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**AURORA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS
BRYNA TURNER'S *BULL IN A CHINA SHOP*
NOVEMBER 8 - DECEMBER 8 (OPENS: NOV. 14)**

BERKELEY, CA (September 10, 2019) Aurora Theatre Company continues its dynamic 28th season with the Bay Area Premiere of Bryna Turner's **BULL IN A CHINA SHOP**. Newly appointed Associate Artistic Director Dawn Monique Williams will direct this romantic comedy about bravery and revolution at the height of the women's suffrage movement.

The cast features **Stacy Ross** (*The Year of Magical Thinking, Leni*), **Leontyne Mbele-Mbong** (*Temple, Breakfast With Mugabe*), **Rebecca Schweitzer** (*Rapture, Blister, Burn*), **Mia Tagano** (*Splendour*), and **Jasmine Milan Williams**.

BULL IN A CHINA STOP runs November 8 - December 8 (**Opens: November 14**).

Fierce feminist Mary Woolley becomes the president of Mount Holyoke College in 1901, on a crusade to stop training pious wives and start giving women a real education. The students respond, even starting a fan club for Woolley's longterm romance with teacher Jeannette Marks. But leading a revolution from inside an institution isn't easy, and neither is maintaining a relationship through years of challenges and change. Inspired by real letters between Woolley and Marks, this fast-paced comedy asks: What is revolution? What does it mean to be at odds with the world? And how the hell do we grow old together?

Time Out New York gave **BULL IN A CHINA SHOP** four stars and said, “*Bull in a China Shop* does the sisterhood proud! Heartbreaking, hilarious and delectable.”

“*Bull In a China Shop* is a delightful blend of 21st century language and a true story set in the early 20th century,” said Artistic Director Josh Costello. “Stacy Ross returns to Aurora to play a college president who is ahead of her time and fighting hard to bring her time along with her. We have a remarkable group of artists telling a story about remarkable women--it's an exhilarating and thought-provoking production.”

Bryna Turner is a Brooklyn-based playwright originally from Fort Bragg in Northern California. Her play, *Bull in a China Shop*, premiered at LCT3 and is published by Samuel French. Her work has been produced, developed, or presented by Abingdon Theatre Company, About Face, A.C.T., Alley Repertory, Clubbed Thumb, Colt Coeur, Diversionary, Ensemble Studio Theatre, LCT3, Mendocino Theatre Company, The National Theatre, and Rainbow Theatre Project. She is an alum of Clubbed Thumb’s Early Career Writer’s Group, a 2017 MacDowell Colony fellow, and a current artist in WP Theater’s 2018-2020 Lab. She is currently working on a commission for Lincoln Center Theater and was awarded their Emerging Artist Award of 2018. She holds an MFA from Rutgers University.

Bay Area native **Dawn Monique Williams** makes her Aurora debut. Most recently she was Artistic Associate and a resident artist at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for six seasons where she directed *Merry Wives of Windsor* in 2017. Recent directing credits include *Earthrise* at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, *TiJean and His Brothers*, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, *The Secretaries* (Willamette Week’s Top 10 Portland Theatre Productions of 2018), *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Piano Lesson*, and *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*. She's worked in theatres across the US including HERE Arts Center, Profile Theatre, A.C.T., Chautauqua Theater Company, and African-American Shakespeare Company. Her awards include a Princess Grace Theatre Fellowship, a TCG Leadership U Residency Grant, the Killian Directing Fellowship at OSF, and a Drama League Directing Fellowship. She holds an MA in Dramatic Literature and an MFA in Directing

Williams said: “I am thrilled to be making my Aurora debut with Bryna Turner’s *Bull in a China Shop*. This play has all the things I love: poetry, romance, and something important to say. It is a love story, yes, but it is also a radical unveiling of a time in history. To honor Mary Woolley and Jeanette Marks’ love story while also examining what it means to be a woman in a leadership position at a time of revolutionary change in our country, excites me. And that Turner insist the cast be made up intergenerationally of women from varying racial and ethnic backgrounds

makes me even more passionate about the work. Queer women's history is marginalized and so often untold, I am so fortunate to be a storyteller as part of this play's journey."

Williams has assembled a stellar cast for **BULL IN A CHINA SHOP**.

Stacy Ross is happy to return to Aurora after last appearing in 2019's *The Year of Magical Thinking* (2019). Other stints at the Aurora include *Leni, A Kind of Alaska, Hedda Gabler, Man of Destiny* and *Gidion's Knot*. Locally she has also been seen at Cal Shakes, Cutting Ball, SF Playhouse, Custom Made, A.C.T, Berkeley Rep, Playground and San Jose Rep.

Leontyne Mbele-Mbong is delighted to return to the Aurora where was last seen in *Temple* and *Breakfast with Mugabe*. Most recent shows: *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* with Word for Word, and *Macbeth* with African-American Shakespeare Company, where she will be doing *Private Lives* next Spring. Other AASC favorites include the title role in *Medea* (TBA Award), and Cleopatra in *Antony & Cleopatra* (TBA Award Finalist). Other favorites: *Watch on the Rhine, Top Girls, The Last Days of Judas Iscariot, Fences, Andromache, Candide, Richard III* (3 times), *Twelfth Night*, and *Intimate Apparel* (Mayme; ARTY Award, best supporting actress).

Rebecca Schweitzer is thrilled to back at the Aurora where she was last seen in *Rapture, Blister, Burn*. Other stage credits include Center Rep, SF Playhouse, Marin Theatre Company, and Pacific Conservatory of Performing Arts. Her voice can be heard on various video games (The Walking Dead, Back to the Future, World of Warcraft: Legion, League of Legends, SimsCity, CSI Hard Evidence, CSI Deadly Intent) TV and radio commercials, corporate videos, and reservation lines (CSAA, Disney). Schweitzer is a graduate of the Pacific Conservatory of Performing Arts.

Mia Tagano was last seen at Aurora in *Splendour*. Locally she's been seen at Berkeley Rep, A.C.T., CalShakes, and TheatreWorks. Regional credits include Shakespeare Theater, Portland Center Stage, Hartford Stage, Lincoln Center, Cherry Lane Theater, and Capital Rep among others. Tagano holds a BA from Ohio State University and an MFA from the University of Washington.

Jasmine Milan Williams makes her Aurora debut. Recent stage credits include Crowded Fire Theatre and TheaterFIRST. Other credits include Campo Santo, African-American Shakespeare Company, and New Conservatory Theatre Center.

The creative team for **BULL IN A CHINA SHOP** includes **Leslie Radin**--Stage Manager; **Nina Ball**--Set; **Ulises Alcalá**--Costume; **Kurt Landisman**--Lights; and **Lana Palmer**--Sound.

CALENDAR EDITORS

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DATES

Previews: Friday 11/8 and Saturday 11/9 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, 11/10 at 2 p.m. only.

Tuesday, 11/12 and Wednesday, 11/13 at 7 p.m.

Open: **Thursday, November 14**

Close: **Sunday, December 8**

Shows: Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m.

Sunday at 2 p.m. & 7 p.m.

WHERE Aurora Theatre Company | 2081 Addison Street | Berkeley, CA

TICKETS For single tickets (\$35-\$70) or subscriptions (\$111-\$396), the public can call (510) 843-4822 or visit www.auroratheatre.org.

PRE PRODUCTION IMAGES <http://bit.ly/BULLAuroraPress>

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ABOUT AURORA THEATRE COMPANY

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.

Aurora Theatre Company gratefully acknowledges Season Sponsors: Ed & Liliane Schneider. Sponsors: George & Candy Hisert. Associate Sponsors: Gertrude E. Allen, Deborah & Howard Goodman, Rosalind & Sung-Hou Kim, Paul Templeton & Darrell Louie, Lisa R. Taylor, Tom & Amy Worth.

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