



**PRESS RELEASE**

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL MARCH 27, 2019 | 12:00 P.M.**

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**AURORA THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES 2019/2020 SEASON**

**World Premiere of *THE RULER***  
**West Coast Premiere of *THE CHILDREN***  
**Bay Area Premieres of *EXIT STRATEGY*,**  
***SEX WITH STRANGERS* and *BULL IN A CHINA SHOP***  
**The Classic *LOOT***

**BERKELEY, CA (March 27, 2019)** Berkeley's acclaimed Aurora Theatre Company (Artistic Director **Tom Ross**) announces today the six plays that will comprise the theatre's 28th season, beginning with the Bay Area Premiere of Ike Holter's energetic drama, **EXIT STRATEGY**. The Bay Area premiere of Bryna Turner's **BULL IN A CHINA SHOP** follows. Lucy Kirkwood's recent Broadway hit **THE CHILDREN** will kick off the new year as a West Coast Premiere, followed by Joe Orton's classic **LOOT** in a production honoring the playwright's unseen and uncensored version. Next is the World Premiere of Christopher Chen's thought-provoking Originate + Generate commission, **THE RULER**. The season closes with the Bay Area premiere of Laura Eason's smart comedy **SEX WITH STRANGERS**.

"Welcome to Aurora's 28th Season of three Bay Area Premieres, a West Coast Premiere of recent Broadway hit, a classic comedy from the 1960s and a new O+G Aurora commissioned World Premiere," Ross said. "I think the title of our first play, *Exit Strategy* is appropriate as this season's theme. This is my final season after 27 years of building Aurora, 15 years as the company's Artistic Director. Aurora's plays this season do seem to be very specifically about moving from one place to another, whether it be physically, spiritually, professionally, or politically.

"Apropos to my moving on, I've asked incoming Artistic Director, Josh Costello, to direct our opening production as well as curate the second slot," he said.

The 2019/2020 Season is the final season Ross will assemble for Aurora. He will step down in July 2019. Josh Costello, who will succeed Ross, chose one play for inclusion in the season, **BULL IN A CHINA SHOP**, and will direct **EXIT STRATEGY**.

"Tom has put together a great lineup of plays for Aurora's next season," Costello said. "I'm thrilled to add Bryna Turner's **BULL IN A CHINA SHOP** to the mix. It tells an important historical story with muscular contemporary language, exploring the challenges that still face progressive female leaders with sharp insight and a lot of humor."

Costello added, "And I'm proud to be directing beloved Chicago playwright Ike Holter's Bay Area debut. **EXIT STRATEGY** is set in Chicago, but its story of a failing public school and the community that bands together to try to pull it back from the brink reminds me of my junior year at El Cerrito High, when we protested in Sacramento to try to keep the Richmond Unified School District open following massive budget shortfalls."

Aurora's regular season will run August 2019 through July 2020. In chronological order, the Aurora 2019/2020 season is as follows:

### **EXIT STRATEGY**

By **Ike Holter** | Bay Area Premiere

Directed by **Josh Costello**

**August 30 - September 29, 2019 (Opens: September 5)**

Five Chicago public school teachers, their frazzled vice-principal and a defiant but motivated student take on a failing school system in Ike Holter's sensational new play, *Exit Strategy*. Fierce, funny and charged with anger, the sharply written play follows this motley crew as they band together to save the demolition of their school and regain the optimism and courage they thought they'd lost forever.

*"A CALL TO ARMS...BEAUTIFULLY DANGEROUS, DEEPLY FELT IN EACH SHOCKING DISCOVERY...EXIT STRATEGY CHALLENGES AND INSPIRES, QUESTIONING WHAT'S WORTH FIGHTING FOR AND HOW TO LEAD THAT FIGHT."* — DC METRO THEATRE ARTS

### **BULL IN A CHINA SHOP**

By **Bryna Turner** | Bay Area Premiere

Directed by **Dawn Monique Williams**

**November 8 - December 8, 2019 (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?

*FOUR STARS! "BULL IN A CHINA SHOP DOES THE SISTERHOOD PROUD! HEARTBREAKING, HILARIOUS AND DELECTABLE." — TIME OUT NY*

## **THE CHILDREN**

By **Lucy Kirkwood** | **West Coast Premiere**

Directed by **Barbara Damashek**

**January 31 - March 1, 2020 (Opens: February 6)**

A long-married couple live in a ramshackle cottage near the edge of a nuclear disaster that recalls the 2011 Fukushima catastrophe. Intruding into their somewhat eccentric existence comes Rose, a former co-worker at the destroyed nuclear power station whose appearance after 30 years is a mystery that will inspire both laughter and an increasing sense of menace. But Rose is on an important mission, one that will change all three of their lives.

A recent hit on Broadway after a successful run at London's Royal Court, Lucy Kirkwood's unique play is a beautifully written puzzle about personal responsibility, guilt, and what today's elders owe the young.

*"...A RICHLY SUGGESTIVE AND BEAUTIFULLY WRITTEN PIECE OF WORK...KIRKWOOD IS THE MOST REWARDING DRAMATIST OF HER GENERATION." — THE INDEPENDENT (LONDON)*

## **LOOT**

By **Joe Orton** | **Aurora Classic**

Directed by **Tom Ross**

**April 3 - May 3, 2020 (Opens: April 9)**

Hailed as a masterpiece of dark comedy farce, *Loot* follows the fortunes of two young thieves in swinging 60s London. Dennis works for an undertaker and Hal's old Mum has just died. Having robbed a bank, the lads need a place to stash the loot and Mum's coffin seems like the perfect place – but where to stash poor Mum? Playing roughhouse with the conventions of popular farce, Orton creates a world gone mad, hilariously examining hypocritical mores still percolating in our current time. Ross will be directing this comedy in a new way that honors Orton's original unseen and uncensored version.

*"...COMIC TIME BOMB GOING OFF EXACTLY ON SCHEDULE AND OBLITERATING ALL IN ITS RADIUS WITH OUTLANDISH ENTERTAINMENT." — HUFFINGTON POST*

## **THE RULER**

By **Christopher Chen** | **An Originate + Generate World Premiere**

Directed by **Becca Wolff**

**May 8 - June 21, 2020 (Opens: May 14)**

**Harry's UpStage in Aurora's Dashow Wing**

A ruler, a rebel, and a stranger play a three-way game of cat and mouse in a mythical province reminiscent of our own world. In a rapidly changing political landscape, are these players engaged in a friendly chat or a dangerous power struggle? Are they sliding down a slippery slope into fascism, or is this all a game? Who is telling the truth? Known for his plays that probe the layers of reality, Obie Award-winning local playwright Christopher Chen (*Caught*, *Shotgun Players*; *You Mean To Do Me Harm*; SF Playhouse) asks us to question our beliefs about power and authority in this new play specially commissioned by Aurora.

*"LOCAL PLAYWRIGHT CHEN IS A TALENT TO KEEP AN EYE ON."* — *SF CHRONICLE*

## **SEX WITH STRANGERS**

By **Laura Eason** | **Bay Area Premiere**

Directed by **Jennifer King**

**June 19 - July 19, 2020 (Opens: June 25)**

In this smart, contemporary comedy, twenty-something star sex blogger Ethan tracks down his literary idol, the gifted but obscure forty-ish novelist Olivia. As their initial attraction turns to sex, and they inch closer to finding success, both must confront the dark side of ambition, ageism, sexism and the trouble of reinventing oneself in the digital age.

*"A TWISTY AND TIMELY TWO CHARACTER DRAMA ABOUT LUST, LOVE AND THE COMPLEX NATURE OF IDENTITY IN OUR DIGITAL-DOMINATED ERA."* — *NY TIMES*

Full-season (6-play), 5-play, and 3-play subscriptions are currently available (\$111-\$396) and offer priority seating, easy exchanges, missed performance and guest discounts, and more. Single tickets (\$35-\$70) go on sale for subscribers July 23, and on sale August 1 to the general public.

Aurora subscribers save as much as 53% off single ticket prices. Current full-time teachers receive 20% off subscription prices, and active and retired military personnel also receive 20% off subscription prices through Theatre Communications Group's Blue Star Theatres program. Patrons 35 and under are eligible for half-price subscriptions, and deeply discounted subscriptions are available for full-time college and high school students.

For subscriptions or single tickets, the public can call 510.843.4822 or visit [auroratheatre.org](http://auroratheatre.org).

## **CALENDAR EDITORS**

Berkeley's acclaimed Aurora Theatre Company (Artistic Director **Tom Ross**) announces today the six plays that will comprise the theatre's 28th season, beginning with the Bay Area Premiere of Ike Holter's energetic drama, **EXIT STRATEGY**. The Bay Area premiere of Bryna Turner's **BULL IN A CHINA SHOP** follows. Lucy Kirkwood's recent Broadway hit **THE CHILDREN** will kick off the new year as a West Coast Premiere, followed by Joe Orton's classic **LOOT** in a production honoring the playwright's unseen and uncensored version. Next is the World Premiere of Christopher Chen's thought-provoking Originate + Generate commission, **THE RULER**. The season closes with the Bay Area premiere of Laura Eason's smart comedy **SEX WITH STRANGERS**.

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## **SCHEDULE**

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### **BULL IN A CHINA SHOP**

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**November 8 - December 8, 2019 (Opens: November 14)**

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**January 31 - March 1, 2020 (Opens: February 6)**

### **LOOT**

By **Joe Orton** | Aurora Classic

Directed by **Tom Ross**

**April 3 - May 3, 2020 (Opens: April 9)**

### **THE RULER**

By **Christopher Chen** | World Premiere

Directed by **Becca Wolff**

**May 8 - June 21, 2020 (Opens: May 14)**

### **SEX WITH STRANGERS**

By **Laura Eason** | Bay Area Premiere

Directed by **Jennifer King**

**June 19 - July 19, 2020 (Opens: June 25)**

**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](http://www.auroratheatre.org)**.

**Subscriptions on sale March 27. Single tickets on sale for subscribers July 23, and on sale August 1 to the general public.**

**ABOUT AURORA THEATRE COMPANY**

The 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.

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