lead as a competitor on ABC's top-rated *Dancing with the Stars*, also going on the national tour. Rinna and Hamlin performed together in the Broadway revival of *Chicago* as Billy Flynn and Roxie Hart, and most recently starred in their own TV Land reality series *Harry Loves Lisa*, which coincided with the launch of his Scribner memoir, *Full Frontal Nudity*. Hamlin has portrayed Uncle Marty on the CBS murder mystery *Harper's Island*, Aaron Echolls on the critically acclaimed *Veronica Mars*, and led the cast of the comedy series *Movie Stars*. He received three consecutive Golden Globe nominations for his memorable role as attorney Michael Kuzak on Steven Bochco's *L.A. Law*. On the big screen, Hamlin has appeared in *Strange Wilderness*, *Clash of the Titans* with Sir Lawrence Olivier, and in *Making Love*, a film about a gay relationship in the early '80s. On the horizon are the independent features *Dangerous Attraction*, *The Fourth Noble Truth* and *Immigrant*. He most recently appeared in the Los Angeles stage production of *The Jesus Hicke*. Hamlin is a classically trained actor with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Drama from Yale University and a Master of Fine Arts in Acting from the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. He was *People Magazine's* Sexiest Man Alive in 1987.

Heidi Armbruster '02

Heidi Armbruster has been living and working as an actor and writer in New York for the past ten years. She was most recently seen in the role of Emily in *Disgraced* at Lincoln Center Theater. Armbruster's theater credits include *Time Stands Still*, *Sea of Tranquility*, *Tea and Sympathy* (Drama League Nomination), *The Fifth Column*, *Love Goes To Press*, *Susan and Go*, *Duchess of Malfi*, *Hillary*, *Dov* and *Ali*. Her extensive regional credits include New York Stage and Film, as well as Guthrie Theater, American Conservatory Theater, Seattle Repertory, Actors' Theatre of Louisville, Barrington Stage Company, Baltimore Center Stage, and George Street Playhouse. Armbruster has also appeared in Film and TV in *My Man Is a Loser* (upcoming), *Michael Clayton*, *The Northern Kingdom*, *The Smurfs*, *30 Rock*, *Unforgettable*, *Louie*, *Law and Order: SVU*, *Law and Order*, and *Mercy*. Heidi was recently featured in Zach Calhoun's blog *Visible Soul* as one of his People You Should Know.

Peter Friedrich '94

Peter Friedrich has performed in various tours and regional theater productions, including the Lincoln Center Tour of Wendy Wasserstein's *The Sisters Rosensweig* and San Diego Rep's *Death of a Salesman*. He has also appeared in featured roles on *Saturday Night Live* and *Sesame Street*. In 2011 he became a full-time teacher for Los Angeles Unified School District in programs targeting immigrants, at-risk youth, and the homeless. Continuing theater work in smaller productions, he directed for Susan Lori Parks' 365 Project at Circle-X Theatre, receiving a Los Angeles Critics Circle nomination for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf in 2003*. In 2008, he joined the American University of Iraq in Sulaimani where he directed the Iraqi premieres of Akbar Ahmed's *Noor*, Heather Raffo's *Nine Parts of Desire*, and several original works by Iraqi students on war, corruption, women's rights and religion. In October, he will guest teach at Stanford University, and New York University.. He is currently on a one-year assignment as Scholar in Residence at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, where he teaches Improvisation and Theater for Social Change.

Joan W. Sadler

Prior to moving to the Bay Area in 1966, Joan was a free-lance actor and broadcaster, and vice president of the board at Detroit's Vanguard Theatre. She was immediately drawn to support A.C.T. after attending its powerful opening performance in 1966 and under the leadership of Mortimer Fleishhacker and Cyril Magnin, she served first as secretary, and then as vice president, on the board of the California Association for A.C.T. When Founding Artistic Director William Ball retired, she was active in A.C.T.'s reorganization, acting on its nominating and research committees and serving as president of the newly formed A.C.T. Board of Trustees from 1987 until 1989. After her retirement, she served on the Conservatory Committee

until its recent reorganization. Throughout the years, she has been particularly inspired by the role the conservatory plays in contributing to the culture of the city. In 2002 she initiated an annual Joan Sadler Award to be given to a second-year A.C.T. Masters of Fine Arts in Acting student for exemplary work both as a student and as a graduate who will represent the highest standards and traditions of the theatrical art. Joan was born in Washington D.C., attended the Katharine Branson School, and is a graduate of Vassar College. A visual artist and photographer, she has a long association with the O'Hanlon Center for the Arts in Mill Valley.

Wells Fargo, represented by Diana Starcher

Wells Fargo defines itself as a community-based, *diversified financial services company* with operations that stretch across the globe. They make grants in three primary areas: Community Development, Education, and Human Services, and also support nonprofit organizations for which Wells Fargo team members have made a commitment to volunteer via direct service or through committee or Board membership. Diana Starcher, senior executive at Wells Fargo & Company, serves as a member of the A.C.T. Board of Trustees. She has over 30 years of experience in the financial services industry, and manages the Customer Service, Sales, and Operations Group for Wells Fargo in San Francisco. A resident of the Bay area for 12 years; Diana loves being a part of this beautiful city. She takes great pleasure in being an active supporter of live theater in the Bay Area. Wells Fargo is proud to support organizations that work to strengthen our communities and A.C.T. salutes Wells Fargo for helping us provide live theater, actor training and educational outreach to keep both our and their communities strong, diverse, and vibrant.

Ranked as one of the top programs in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*, the **A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program** is the only theater training program in the country 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 to the larger 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 leading roles in ***Arcadia, Dead Metaphor, Armistead Maupin's Tales of the City, Once in a Lifetime, Marcus; or The Secret of Sweet, and The Caucasian Chalk Circle***, 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, Anika Noni Rose, 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: 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., and the Young Conservatory, and trains more than 3,000 students annually. For more information, visit **act-sf.org/conservatory**.

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