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**FRANCESCA GABOUREL  
NAMED NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR OF  
BERKELEY'S AURORA THEATRE COMPANY**

**BERKELEY, CA (March 8, 2022)** Aurora Theatre Company and its Board of Directors today announced that Francesca Gabourel will become the company's next managing director. Gabourel succeeds Julie Saltzman Kellner, who left the organization in June 2021 after 11 years in the role.

“At the very beginning of the interview process, when I first spoke with Francesca, I knew she was the right person to bring her youthful vigor and unique perspective to this very important position at Aurora,” said board member Craig Moody. “Her love of the theatre world came through instantly, and her valuable experiences in closely related venues such as ODC and KQED will contribute in new and different, very helpful ways to running our theatre company. But what really stood out was her vibrant, caring personality; a perfect mesh with our objectives and our brilliant staff.”

“I am thrilled to join Aurora Theatre Company,” Gabourel said. “Theater is essential in building vibrant and empathetic communities, and this is a profound season of change for the industry. I believe Aurora's commitment to confront and dismantle oppression will allow us to create a more accessible and inclusive theater experience as we move back to in-person gatherings. I look forward to working with this dedicated team to tell stories that reflect the diverse voices found in the Bay Area.”

Gabourel joins Aurora just shy of the two-year anniversary of the theatre closing its doors in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020 and devastated the arts sector locally and around the world. Yet, despite all that, she steps into her new position optimistic about Aurora's future.

“As the new Managing Director, I hope to work with the staff and board to form a cohesive unit, revitalized to face the challenges and opportunities ahead,” Gabourel said. “I'm excited to continue producing quality productions while embracing new work and talent that represents our community. My goal is to move Aurora forward strategically, mindfully, and optimistically as we face a post-pandemic world.”

Gabourel will be Aurora's fifth managing director in its 30-year history.

“I am thrilled to begin this new partnership with Francesca as Aurora slowly reopens and emerges as a more inclusive and more community-minded organization,” said Artistic Director Josh Costello. “Francesca has an extraordinary ability to make connections and to lead with the same kind of care that goes into all of Aurora's work both on and off the stage. Her energy, her positivity, and her deep engagement will serve Aurora well in the years ahead. I can't wait for our community to get to know Francesca, and to work with her to lead Aurora into the future.”

Gabourel's appointment comes after a four-month-long nationwide search helmed by arts consulting firm ALJP Consulting. ALJP worked in partnership with a search committee composed of Aurora board members, led by former Bay Area actor Lance Gardner.

Said Gardner: “I'm so excited to welcome Francesca Gabourel to Aurora. It was clear throughout the search and interview process that she was committed to understanding and addressing our specific needs. She has the disposition and experience to foster a positive working environment and facilitate the change necessary to lead us out of these uncertain times, and into a new era of joy and prosperity. I'm grateful that she has put her faith in us to support her in this new endeavor, and I look forward to working with her to build a sustainable, inclusive vision for the future of our theatre.”

Gabourel has over a decade of experience working for cultural and performing arts organizations with a strong focus on community engagement. Most recently, she served as the Events Audience Manager at KQED. In this role, she helped to launch KQED's new events program, KQED Live, and establish the guest experience at their renovated headquarters. In addition, she has held positions at significant arts nonprofits throughout the Bay Area, including ODC, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and The Crucible.

Gabourel holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History and Arts Administration from Simmons University in Boston, Massachusetts.

Of the many aspects of her new role as Managing Director that Gabourel is eager to dive into, it is Aurora's equity, diversity, and inclusion work – which the organization has renamed “Confronting and Dismantling Oppression” – that she might be most enthusiastic about.

“Aurora's commitment to confronting and dismantling oppression initially drew me to the position,” Gabourel said. “As a woman of color, I know how hard it can be to forge a career in the arts, and it should be sustainable for more people. The arts have always been a lens for learning and understanding one another. It benefits us all to examine the history and ramifications that have left certain people out of mainstream creative expression and provide them opportunities. I intend for this work to inform everything we do at Aurora.”

Gabourel believes that an essential part of Aurora's role as the storyteller for the Bay Area and the theatre's communities is to provide space for all voices: onstage, off stage, and in Aurora's audience.

Her first day was Monday, March 7th.

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

#### **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. Aurora has an operating budget of \$2.2 million.

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