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**AURORA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS
THE WORLD PREMIERE AUDIO DRAMA
THE FLATS
By LAUREN GUNDERSON, CLEAVON SMITH,
AND JONATHAN SPECTOR**

BERKELEY, CA (August 25, 2020) Aurora Theatre Company kicks off its 29th season with the original World Premiere Audio Drama **THE FLATS**, jointly written by playwrights **Lauren Gunderson, Cleavon Smith, and Jonathan Spector** (*Eureka Day*). **Artistic Director Josh Costello** (*Exit Strategy, The Importance of Being Earnest, Eureka Day, Detroit*) directs this new story that speaks directly to our present moment in all its complexity.

Aurora commissioned **THE FLATS** in June 2020 after the COVID-19 health crisis forced the theatre to shift its focus to a membership program for the 2020/2021 season, with online offerings replacing live productions until conditions allow for audiences to gather safely.

“Aurora thrives on detailed language and nuanced acting that our intimate spaces make possible,” Costello said. “When it became clear that we had to move online, I knew an audio drama would be the right format for carrying on these qualities.”

The cast features **Lauren English** (*Talley’s Folly*), **Anthony Fusco**, and **Khary L. Moye**.

THE FLATS opens October 23 and will be available through Aurora’s new membership program, and also for individual release.

SYNOPSIS: The residents of a Berkeley triplex are thrown together by a shelter-in-place order due to a mysterious threat. Brooke is a Black man navigating the white world of supposedly liberal Berkeley. Harmony is a white suburban mom away from her kids for the first time in years. Leonard is an aging hippie with a theory that might change everything. When the old system is thrown into chaos, how do we build a new world together?

Lauren Gunderson has been one of the most produced playwrights in America since 2015, topping the list twice including 2019/20. She is a two-time winner of the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award for *I and You* and *The Book of Will*, the winner of the Lanford Wilson Award and the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award, a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and John Gassner Award for Playwriting, and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation's Residency with Marin Theatre Company. She studied Southern Literature and Drama at Emory University, and Dramatic Writing at NYU's Tisch School where she was a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship. She co-authored the *Miss Bennet* plays with Margot Melcon. Her play *The Half-Life of Marie Curie* is available on Audible, and her work is published at Playscripts, Dramatists Play Service, and Samuel French.

Cleavon Smith is TheatreFIRST's playwright-in-residence. Credits include *Vs.* and *The Last Sermon of Sister Imani* as well as the one-act, "Just One Day" featured in the compilation *Between Us*. He's won a PlayGround Emerging Playwright Award and has had work featured in UC Berkeley's New Play Reading Series, the Ohlone College Playwrights Festival, and two Utopia Theatre Project productions. He is the artist mentor for Berkeley Repertory Theatre's Young Writers of Color Collective and teaches English at Berkeley City College.

Jonathan Spector's play *Eureka Day* was commissioned by and premiered at Aurora, and received all of the Bay Area's new play awards: The Glickman, Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle, Theatre Bay Area, & Rella Lossy Awards. It later had a sold out run in New York City with Colt Coeur, where it was New York Times Critics' Pick. Other plays include *This Much I Know, Good. Better. Best. Bested.*, *What Comes Next*, *Siesta Key*, and *In From The Cold*. His work has also been developed and produced with Roundabout Theatre Company, South Coast Rep, Mosaic Theater, InterAct, Mugwumpin, San Francisco Playhouse, Crowded Fire, and Theatre of NOTE. He is a recipient of South Coast Rep's Elizabeth George Commission, has been a MacDowell Colony Fellow, a Resident Playwright at Playwrights Foundation, and is currently a Core Writer at The Playwrights Center in Minneapolis. Spector is the Co-Artistic Director of Just Theater.

Josh Costello is the Artistic Director of Aurora Theatre Company. Throughout his career, Josh has worked to make theatre more accessible for more people, sharing a passion for the visceral

experience of live theatre with new audiences and underserved communities. He was the founding Artistic Director of Impact Theatre and the Artistic Director of Expanded Programs at Marin Theatre Company. At Aurora, Josh initiated student matinee and Community Partner programs and led a revision of Aurora's mission to emphasize the theatre's role as storyteller to the community. Josh has directed *Exit Strategy*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Detroit*, *Wittenberg*, and *The Heir Apparent* for Aurora, as well as the world premiere of *Eureka Day*, which won every Bay Area new play award. His world-premiere production of Aaron Loeb's *Ideation* with San Francisco Playhouse in both SF and NYC won the Glickman Award for best new play in the Bay Area and the Theatre Bay Area Award for Outstanding Direction, and was named a New York Times Critics' Pick.

Costello's other directing work includes *My Children! My Africa!* at Marin Theatre Company, *House of Lucky* at Magic Theatre, and his adaptations of Cory Doctorow's *Little Brother* and Aphra Behn's *The Rover*. Josh holds a BFA in Theatre from Boston University, and an MFA in Directing from the University of Washington, Seattle.

Said Costello: "In the midst of the pandemic and all the cancelations, working on this project has been a source of real joy. These three playwrights are thinking deeply about what this interruption has revealed about us, both individually and as a society, and it's a privilege to get to tell a story that has grown so organically out of the present circumstances, and that moves the conversation forward with such passion, humor, and humanity.

"We're in a new place now, and we need new stories to help us understand the new world we're living in. I'm so proud that Aurora is telling this story right now."

Costello has assembled a talented cast for **THE FLATS**.

Lauren English (Harmony) returns to Aurora after 2015's *Talley's Folley*. She was most recently seen playing the title role in *Gloria* at A.C.T. directed by Eric Ting. She has worked extensively with San Francisco Playhouse, where she is a founding company member and Artistic Associate. Other local credits include over 25 productions with SF Playhouse, and productions with Just Theatre, Cal Shakes, Magic Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, and Marin Shakes, among others. English is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of The Arts. New York credits include The Public Theatre, TACT Theatre (Off Broadway), The New York Times Theatre (Off Broadway), Ensemble Studio Theatre, The Lark Theatre, Playwrights Realm, and The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. She is a two-time Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle Award winner and three-time Dean Goodman Award recipient.

Anthony Fusco (Leonard) makes his Aurora debut. He has appeared in more than 40 productions at A.C.T. including *A Christmas Carol* (for 16 years), *Love and Information*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Homecoming*, *November*, *At Home at The Zoo*, *Napoli!*, and *Hedda Gabler*. Other local credits include Cal Shakes, SF Playhouse, Berkeley Rep, Marin Theatre Company, and TheatreWorks Silicon Valley. Anthony's New York credits include two shows on Broadway (*The Real Thing*, *The Real Inspector Hound*), as well as several off- and off-off- Broadway. He trained at The Juilliard School and with The Barrow Group.

Khary L. Moye (Brooke) also makes his Aurora debut. He was last seen understudying the roles of Stretch, King and Woody for the production of *Toni Stone* at A.C.T. Other Bay Area credits include *A Streetcar Named Desire* with African American Shakespeare Company, *Clybourne Park* at Altarena Playhouse, and *Six Degrees Of Separation* at Custom Made Theatre. Film and television credits include *The Dave Chappelle Show* and *Sense 8*.

The Sound Designer for **THE FLATS** is **Everett Elton Bradman**.

CALENDAR EDITORS

Aurora Theatre Company kicks off its 29th season with the original World Premiere Audio Drama **THE FLATS**, jointly written by playwrights **Lauren Gunderson**, **Cleavon Smith**, and **Jonathan Spector** (*Eureka Day*). **Artistic Director Josh Costello** (*Exit Strategy*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Eureka Day*, *Detroit*) directs this new story that speaks directly to our present moment in all its complexity.

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THE FLATS will be released **October 23** through Aurora's new membership program, and single tickets will also be available for individual purchase.

- **Aurora single (\$150) and dual (\$250) memberships** are available for purchase at auroratheatre.org/memberships.

Memberships include but are not limited to virtual tickets to **THE FLATS**; virtual tickets to another audio drama in the spring; access to monthly performances; a monthly book club exploring the works of playwright August Wilson; interactive virtual salons with leading Bay Area actors, directors, playwrights, and designers; and access to readings of new plays in development.

- **Single tickets to THE FLATS** will be available for purchase starting October 23 at auroratheatre.org/the-flats.
- For more information, or for assistance with memberships, the public can call **(510) 843-4822** or visit www.auroratheatre.org for more information.

PHOTOS <http://bit.ly/FLATSAuroraPress>

PRESS **Please do not reply to this media advisory for review tickets. Press review invites will be sent to selected media.**

ABOUT AURORA THEATRE COMPANY

As the storyteller for our community, Aurora Theatre Company inspires new audiences and longtime theatre lovers alike with the visceral power of live theatre. Our venues, the most intimate professional stages in the Bay Area, highlight great acting, nuanced language, and an immediacy that makes for exhilarating theatre. By telling profoundly relevant stories, we're building a new culture of theatregoing in the Bay Area and contributing to a revitalization of theatre nationwide, challenging all of us to think deeper, laugh louder, and engage more purposefully and profoundly with our neighbors and our world. It has an operating budget of \$2.2 million.

Aurora Theatre Company gratefully acknowledges Season Sponsors: Ed & Liliane Schneider, Ellen & Barry Levine. Premiere Sponsors: Gertrude E. Allen, Elizabeth Burwell. Sponsors: Thomas W. Edwards & Rebecca Parlette-Edwards, Rosalind & Sung-Hou Kim, Gary & Trudy Moore, The Wood Foundation: David Wood & Kathleen Garrison, Amy & Tom Worth. Associate Sponsors: George & Candy Hisert, Muffy Thorne.

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