



**AURORA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS  
THE BAY AREA PREMIERE OF ABI MORGAN'S  
"SPLENDOUR"  
June 23-July 23, 2017**

BERKELEY, Calif. (May 30, 2017) – Aurora Theatre Company closes its 25<sup>th</sup> season with the Bay Area Premiere of **SPLENDOUR**, Abi Morgan's (*Suffragette*, *The Iron Lady*, *Shame*, *The Hour*) riveting play about the fragility of power and the unreliability of language. **Barbara Damashek** (*American Buffalo*) returns to Aurora to helm this drama, featuring **Lorri Holt** (*The Aspern Papers*), **Denmo Ibrahim** (*Betrayed*), **Mia Tagano**, and **Sam Jackson**. **SPLENDOUR** plays **June 23 through July 23** at the Aurora Theatre in Berkeley. For tickets and information the public can call **(510) 843-4822** or visit **[auroratheatre.org](http://auroratheatre.org)**.

In the dripping-with-wealth drawing room of a presidential palace, a Western photojournalist awaits the return of a dictator. She is there to take his picture only the dictator in question is running very, very late. The sounds of gunfire from the streets and rumors of revolution swirling in the air reveal that something has also gone very, very wrong. The dictator's wife, her best friend, and an interpreter wait with her. They talk films and Prada shoes as their fingers lightly tap out the time. All four women harbor secrets and suspicions. All four are in danger. In a fascinating, non-linear structure, this lush piece returns over and over to earlier scenes, each time with the knowledge of what has been uncovered since. Compassionate, dispassionate, and icily probing, **SPLENDOUR** allows a devastating glimpse into the minds of four women as their world turns.

*The Evening Standard* called **SPLENDOUR** "splendid," and *The Huffington Post* stated, "...how good it [is] to see a play about power and human fallibility told from a female perspective." *The Telegraph* said, "In radically showing a tense, fracturing situation from conflicting angles, the play not only represents an inspired marriage of form and content but resonates strongly with our anxious age of ethno-political disintegration. The result is a mixture of perturbing comedy and gathering dread: shards of a drama we must piece together."

Tony-nominated director **Barbara Damashek**, who helmed Aurora Theatre Company's productions of *American Buffalo*, *The Lyons*, *Fat Pig* and *Private Jokes*, *Public Places*, returns to direct **SPLENDOUR**. Best known as the director, composer-lyricist, and co-author of the musical *Quilters*, which received six

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Tony nominations, Damashek has directed productions for South Coast Repertory Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Trinity Repertory Company, Mark Taper Forum, Yale Repertory Theatre, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, among others. Additionally, Damashek has helmed productions at Berkeley Repertory Theatre (*House of Blue Leaves*, *Rhinoceros*), Center REpertory Company (*Laughter on the 23rd Floor* and *Noel and Gertie*), Marin Theatre Company (*Arms and the Man*), American Conservatory Theater (*The Cherry Orchard*), and Magic Theatre (*The Cryptogram*, *Lonesome West*). An Assistant Professor at San Francisco State University, Damashek has created a large body of original plays with music, including *Whereabouts Unknown*, a musical documentary about the homeless, which was commissioned by the Actors Theatre of Louisville’s Humana Festival and a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize.

**Abi Morgan** is a British playwright, producer, and screenwriter. She is the daughter of actress Pat England and theatre director Gareth Morgan. After initial ambitions to become an actress herself, she decided to become a writer. In addition to **SPLENDOUR** (2000), Morgan’s plays include *Skinned* (1997); *Sleeping Around* (1998); *Fast Food* (1999); *Tiny Dynamite* (2001); *Tender* (2001); *Monster Mum* (2005); *Fugee* (2008); *The Night is Darkest Before the Dawn* (2009); *Lovesong* (2011); *27* (2011); and *The Mistress Contract* (2014). Screenplays include *Brick Lane* (2007); *The Iron Lady* (2011); *Shame* (2011); *The Invisible Woman* (2013); and *Suffragette* (2015). She won an Emmy for penning the BBC drama *The Hour* (2013).

Aurora Theatre Company has assembled a talented ensemble for **SPLENDOUR**. Award-winning actress **Lorri Holt** returns to Aurora as Micheleine in **SPLENDOUR**; she previously appeared in the company’s production of *The Aspern Papers*. Additional credits include productions at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, American Conservatory Theater, San Francisco Playhouse, Magic Theatre, Cutting Ball Theater, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Marin Theater Company, California Shakespeare Theater, Wilma Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, Birmingham Repertory Theatre (England), and the Barbican Theatre (London), among others. She originated the role of Harper Pitt in Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America* at the Eureka Theater and recently co-wrote and starred in a one-woman show, *Colette Uncensored*, at The Marsh.

**Denmo Ibrahim** returns to Aurora Theatre Company as Kathryn in **SPLENDOUR**; she was last seen at Aurora in *Betrayed*. Additional credits include productions at American Conservatory Theater, California Shakespeare Theater, Crowded Fire Theater, Golden Thread Productions, Theatre of Yugen, Alter Theatre, Fools Fury, Elastic Theatre Company, and Huntington Theatre, among others. She is a co-founder of the Mugwumpin performance company.

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**Mia Tagano** makes her Aurora stage debut as Genevieve in **SPLENDOUR**. Credits include productions at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Magic Theatre, TheatreWorks, American Conservatory Theater, California Shakespeare Theater, The Marsh, Hartford Stage, and the Royal Shakespeare Company, among others.

Rounding out the cast and making her Aurora debut is **Sam Jackson** as Gilma. Credits include productions at Berkeley Playhouse (*Bridges: A New Musical*) and New Conservatory Theatre Center (*Avenue Q*), among others. She is the lead vocalist of The Gentlemen Amateurs.

Aurora Theatre Company opens its 26<sup>th</sup> season in September with the Bay Area Premiere of Rebecca Gilman’s **LUNA GALE**, directed by Aurora Artistic Director Tom Ross. Darryl V. Jones makes his Aurora directing debut in November with the Bay Area Premiere of Marco Ramirez’s **THE ROYALE** followed by a revival of George Bernard Shaw’s classic, **WIDOWERS’ HOUSES**, directed by Joy Carlin in January. Caryl Churchill’s **A NUMBER**, helmed by Barbara Damashek, will be staged in March followed by the World Premiere of Jonathan Spector’s **EUREKA DAY** in April, directed by Josh Costello. Closing the season is the Bay Area Premiere of Sarah Burgess’ off-Broadway hit **DRY POWDER** directed by Jennifer King in June.

Voted Best Theater Company in 2012 by *SF Weekly*, Aurora Theatre Company continues to offer challenging, literate, intelligent stage works to the Bay Area, each year increasing its reputation for top-notch theater. Located in the heart of the Downtown Berkeley Arts District, Aurora Theatre Company, declared “one of the best regional theaters around” by *7x7* magazine, has been called “one of the most important regional theaters in the area” and “a must-see midsize company” by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, while *The Wall Street Journal* has “nothing but praise for the Aurora.” The *Contra Costa Times* stated “perfection is probably an unattainable ideal in a medium as fluid as live performance, but the Aurora Theatre comes luminously close,” while the *San Jose Mercury News* affirmed Aurora Theatre Company is “arguably the finest small theater in the Bay Area,” and the *Oakland Tribune* stated “it’s all about choices, and if you value good theater, choose the Aurora.”

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### **FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

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**DATES:**        Previews: June 23, 24, 28 at 8pm; June 25 at 2pm; June 27 at 7pm  
                  **Opens: June 29, 2017**  
                  Closes: July 23

**SHOWS:**        Tuesday at 7pm; Wednesday through Saturday at 8pm; Sunday at 2pm, 7pm

**WHERE:**        Aurora Theatre Company, 2081 Addison Street, Berkeley, CA

**TICKETS:**     For tickets (Previews \$36; Regular Performances \$32-56; Limited Opening Night Seating \$65) the public can call **(510) 843-4822** or visit **auroratheatre.org**. Half-off tickets for Under 35; student, and group discounts available.

**PHOTOS:**     High-resolution photos for **SPLENDOUR** can be found at **auroratheatre.org/index.php?option=com\_theatre&view=press\_show&id=134** or can be received as jpegs upon request by emailing [elewis@auroratheatre.org](mailto:elewis@auroratheatre.org)

Aurora Theatre Company gratefully acknowledges Season Restaurant Sponsor Gecko Gecko and Season Floral Sponsor Darling Flowers for their support.

Aurora Theatre Company gratefully acknowledges Sponsors Cindy and Stephen Snow, and Alison Teeman and Michael Yovino-Young, and Associate Sponsors Leah and Neil MacNeil, and Lisa and James Taylor for their support.

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