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# Changes continue in Bay Area theater artistic leadership



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By Jean Schiffman on March 3, 2019 12:01 am

The latest artistic director to be hired at a local theater, amid an unprecedented period of transitions in artistic leadership in the Bay Area, is Josh Costello at Berkeley's intimate Aurora Theatre Company.

Costello's appointment followed a nationwide search. The 27-year-old theater's longtime artistic director Tom Ross will leave in July after 15 years as the company's second artistic director.

Among other shows he's directed at Aurora, Costello, the company's literary manager and artistic associate since 2012, helmed Jonathan Spector's award-winning "Eureka Day" last season.

"I want to reach out to new audiences," he says. "I want us to be a storyteller to the whole community."

Next door, at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Johanna Pfaelzer takes over from Tony Taccone (artistic director since 1997; associate artistic director prior to that) in September.

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Johanna Pfaelzer is slated to take over at Berkeley Repertory Theatre in September. (Courtesy photo)

Currently the artistic director at New York Stage and Film, Pfaelzer lived in the Bay Area as a child and was associate artistic director at American Conservatory Theater for five years. In a message on Berkeley Rep's website, she says, "These are complicated times and theater is one of the greatest tools we have for understanding each other."



Pam MacKinnon is American Conservatory Theater's new artistic director. (Courtesy photo)

Meanwhile, at American Conservatory Theater, Pam MacKinnon recently directed Edward Albee's "Seascape," her first directorial work as artistic director there, following Carey Perloff's departure.

MacKinnon, a director on Broadway, Off-Broadway and in regional theater, has directed at Berkeley Rep and the Magic Theatre as well.

"I want to share with audiences stories that ask us to play," she says. Two upcoming works that fit that bill: Lauren Yee's "The Great Leap" (about basketball) and Kate Hamill's adaptation of "Vanity Fair."

Also in San Francisco, at the experimental Cutting Ball, which was founded by Rob Melrose and Paige Rogers in 1999, Ariel Craft has been at the helm since July. Associated with the company since 2015, she has said she plans to continue taking the artistic risks that the company is known for.

Down the Peninsula, founder-artistic director Robert Kelley of TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, a company well known especially for launching new musicals, announced that he will step down as

...reedy, another founder artistic director, Shane Tusa of the 17-year-old local theatre in Mountain View, resigned in 2017; Betsy Kruse Craig is current artistic director.

In Redwood City, Dragon Productions Theatre Company took on co-artistic directors Bora “Max” Koknar and Alika U. Spencer-Koknar when founding artistic director Meredith Hagedorn last year left after 18 years.

Finally, at the long-running Douglas Morriison Theatre in Hayward, artistic director Susan Evans departed when the board of the Hayward Area Recreation and Park District, which operates the theater, decided to hire a theater manager, Mary Jo Price, to oversee artistic activities as well as rentals, youth programming and more.

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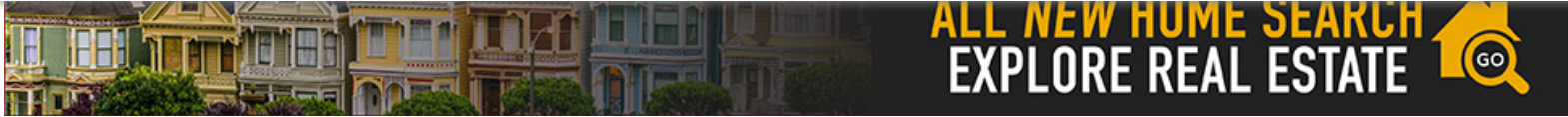
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