

EMBARGO:

ONLINE HOLD UNTIL 4PM WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 2024

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**THEATREWORKS SILICON VALLEY, AURORA THEATRE COMPANY, AND CAPITAL
STAGE PARTNER TO PRESENT CO-PRODUCTION OF**

THE HEART SELLERS

By Lloyd Suh

Directed by Jennifer Chang

PALO ALTO, CA (6 March 2024) — **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Aurora Theatre Company,** and **Capital Stage** will team up to co-produce the Northern California Premiere of *The Heart Sellers* as part of each of the three companies' 2024-25 seasons. Written by 2023 Pulitzer Prize finalist **Lloyd Suh** (*The Chinese Lady, The Far Country*), *The Heart Sellers* is a humorous and heartwarming play about the Asian immigrant experience, offering a personal portrait of the impact of the landmark 1965 Hart-Celler Act that revoked discriminatory barriers to immigration and citizenship. Set in 1973 during the aftermath of Watergate, *The Heart Sellers* centers on two Asian women navigating their first American Thanksgiving. Starting out as strangers who meet in the grocery store, Luna from the Philippines and Jane from South Korea find common ground in their shared experiences of often-absent medical resident husbands, missing their families and friends back home, and discovering the joys and challenges of life in America. As the women attempt to cook Thanksgiving dinner, they dream of discotheques, Disneyland, and the future. This timely and stunning celebration of the human spirit explores how to build life in a strange new land. Acclaimed director/actor/playwright **Jennifer Chang**, who directed the World Premiere of *The Heart Sellers* at Milwaukee Repertory Theater and the West Coast Premiere of Lloyd Suh's *The Far Country* opening next week at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, reunites with Suh to direct the co-production.

“When I read this gorgeous play, I couldn’t wait to share it with our audiences.” said TheatreWorks Artistic Director **Giovanna Sardelli**. “I have long been a fan of Lloyd Suh’s work and *The Heart Sellers* is the epitome of everything we aspire to present on our stages: it’s so funny and filled with heart. Pinpointing the personal during a pivotal moment in our history, this uplifting play offers a moving tribute to those who make America their home. This is a beautiful story that needs to be told,

and I'm excited for TheatreWorks to team up with Aurora Theatre Company and Capital Stage to share this play with more theatre lovers across Northern California."

"*The Heart Sellers* is as charming and moving a play as I have read in a long time," said **Josh Costello**, Artistic Director of Aurora Theatre Company. "I'm thrilled to partner with Capital Stage and TheatreWorks to bring this beautiful story to the Bay Area, and to be a part of the conversations this story inspires about immigration, human connection, and the American experience."

"My first thought after I read this play was that we must produce it," said **Michael Stevenson**, Artistic Director of Capital Stage. "The beautiful story of these women's friendship made me fall in love with these brave immigrants and their first Thanksgiving journey. Lloyd's extraordinary writing touched my heart and made me laugh out loud—and made me think anew about the idea of America and what it means to so many people."

The three regional theatres will present their co-production of *The Heart Sellers* on their stages in Sacramento and the Bay Area. *The Heart Sellers* will open at **Capital Stage** in Sacramento in the fall of 2024, then move to **Aurora Theatre Company** in Berkeley in early 2025, before concluding its run at **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley**. Tickets for this co-production will be available as part of subscriptions for each company's 2024-25 season—single tickets will be available at a later date. Performance dates will be announced at a later date.

The Heart Sellers received its World Premiere at Milwaukee Repertory Theater and was also presented by Huntington Theatre Company. *The New York Times* called the play "beautiful" and "politically astute." *Stage and Cinema* deemed it "fast-paced and entertaining" and "an ode to friendship and the courage of immigrants." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* called it "stunning" and *Urban Milwaukee* lauded it as "smartly audacious and stirringly theatrical." *Boston Globe* said "Theater-makers talk often about telling stories that merge the epic and the intimate. There aren't many contemporary playwrights better at that tricky balancing act than Suh."

Named one of "50 to Watch" by The Dramatists Guild, **Lloyd Suh's** (playwright) plays include *The Heart Sellers*, *The Far Country*, *The Chinese Lady*, *Charles Francis Chan Jr's Exotic Oriental Murder Mystery*, *Jesus in India*, *The Wong Kids in The Secret of the Space Chupacabra GO!*, and *American Hwangap*. *The Far Country* was a finalist for the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and received an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award. His play *The Chinese Lady* was hailed a *New York Times*

Critics' Pick and was nominated for a Drama Desk Award. Suh also won the 2022 Steinberg Playwright Award and was the 2019 winner of the Herb Alpert Award for Theater. Suh has received additional grants, awards, and fellowships from organizations including The Dramatists Guild, The Jerome Foundation, the Lark Play Development Center, The NEA New Play Development Project at Arena Stage, Pan Asian Repertory Theatre, and The National Asian American Theatre Company. His work has been presented by Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Barrington Stage Company, Ma-Yi Theater Company, The National Asian American Theatre Company, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Huntington Theatre Company, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Long Wharf Theatre, Magic Theatre, Theatre Mu, Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis, Artists at Play, and Artists Repertory Theatre. An alum of Ensemble Studio Theatre's Youngblood and the Soho Repertory Theater's Writer Director Lab, Suh has previously served as Artistic Director of Second Generation Theatre, Co-Director of the Ma-Yi Writers Lab, and Director of Onsite Programs at The Lark.

Jennifer Chang (director) is a multi-disciplinary artist who is committed to anti-racist practices and diversifying storytelling aesthetics. Her directing credits include work with Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, East West Players, Round House Theatre, Signature Theatre in Virginia, City Theatre Company, LA Opera, Antaeus Theatre Company, Primary Stages, South Coast Repertory, The Fountain Theatre, and Artists at Play. She has developed new work at South Coast Repertory's Pacific Playwrights Festival, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Pasadena Playhouse, Geffen Playhouse, National Playwrights Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, The New Harmony Project, Ashland New Plays Festival, Center Theatre Group, Boston Court, Theatre Mu, Chance Theater, Echo Theater Company, Circle X Theatre Company, Chalk Repertory Theatre, Artists at Play, East West Players, The Sông Collective, and others. Her plays include *The Devil is a Lie*, she was the recipient of the 2022-2023 Beatrice Terry Residency for the Drama League for her play *Matter*, and she is currently writing a musical in the Geffen Writers Room. A founding member of Chalk Repertory Theatre, Chang was a Drama League Directing Fellow, an Old Globe Classical Directing Fellow, and she won the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award. Signature Theatre's production *King of the Yees*, helmed by Chang, is nominated for 3 Helen Hayes Awards including Best Production. As an actor, she has collaborated with La Jolla Playhouse, South Coast Repertory, The National Asian American Theatre Company, East West Players, and Mixed Blood Theatre.

TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, led by Artistic Director **Giovanna Sardelli** in partnership with Executive Director **Debbie Chinn**, presents a wide variety of contemporary plays and musicals and

revitalizes great works of the past. Founded in 1970 by **Robert Kelley**, TheatreWorks has grown from a truly original Silicon Valley start-up to become one of the nation's leading professional non-profit theatre companies. TheatreWorks was recently honored as the recipient of the 2019 Regional Theatre Tony Award. TheatreWorks also champions new work, offering artists support and a creative home as they develop new stories for the American theatre. Offstage, TheatreWorks' arts education programs in local schools and arts engagement programs in Silicon Valley neighborhoods uplift its audiences and strengthen community bonds. Onstage and off, TheatreWorks welcomes the mosaic of people that embody the Bay Area and beyond, celebrating the transformative power of theatre to ignite imagination, inspire conversation, and enliven our souls.

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.

Capital Stage is a professional nonprofit theatre company in Sacramento whose mission is to entertain, engage and challenge its audience with bold, thought-provoking theatre. Founded in 2005, Capital Stage presents seven full-length live theatre productions each year, as well as various concerts and special events in its Midtown Sacramento home at 2215 J Street. Capital Stage also offers apprenticeships and internships to individuals seeking professional experience in theatre, performing arts classes to the public, and educational theatrical opportunities in association with CLARA, The Crocker Art Museum and McGeorge School of Law. Named by The Sacramento Bee as "One of the most respected arts organizations in the region", Capital Stage is a leader of cutting-edge quality theatre in Northern California.

Media sponsor for TheatreWorks Silicon Valley's 2023/24 season is *San Francisco Chronicle*.

For Calendar Editors:

WHAT: **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Aurora Theatre Company, and Capital Stage** will team up to co-present the West Coast Premiere of *The Heart Sellers* as part of each of the three companies' 2024-25 seasons. Written by 2023 Pulitzer Prize finalist **Lloyd Suh**

(*The Chinese Lady, The Far Country*), ***The Heart Sellers*** is a humorous and heartwarming play about the Asian immigrant experience, offering a personal portrait of the impact of the landmark 1965 Hart-Celler Act that revoked discriminatory barriers to immigration and citizenship. Set in 1973 during the aftermath of Watergate, ***The Heart Sellers*** centers on two Asian women navigating their first American Thanksgiving. Starting out as strangers who meet in the grocery store, Luna from the Philippines and Jane from South Korea find common ground in their shared experiences of often-absent medical resident husbands, missing families and friends back home, and discovering the joys and challenges of life in America. As the women attempt to cook Thanksgiving dinner, they dream of discotheques, Disneyland, and the future. This timely and stunning celebration of the human spirit explores how to build life in a strange new land and whether home is truly where the heart is. Acclaimed director/actor/playwright **Jennifer Chang**, who directed the World Premiere of ***The Heart Sellers*** at Milwaukee Repertory Theater and the West Coast Premiere of Lloyd Suh's *The Far Country* opening next week at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, reunites with Suh to direct.

WHEN: Performance dates to be announced.

WHERE: **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley** at Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro Street, Mountain View
Aurora Theatre Company, 2081 Addison Street, Berkeley
Capital Stage, 2215 J Street, Sacramento

TICKETS: Tickets for this production will be available as part of subscriptions for each company's 2024-25 season—single tickets will be available at a later date.

INFO: For information about TheatreWorks Silicon Valley visit **theatreworks.org** or call **(877)-662-8978**.

For information about Aurora Theatre Company visit **auroratheatre.org** or call **510-843-4822**.

For information about Capital Stage visit **capstage.org** or call **916-995-5464**.

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PRESS: Contact Lauren Goldfarb, Carla Befera & Co., lauren@cb-pr.com

PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available: <http://cbpr.co/press/theheartsellers>