



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT

Dayna Kalakau
510.843.8042 x311
dkalakau@auroratheatre.org

**JOSH COSTELLO
NAMED NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF
BERKELEY'S AURORA THEATRE COMPANY**

BERKELEY, CA (Feb. 5, 2019) Aurora Theatre Company and its Board of Directors today announced that Josh Costello will become the company's next artistic director. Costello will succeed Tom Ross who last May announced his July 2019 departure after 15 years as in the role.

"On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to announce that Josh Costello has been selected to lead Aurora Theatre Company as the next artistic director," said Board President Gary Moore. "Josh is a tremendously talented artist, an advocate for inclusivity in the arts, and a beloved member of the Bay Area theatre community who understands the nuance of our local arts culture. He knows where Aurora's been and he has a vision for where Aurora can go. I very much look forward to Aurora's growth under his artistic leadership."

"I am honored and humbled at the prospect of leading Aurora into its next chapter," Costello said. "Aurora has always been known for the quality of its work and for the compassion with which it treats its artists. We have a terrific staff, an engaged and passionate Board that is enthusiastic about the changes that are coming for Aurora, and a family of the best artists in the Bay Area who know that Aurora gives them the support they need to do their best work. I look forward to continuing that legacy while initiating a new commitment to welcoming and inspiring our whole community."

With his appointment, Costello brings a vision for Aurora's next chapter that builds on the theatre's success to make it a vital, celebrated, and authentic part of people's lives in the Bay Area.

“My whole career I've advocated for theaters to work harder to reach out to new audiences by telling stories that truly reflect our world and our present moment,” said Costello. “Now is the perfect time for us to embrace our role as storyteller to our community, making inclusive and compelling theatre that is as relevant as it is excellent.”

Costello will be Aurora's third artistic director in its 27-year history. Since 2012 he has served as Aurora's literary manager and artistic associate, supporting season planning and all artistic decisions at the award-winning Bay Area theatre. In that time he has directed four successful shows at Aurora, the most recent being *Eureka Day*, recipient of the Rella Lossy Award for the best new script by an emerging playwright and the Glickman Award for the best new play in the Bay Area.

“I am thrilled to welcome Josh into his new role at Aurora and as my partner. I've long respected Josh and his skill, and after an exhaustive search, was blown away by his vision for the company,” said Managing Director Julie Saltzman Kellner. “I know that he'll continue using his talents to develop excellent new plays and build new partnerships with both artists and community members. Together, we are looking forward to making Aurora a true home for all members of our community and letting the world see what great art can come out of a 150-seat theatre in Berkeley.”

“I've had a wonderful time working with Josh as my associate for the past six years,” said Ross. “During that time he has done a terrific job for Aurora and other Bay Area theatres and has continued to be respected by our thriving theatre community. I look forward to seeing Josh take the reins and drive the company deeper into the 21st Century.”

Costello's appointment comes after an eight-month-long nationwide search by a committee led, in part, by Ellen Levine, Board vice president, and composed of other board members and leading Bay Area theatre artists.

“Our search generated over 75 applications from many well-qualified applicants located throughout the country and in the Bay Area,” Levine said. “After a painstakingly difficult process over several months, we narrowed the list down to 13 to 4 to 1. At the end of the day, we felt that Josh was the right person at the right time. He has a vision for Aurora's future that dovetails with that of the Board and, we believe, with that of our patrons, and new and exciting

ideas to keep Aurora Theatre in the forefront of Bay Area theatre. We're all very excited to work with him in this new phase of Aurora's life."

A celebrated and award-winning local director and arts leader, Costello has had a long career of developing and directing new plays with playwrights like Lauren Gunderson, Zayd Dohrn, Aaron Loeb, Jonathan Spector, and Steve Yockey. He was the founding artistic director of Impact Theatre, a small company that made a big splash by attracting young audiences to meaningful theatre with an irreverent attitude. Before joining Aurora he spent five years as the Artistic Director of Expanded Programs at Marin Theatre Company where he ran the education and outreach departments, including commissioning new work and building new relationships with the Bay Area community and directing acclaimed productions such as *My Children! My Africa!*. Costello has directed notable world and regional premieres: *Eureka Day*, *The Heir Apparent*, *Detroit*, and *Wittenberg* at Aurora Theatre Company; *Ideation* at SF Playhouse, which received the Theatre Bay Area Award for Outstanding Direction and was named a New York Times Critic's Pick off-Broadway; *Eve and Steven* at TheatreFirst; and *Little Brother* at Custom Made Theatre Company.

Dedicated to education almost as much as he is to directing, Costello has taught at Cal Shakes, ACT, South Coast Rep, UC Riverside, Cal State Long Beach, SF Shakes, and Marin Shakes, among others. He holds a BFA in Theatre from Boston University and an MFA in Directing from the University of Washington, Seattle.

"As someone who has worked with Josh, I am so excited to see where Aurora goes under his leadership!" said *Wittenberg* and *Eureka Day* actress Elizabeth Carter. "He's smart, thoughtful and willing to push the envelope. As an actor, he's a dream of a director who really creates a space for all voices to be heard. I know he will take this into his the vision for the Aurora."

A longstanding commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion informs Costello's approach to theatre. "I know that many people haven't been given the kinds of opportunities I've had to move my career forward," he said. "That puts the responsibility on me -- especially when stepping into this role at Aurora -- to ensure that I'm using whatever means I have to create those kinds of opportunities for talented and passionate people who might not have had them in the past. Bringing in new perspectives enriches the art." Costello plans for Aurora to champion new and diverse voices, welcome new audiences, and tell stories that reflect the whole Bay Area Community.

Costello's first task as artistic director will be to choose the final play of Aurora's six-show 2019/2020 season.

More information and photos can be found at <http://bit.ly/AuroraNewAD>.

ABOUT AURORA

Aurora Theatre Company is known for work that invigorates audiences and artists through a shared experience of professional, intimate theatre. Aurora challenges itself and the broader community to do better, think deeper, laugh louder and cast wider nets of empathy toward the world. Through its productions of both classic and new works, it supports the Bay Area community by hiring local artists and artisans. It has an operating budget of just over \$2 million. Learn more at auroratheatre.org.

###