

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2, 2018

MARIN THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES 2018-19 MAIN STAGE SEASON

MILL VALLEY, CA—Marin Theatre Company's artistic director Jasson Minadakis and managing director Keri Kellerman are thrilled to announce its 2018-19 season of bold, pioneering, socially engaged new American plays. Featuring six sensational works for its intimate 231-seat main stage Boyer Theatre, the season includes:

- Bay Area Premiere of **Oslo** by J.T. Rogers—winner of the 2017 Tony Award for Best Play—in Sept./Oct.
- World Premiere of **The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley** by MTC Playwright in Residence Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon—a companion piece to the duo's *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*—in Nov./Dec.
- Bay Area Premiere of August Wilson's **How I Learned What I Learned** in Feb./Mar—in partnership with African-American Shakespeare Company and Ubuntu Theater Project.
- Bay Area Premiere of **The Who & The What** by Ayad Akhtar in Mar./Apr.
- West Coast Premiere of **Jazz**, adapted by Nambi E. Kelley, based on the book by Toni Morrison, and featuring music composed by Marcus Shelby, in Apr./May.
- World Premiere of **Wink** by Jen Silverman in June/July.

In MTC's upcoming season, all evening performances will begin at 7:30pm. Subscription renewal sales will go live early-March; single tickets expected to go on sale in July.

Sentiments from MTC's Fearless Leaders

"Six new American plays by eight thrillingly original American voices. This season is a diverse journey of brave stories of everyday people struggling to make the world a better place. From the unknown heroes of the Oslo Accords to the everyday men and women of 1920's Harlem to the story behind August Wilson's *Century Cycle*, this season will lift your spirits and inspire your imagination." – *Jasson Minadakis, Artistic Director*

"The brilliant poet and activist Audre Lord said '[I]t is not difference which immobilizes, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken.' We hope the playwrights and plays in our 2018-19 season begin to answer that call by lifting up urgent and necessary stories that help illuminate what it means to live in America today."
- *Keri Kellerman, Managing Director*

Oslo by J.T. Rogers | Bay Area Premiere

MTC opens its 2018-19 season with the Bay Area Premiere of J.T. Rogers' Tony Award-winning play, direct from Broadway—**Oslo**. A darkly-comic and fast-paced epic, **Oslo** tells the true and widely unknown story of how one young couple—Norwegian diplomat Mona Juul, and her husband, social scientist Terje Rød-Larsen—planned and orchestrated top-secret meetings between the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, culminating in the historic 1993 Oslo Accords. Through back-channel talks, unlikely friendships and quiet

heroics—common ground between the Israeli and Palestinian envoys is carefully unearthed as tensions mount dangerously high. *Oslo* is a deeply personal story set against a complex historical canvas, a story about the individuals behind world history and their all too human ambitions.

“As a playwright, I look to tell stories that are framed against great political rupture. I am obsessed with putting characters onstage who struggle with, and against, cascading world events—and who are changed forever through that struggle. While journalism sharpens our minds, the theatre can expand our sense of what it means to be human. It is where we come together in a communal space to hear ideas that grip us, surprise us—even infuriate us—as we learn of things we didn’t know. For me, that is a deeply, thrillingly, political act.” - *J.T. Rogers*

J.T. Rogers’s plays include *Oslo* (Lincoln Center Theater, then Broadway; National Theatre, London, then West End); *Blood and Gifts* (Lincoln Center Theater; National Theatre); *The Overwhelming* (National Theatre, then UK tour with Out of Joint; Roundabout Theatre); *White People* (Off Broadway with Starry Night Productions); and *Madagascar* (Theatre 503, London; Melbourne Theatre Company). For *Oslo* he won the Tony, New York Critics, Outer Critics, Drama Desk, Drama League, Lortel, and Obie awards. As one of the playwrights for the Tricycle Theatre of London’s *The Great Game: Afghanistan* he was nominated for an Olivier Award. His works have been staged throughout the United States and in Germany, Canada, Australia, and Israel. He is a Guggenheim fellow and has received three NYFA fellowships in playwriting. Rogers is a member of the Dramatists Guild, where he is a founding board member of the Dramatists Legal Defense Fund. He is an alum of New Dramatists and holds an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley
by Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon | Rolling World Premiere

For the holiday season, MTC revisits Regency romance with the World Premiere of Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon’s ***The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley***—a companion piece to the duo’s delightful *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*—both continuations of Jane Austen’s popular novel, *Pride and Prejudice*. As the events of *Miss Bennet* unfold upstairs at Pemberley, the servants below stairs find themselves in the midst of a different holiday scandal. An unwelcome visitor has stumbled into the hall in the middle of the night, drunken and half-beaten—Mr. Darcy’s nemesis and Lydia’s incorrigible husband: Mr. Wickham. The bustling housekeeper Mrs. Reynolds, Lucy the resilient new serving girl, and Brian the helplessly romantic groomsman, must each balance their holiday preparations with keeping Wickham confined—for a secreted letter may be the key to bringing him to justice. But before long, old grudges and new misunderstandings reach a boiling point, and as the festivities spiral into chaos, Pemberley’s residents struggle to keep peace without taking sides. Warm and sensational, Gunderson and Melcon’s second Austen adaptation delves into class, privilege, family and forgiveness—and what it means to truly give, in the season of giving.

Lauren M. Gunderson is the most produced playwright in America of 2017, the winner of the Lanford Wilson Award, the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award and the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award. She is also a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and John Gassner Award for Playwriting, and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation’s 3-Year 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. Her work has been commissioned, produced and developed at companies across the US including South Coast Rep (*Emilie*, *Silent Sky*), The Kennedy Center (*The Amazing Adventures of Dr. Wonderful And Her Dog!*), Oregon Shakespeare Festival, The O'Neill, The Denver Center, San Francisco Playhouse, Marin Theatre Company, Synchronicity, Berkeley Rep, Shotgun Players, TheatreWorks, Crowded Fire and more. She co-authored *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* with Margot Melcon, which was one of the most produced plays in America in 2017. Her work is published at Playscripts (*I and You*, *Exit Pursued By A Bear*, *The Taming*, and *Toil And Trouble*), Dramatists (*The Revolutionists*, *The Book of Will*, *Silent Sky*, *Bauer*, *Miss Bennet*) and Samuel French (*Emilie*). Her picture book *Dr Wonderful: Blast Off to the Moon* was released from Two Lions / Amazon in May 2017. LaurenGunderson.com and [@LalaTellsAStory](https://www.instagram.com/LalaTellsAStory)

Margot Melcon is a theatre artist, administrator and writer. She was the Director of New Play Development at Marin Theatre Company for seven years, where she dramaturged over 30 productions - including six world premieres - and administered the company's two annual new play prizes and commissioning program. She has developed plays with TheatreWorks, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Crowded Fire Theater, Shotgun Players, Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor, the Kennedy Center, the New Harmony Project, and the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis. She is currently the Program Executive for Promoting Culture at the Zellerbach Family Foundation. Margot is a graduate of California State University, Chico.

**August Wilson's *How I Learned What I Learned*
Co-conceived by Todd Kreidler | Bay Area Premiere
In Partnership with Ubuntu Theater Project
and African-American Shakespeare Company**

MTC is thrilled and honored to bring August Wilson's *How I Learned What I Learned* not only to our stage, but to others in the Bay Area, through a partnership with African-American Shakespeare Company and Ubuntu Theater Project. From the late **August Wilson**, one of America's greatest playwrights and creator of award-winning titles like *Fences* and *Jitney*, comes this autobiographical tour de force. In his one-man show, Wilson takes us on a journey through his days as a young poet: his first few jobs, a stint in jail, the support of his lifelong friends, and his encounters with racism, music, and love as a struggling writer in Pittsburgh's Hill District. Originally performed by Wilson himself, *How I Learned What I Learned* is a heartfelt theatrical memoir—charting one man's journey of self-discovery through adversity, and what it means to be a black artist in America.

“One of the reasons I agreed to do this show was because I would have the opportunity to tell anyone who was willing to listen that we are not Black by the accident of our births. That our births are moments of profound creativity engineered by our genetic muscle as it aspires toward perfection.” – *August Wilson*

August Wilson (playwright) authored *Gem of the Ocean*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (New York Drama Critics Circle Award), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (NYDCC Award), *The Piano Lesson* (Pulitzer Prize and NYDCC Award), *Seven Guitars* (NYDCC Award), *Fences* (Pulitzer Prize, Tony and NYDCC Awards), *Two Trains Running* (NYDCC Award), *Jitney* (Olivier and

NYDCC Awards), *King Hedley II* and *Radio Golf*. These works explore the heritage and experience of African Americans, decade by decade, over the course of the 20th century. His plays have been produced at regional theatres across the country and all over the world, as well as on Broadway. In 2003, Wilson made his professional stage debut in his one-man show, *How I Learned What I Learned*. He received an Emmy Award nomination for his screenplay adaptation of *The Piano Lesson*. His early works included the one-act plays *The Janitor*, *Recycle*, *The Coldest Day of the Year*, *Malcolm X*, *The Homecoming* and the musical satire *Black Bart and the Sacred Hills*. Wilson received many fellowships and awards, including Rockefeller and Guggenheim Fellowships in Playwriting, the Whiting Writers Award, Heinz Award and the National Humanities Medal. Following his death in October 2005, the Broadway theatre located at 245 West 52nd Street was renamed the August Wilson Theatre.

Todd Kreidler directed *August Wilson's How I Learned What I Learned*, and served as dramaturg for August Wilson's *Radio Golf* and *Gem of the Ocean* in their early productions at the Huntington and other regional theatres and on Broadway. His adaptation of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* appeared at the Huntington in the fall of the 2014-2015 season. He wrote the Broadway musical *Holler If Ya Hear Me*, an original story featuring the lyrics of Tupac Shakur, and is writing a musical with Nikki Sixx, based on Sixx's memoir and music, *The Heroin Diaries*. His stage adaptation of the film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* ran at Arena Stage in Washington, DC and premiered at True Colors Theatre Company in Atlanta. Most recently, he directed *How I Learned What I Learned* at Off Broadway's Signature Theatre and at Pittsburgh Public Theater. He originally directed and co-conceived the piece with Mr. Wilson performing at Seattle Repertory Theatre in 2003. He co-founded the August Wilson Monologue Competition, a national program aimed at integrating August Wilson's work into high school curriculum, of which the Huntington facilitates the Boston competition.

***The Who & The What* by Ayad Akhtar | Bay Area Premiere**

MTC's 52nd season continues with ***The Who & The What*** by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, Ayad Akhtar (*Invisible Hand*, *Junk*, *Disgraced*). In this fiery comedy, brilliant Pakistani-American writer Zarina is focused on finishing her novel about women and Islam when she meets Eli—a young convert who bridges the gulf between her modern life and her traditional heritage. But when her conservative father and sister discover her controversial manuscript, they are all forced to confront the beliefs that define them. Ayad Akhtar continues his seven-work cycle on the Muslim-American experience with this thrillingly fierce and funny new play about identity, religion and the contradictions that make us who we are.

“One of the perplexities of writing this play was the long process of coming to understand the fight at the heart of it: not just that of a daughter with her father, but that of my love for and my battle with my heritage, my family, my tradition. Can we belong and yet be separate?” - *Ayad Akhtar*

Ayad Akhtar was born in New York City and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is a novelist and author of *American Dervish*, published in over 20 languages worldwide. His play *Disgraced* won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, ran on Broadway at the Lyceum Theatre, and was nominated for the 2015 Tony Award for Best Play. His plays *The Who & The What* and *The Invisible Hand* received Off-Broadway runs and are currently being produced around the world. His most recent play, *JUNK* received its world premiere at La Jolla Playhouse in 2016 and

opened on Broadway at Lincoln Center Theatre in the fall of 2017. Akhtar was listed as the most produced playwright for the 2015/16 Season by American Theatre magazine. As a screenwriter, he was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for Best Screenplay for *The War Within*. He is also the recipient of an Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, two OBIE Awards, a Jeff Award, and the Outer Critics Circle John Gassner Award. Akhtar was a Resident Playwright at Arena Stage and has received fellowships from MacDowell, Djerassi, the Sundance Institute, Ucross, and Yaddo, where he serves as a Board Director. He is also a Board Trustee at PEN/America and New York Theatre Workshop.

Jazz, adapted by Nambi E. Kelley
Based on the novel by Toni Morrison | West Coast Premiere

In April, MTC welcomes back Nambi E. Kelley (*Native Son*) for the West Coast Premiere of her lyrical, prismatic drama—*Jazz*. Adapted for the stage from Toni Morrison's stunning novel and musically underscored by Bay-Area jazz great Marcus Shelby—*Jazz* is a theatrical composition, transporting us to Harlem, 1926. Here, the city overflows with jazz. Characters move with musicality, and speak in rhythm, and at the heart of it all is Violet—a middle-aged woman set on revenge. Her husband's affair with a beautiful young woman has set off a series of violent events and unforgivable acts, and Violet seeks out answers. As layered, dream-like perspectives unfold, *Jazz* exposes a host of deeply complex individuals, who—like the growing New York neighborhood and the ancestral, winding woods of Violet's southern youth—reveal their own distinct rhythms.

Nambi E. Kelley has penned plays for Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Goodman Theatre, Court Theatre/American Blues Theater, Lincoln Center Theater Director's Lab, LATT Children's Theatre/Unibooks Publishing Company (South Korea), Teatri Sbagliati (Italy), and The Finger Players (Singapore), where she also performed in the co-adapted production of *The Book of Living and Dying*. The world premiere of *Native Son* was nominated for five Jeff Awards (Chicago's Tony Awards) including best adaptation and production of the year, and was the highest grossing production in Court Theatre's 60-year history. It is included on the Kilroy's List 2015, in the top 7% of new plays by female and trans* authors and can be purchased through Samuel French. Her other works *Xtigone* (Chicago Danz Theatre Ensemble; African American Shakespeare Company, directed by Rhodessa Jones), and *For Her As A Piano* (a Goodman Theatre/Chicago Dramatists/Pegasus co-production). A recent finalist for the Francesca Primus Award and the Kevin Spacey Foundation Award, Kelley just concluded being the Playwright in Residence at National Black Theatre where her play *Blood* starring Roscoe Orman received a workshop production in November. Professional affiliations include Goodman Theatre Playwrights Unit, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, La MaMa E.T.C., Spoleto, Ragdale Foundation, and playwright emeritus at Chicago Dramatists. An accomplished actress, Kelley has performed at theatres across the country and internationally and has been seen on several television shows, including *Person of Interest*, *Madam Secretary*, *Elementary*, and *Chicago Justice*. Nambi has a BFA from The Theatre School at DePaul University and an MFA in interdisciplinary arts from Goddard College. nambikelley.com

Marcus Shelby is a bandleader, composer, arranger, bassist, educator, and activist who currently lives in San Francisco, California. Over the past 25 years he has built a diverse biography as a composer. His work and music has focused on sharing the history, present, and

future of African American lives, on social movements in the United States of America, and on early childhood music education. In 1990, Marcus Shelby received the Charles Mingus Scholarship to attend Cal Arts and study composition with James Newton and bass with Charlie Haden. From 1990-1996, Shelby was bandleader of Columbia Records and GRP Impulse! Recording Artists Black/Note. Currently, Shelby is an artist in residence with the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival and the Artistic Director of the Marcus Shelby Orchestra. In 2013, Shelby received a MAP Fund Award and commission from the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival to compose "Beyond the Blues: A Prison Oratorio" an original composition for big band orchestra about the "Prison Industrial Complex," which premiered in September 2015. Shelby was awarded a 2009 Black Metropolis Research Consortium Fellowship in Chicago for Summer 2009 to conduct research for his commission to compose "Soul of the Movement"—a musical suite on MLK and the Civil Rights Movement. Shelby was also a 2006 Fellow in the Resident Dialogues Program of the Committee for Black Performing Arts at Stanford University to conduct research for his commission to compose "Harriet Tubman"—a musical suite based on the life of freedom fighter, Harriet Tubman. Shelby has worked extensively with the Healdsburg Jazz Festival from 2011-2015 leading their Black History programs in the Healdsburg Middle Schools. He has also been the Artistic Director and conductor for the Healdsburg Jazz Festival Freedom Jazz Choir, which is a 100-person community choir created by the Healdsburg Jazz Festival and Shelby in 2012. Shelby has also worked extensively in Bay Area Theater, Film, and Dance on a range of productions, such as composing scores for Anna Deveare Smith's new play "Notes from the Field: Doing Time in Education" (2014), choreographer Joanna Haigood's dance theater work "Dying While Black and Brown" (2014), Margo Hall's plays "Bebop Baby" (2013) and "Sonny's Blues" (2008), the Oakland Ballet's "Ella" (2004), Robert Moses Kin' Dance Company (2000), The Pacific Boy Choir (2009), The San Francisco Girls Choir (2013), The Oakland Youth Chorus (2014), and many other productions over the past 19 years in the San Francisco Bay Area. Since 2002, Shelby has worked with the Equal Justice Society and is currently commissioned to create a musical theater work with choreographer Joanna Haigood and director Stephen Anthony Jones about the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Shelby also has arranged for, toured, and conducted the Count Basie Orchestra featuring Ledisi, performed and recorded with Tom Waits, and received the City Flight Magazine 2005 award as one of the "Top Ten Most Influential African Americans in the Bay Area". Shelby is active in music education and currently teaches at The Community Music Center, Old Adobe Elementary School, St. Paul's Middle School, and the Stanford Jazz Workshop. Shelby has also led many of the San Francisco Jazz Festival Family Matinee Concerts, often with children's book author Daniel Handler (Lemony Snicket). In March 2013, San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee appointed Shelby to the San Francisco Arts Commission where he serves on the Community Arts Grants and Education Committee and the Street Artists Committee.

***Wink* by Jen Silverman | World Premiere**

Closing out MTC's 2018-19 season is the World Premiere production of Jen Silverman's darkly-comic opus on the complicated and dangerous territory of the human heart—***Wink***. Sofie is an unhappy housewife. Gregor is her breadwinning husband. Dr. Franz is their strange psychiatrist. *Wink* is the cat. And Gregor has just skinned the cat. Violent desires, domestic anarchy, and feline vengeance at any cost make *Wink* a dark comedy about the thin, thin line between savagery and civilization.

“I’m fascinated by human relationships, and I’m always trying to find new lenses to see us through, new ways of understanding our complexities. *Wink* is a dark comedy with absurdist tendencies, but it seeks to cut to the heart of something authentic and true in how we long for and lose each other, how we recover and rebuild.” - *Jen Silverman*

Jen Silverman is a New York-based playwright and writer. Born in the U.S., she was raised across the U.S., Europe and Asia. Her theatre work includes *The Moors* (Yale Repertory Theatre premiere, off-Broadway with The Playwrights Realm, Susan Smith Blackburn finalist); *The Roomate* (Actor’s Theatre of Louisville world premiere, produced widely across the U.S. including productions at South Coast Rep and Williamstown Theatre Festival, upcoming at Steppenwolf); and *Collective Rage: A Play in Five Betties* (Woolly Mammoth premiere, The Theater @ Boston Court, Southwark Playhouse in London). Jen is a member of New Dramatists, a Core Writer at the Playwrights Center in Minneapolis, an affiliated artist with SPACE on Ryder Farm, and has developed work with the O’Neill National Playwrights Conference, New York Theatre Workshop, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, The Ground Floor Residency at Berkeley Rep, and the Royal Court in London among other places. She’s a two-time MacDowell fellow, recipient of a New York Foundation for the Arts grant, the Helen Merrill Award, an LMCC Fellowship, and the Yale Drama Series Award. She is the 2016-17 Playwrights of New York (PoNY) Fellow at the Lark. Her plays have been published by Samuel French (US) and Oberon Books (UK), and she has a two-book deal with Random House for a collection of stories called *The Island Dwellers* and a novel. Education: Brown, Iowa Playwrights Workshop, Juilliard. More info: www.jensilverman.com

CALENDAR

Oslo | Bay Area Premiere

By J.T. Rogers

September 27 - October 21, 2018

Opening Night: Tuesday, October 2, 2018 at 7:30 pm

The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley | Rolling World Premiere

By Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon

November 15 - December 9, 2018

Opening Night: Tuesday, November 20, at 7:30pm

August Wilson’s How I Learned What I Learned | Bay Area Premiere

By August Wilson | Co-conceived by Todd Kreidler

In partnership with **Ubuntu Theater Project** and **African-American Shakespeare Company**

January 10 – February 3, 2019

Opening Night: Tuesday, January 15, at 7:30 pm

The Who & The What | Bay Area Premiere

By Ayad Akhtar

February 28 – March 24, 2019

Opening Night: Tuesday, March 5, at 7:30 pm

Jazz | West Coast Premiere

Adapted by Nambi E. Kelley | Based on the novel by Toni Morrison
April 25 - May 19, 2019
Opening Night: Tuesday, April 30, at 7:30 pm

Wink | World Premiere
By Jen Silverman
June 13 – July 7, 2019
Opening Night: Tuesday, June 18, at 7:30 pm

All main stage productions performed in MTC's Boyer Theatre, located at Marin Theatre Company, 397 Miller Avenue, Mill Valley.

Programming and scheduling are subject to change.

ABOUT MTC

Marin Theatre Company is the Bay Area's premier mid-sized theatre and the leading professional theatre in the North Bay. We produce a six-show season focused on new American plays. We are committed to the development and production of new plays, with a comprehensive New Play Program that includes productions of world premieres, two nationally recognized annual playwriting awards and readings and workshops by the nation's best emerging and established playwrights. Our numerous education programs serve more than 10,000 students from over 40 Bay Area schools each year. MTC strives to create intimate, powerful and emotional experiences that engage audiences to discuss new ideas and adopt a broader point of view. We believe in taking risks and inspiring people to participate in live theatre, regardless of personal means. MTC celebrates the intellectual curiosity of our community, and we believe that theatre is an important tool to help build empathy. MTC was founded in 1966 and is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

PRESS CONTACT

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