

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE PRESENTS

NEW MUSICAL

AS YOU LIKE IT

A musical adaptation of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

Adapted by Shaina Taub and Laurie Woolery

Music and lyrics by Shaina Taub

Directed by Bill English, Music Direction by Dave Dobrusky, Choreography by Nicole Helfer

November 17, 2022 – January 14, 2023 (*opening night: November 23*)

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (5 October 2022) — **San Francisco Playhouse** continues its 20th Anniversary season with the imaginative and exhilarating hit musical adaptation of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. This rollicking tale follows exiles making a new life in a strange new place, further complicated by lovers-in-disguise, featuring an original folk-pop score by one of the most exciting new voices in musical theater, **Shaina Taub** (Off-Broadway's *Suffs*, *Twelfth Night* seen at San Francisco Playhouse last season, and the upcoming *The Devil Wears Prada* musical with Sir Elton John). Taub teamed up with The Public Theater's Director of Public Works **Laurie Woolery** to transform the Bard's beloved comedy into an exuberant testament to acceptance and diversity, serving as an apt reminder of what's possible in today's divisive era. Forced from their homes, Duke Senior and his followers escape to the idyllic Forest of Arden, where all are welcomed and embraced. Lost amidst the trees, the refugees find community under the stars, assisted by a lively cast of characters including a waggish court clown, a melancholy philosopher, down-to-earth locals, and several amorous pairs of would-be lovers. Helmed by San Francisco Playhouse's Artistic Director **Bill English** with music direction by **Dave Dobrusky** and choreography by **Nicole Helfer**, *As You Like It* will perform **November 17, 2022 – January 14, 2023** (*opening night: November 23*) at San Francisco Playhouse, 450 Post Street. For tickets (\$15-\$100) and more information, the public may visit sfplayhouse.org or call the box office at **415-677-9596**.

Originally presented by The Public Theater's Public Works program in 2017, *The New York Times* named it among "The Best Theater of 2017" and lauded this musical adaptation as "rollicking, poignant and flat-out delightful. This '*As You Like It*' offers a utopian vision of a society that favors acceptance over division, honesty over obfuscation, grace over meanness." *The Daily Beast* said "Taub and Woolery have transformed *As You Like It* into a celebration of community, difference, and diversity."

Right now, that is very welcome.” The Public Theater recently remounted the show, which delighted critics and audiences alike—*TimeOut New York* called it “inventive and exhilarating” while *The New York Times* praised the production as “shimmering. What a gift.”

Director **Bill English** (he/him) assembles an outstanding cast to bring this whimsical musical to life. Bay Area theatre veteran **Michael Gene Sullivan** (he/him) stars as Duke Senior, a duke banished to the Forest of Arden. Sullivan’s previous appearances at the Playhouse include *Twelfth Night*, *Groundhog Day*, *She Loves Me*, *Stage Kiss*, and *Dogfight*. Other acting credits include American Conservatory Theater, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, California Shakespeare Company, Denver Center Theatre Company, Marin Theatre Company, Aurora Theatre Company, African-American Shakespeare Company, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, and Magic Theatre, among many others. He has also been an actor, playwright, director, and Collective Member of the Tony award-winning San Francisco Mime Troupe, where he has written, acted in, and/or directed over thirty productions over the past 30 years.

River Navaille (they/them) plays Rosalind, the Duke’s daughter, who disguises herself as a man and in that guise, tests the love of her suitor Orlando. Navaille is an actor, director, and educator local to the Monterey Bay, Rumsen Ohlone, and Esselen lands. They have performed at Pacific Repertory Theatre, Monterey Peninsula College Theatre, and The Western Stage, and teach acting, theater, and media studies at Hartnell College. **Nikita Burshteyn** (he/him) will portray Orlando, the brave and tenderhearted romantic who pines for Rosalind, not realizing she has become his new male companion. Burshteyn returns to the Playhouse where he was seen as Jean-Michel in *La Cage Aux Folles*. He was seen earlier this year as Romeo in *The New York Times* Critic’s Pick Off-Broadway musical *Romeo and Bernadette* (A.R.T New York Theatre/Theater 555), which garnered two Outer Critics Circle Awards and a Drama Desk Award nomination. In the Bay Area, he’s performed with Woodminster Summer Musicals, 42nd St. Moon, Bay Area Musicals, Broadway By the Bay, Ray of Light Theatre, and Center Repertory Company.

Sophia Alawi (she/her) and **Emily Dwyer** (they/them) play shepherdesses Silvia and Phoebe, respectively. **Sophia Alawi** returns to the Playhouse after performing in *Groundhog Day*, for which she won San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle (SFBATCC) Award, and *Twelfth Night*. She has also appeared onstage at Theatre Under the Stars, Theatre Row, Hudson Guild Theatre, and Playhouse

on Park Theater. Making their Playhouse debut, **Emily Dwyer** was most recently on stage as Basketcase (the drummer) in Feinstein's at the Nikko's *Bratpack!* and as Usherette in the Oasis/Ray of Light Theatre's production of *The Rocky Horror Show*. Other credits include Quantum Dragon Theatre, Marin Musical Theater Company, and New Conservatory Theatre Center.

Deanalís Arocho Resto (they/he/she) makes their San Francisco Playhouse debut as Jaques, the melancholy contemplative philosopher who offers a sharp commentary on the proceedings. Resto is a nomadic queer Boricua artist, who most recently understudied the role of Julie d'Aubigny in *Revenge Song* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and appeared in *Coming Soon: A New Rock Musical* at Z Space. Resto has also performed with 20% Theatre Company, Lightning Rod Theater, Oak Park Festival Theatre, Kokandy Productions, Filament Theatre.

Returning to the Playhouse after appearing as Phaedra in *La Cage Aux Folles*, **Nicholas Yenson** (he/him) plays Touchstone, a court jester who runs away to Arden with Rosalind and her cousin Celia. His theater credits include performances with Shakespeare Theatre Company, McCarter Theatre Center, American Conservatory Theater, Arena Stage, Signature Theatre, Wellesley Repertory Theatre, and 42nd Street Moon. Concert appearances include Espaço das Américas (São Paulo), Qantas Arena (Sydney), the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane (West End), and the New Amsterdam Theatre (Broadway) and the upcoming *Pacific Overtures* at Signature Theatre. Returning to the Playhouse where they were seen in *The Daughters*, **Ezra Reaves** (they/he) plays Andy, a farmhand who catches Touchstone's eye. Reaves is an actor, comedian, experimental theater writer and performer, and ensemble member of the San Francisco Neo-Futurists. They've toured nationally and internationally with The Neo-Futurists, performed over 150 shows as the lead character in the immersive show "The Speakeasy," and been seen locally at San Francisco Playhouse, Shotgun Players, American Conservatory Theater, New Conservatory Theatre Center, ZSpace, and Magic Theatre. In New York City, Reaves has performed at LaMama Experimental Theatre Club and PS122. As a comedian, they have opened for Janeane Garofalo, Bob Odenkirk, John Hodgman, Paul F. Tompkins and shared the stage with Michael Ian Black at SF Sketchfest. They have recently joined the cast of the GLAAD-nominated television show "4400" on the CW.

Abigail Esfira Campbell (she/ her) makes her San Francisco Playhouse debut as Celia, Rosalind's tender-hearted cousin. Campbell's credits include playing Ariel in Disney's *The Little Mermaid* at Sierra

Repertory Theatre, Molly in *Peter and the Starcatcher* at Adrienne Arsht Center, and Andy in the original cast of *Coming Soon: A New Rock Musical* at ZSpace.

Will Springhorn Jr. (he/him) plays the usurping Duke Frederick who has banished his brother, and sets the play into motion by banishing his niece as well. Returning to the Playhouse where he was seen as Andy in the World Premiere of *An Entomologist's Love Story*, Will in *Coronado*, and Ernst in *Cabaret* (2008 and 2019), Springhorn has also performed with Berkeley Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Center Repertory Company, San Jose Stage Company, 42nd Street Moon, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Pacific Repertory Theatre, Hillbarn Theatre, Magic Theatre, and Theatre Rhinoceros. Recent film credits include Academy Award winner Mark Andrews' *Circle of Stone* and *Drive All Night*.

Ryan Torres (he/him) plays Oliver, Orlando's wicked brother. Torres' theatre credits include performances at SPARC Theater, Stageworks Fresno, and Good Company Players. **Wayne Wong** (he/him) makes his San Francisco Playhouse debut as Adam, Orlando's faithful servant. An experienced character actor and singer, he has appeared in over 80 productions, largely operas, with companies such as Pocket Opera, Opera Parallele, Berkeley (West Edge) Opera, Island City Opera, Playwrights Center of SF, and Teatro Bocchino.

Johann Santiago Santos (he/him), **Jillian A. Smith** (she/her), **Renee Rogoff** (she/her), and **Göran Norquist** (he/him, they/them) round out the ensemble, performing in a variety of roles. Making his Playhouse debut, **Johann Santiago Santos** has been seen onstage at Pacific Coast Repertory Theatre, 42nd Street Moon, Broadway By the Bay, Children's Musical Theater of San Jose's Marquee Productions, Laguna Playhouse, Atwood Concert Hall, and Landmark Musical Theatre. Making her Playhouse debut, **Jillian A. Smith's** recent credits include roles at SPARC Theater, Ray of Light Theatre, Custom Made Theatre company, South Bay Musical Theatre, and Barestage Productions. **Renee Rogoff's** appearances include roles at Custom Made Theatre Company, Cutting Ball Theater, Central Works Theater Company, Roustabout Theater Company, Those Women Productions. Rogoff received a SFBATCC Award for Best Featured Actress for her performance as Hannah in *When We Were Young and Unafraid* at Custom Made Theatre Company. She has performed with Upright Citizens Brigade in NYC and is a standup comedian at Gotham Comedy Club and Broadway Comedy Club.

Göran Norquist has performed with American Conservatory Theater, Texas Shakespeare Festival, Metropolis Performing Arts Centre, Playhouse Merced, and Shakespeare Orange County.

As You Like It features music direction by **Dave Dobrusky**, choreography by **Nicole Helfer**, fight choreography by **Will Springhorn Jr.**, scenic design by **Heather Kenyon**, costume design by **Kathleen Qui**, lighting design by **Dave Robertson**, sound design by **James Goode**, projections design by **Sarah Phykitt**, props design by **Jos Harrington**. Assistant direction is by **Marie-Claire Erdynast**, and **Sarah Selig** serves as stage manager, with **Ada May** as equity assistant stage manager.

Dave Dobrusky (music direction) (he/him) has been working in the Bay Area for 25 years. He won SFBATCC awards for his work on San Francisco Playhouse's *Cabaret*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, and *Man of La Mancha* and on 42nd Street Moon's *Paint Your Wagon*. Other San Francisco Playhouse highlights include *Groundhog Day the Musical*, *La Cage Aux Folles*, and *City of Angels*. For 42nd Street Moon, credits include *Hot Mikado*, *110 in the Shade*, *Dames at Sea*, *Me and My Girl*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Most Happy Fella*, and *Scrooge in Love!*. He has worked with many theater companies, including Theatre Rhinoceros, Ray of Light Theatre, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, New Conservatory Theatre Center, and Hillbarn Theatre.

Nicole Helfer (choreography) (she/her) is an award-winning choreographer, director, performing artist, and has been a dance and theatre teacher for twenty-five years. She has worked with Bay Area theatre companies including 42nd Street Moon, Broadway By the Bay, Center Repertory Company, Contra Costa Musical Theatre, Lamplighters Music Theatre, Ray of Light Theatre, Mountain Play, Bay Area Children's Theatre, and Pacific Coast Repertory Theatre. She has choreographed for San Francisco Playhouse since 2019 in productions including *Cabaret* (SFBATCC and TBA Award finalist), *Groundhog Day the Musical* (SFBATCC nominee), *Songs for a New World*, *Starting Here Starting Now* (SFBATCC nominee), *Twelfth Night* (SFBATCC award), and the most recently, *Follies*. Additional choreography credits include The Mountain Play and Ross Valley Players' *She Loves Me* (SFBATCC award); 42nd Street Moon's *Dames at Sea* (TBA finalist and SFBATCC nominee) and *No, No, Nanette* (TBA finalist and SFBATCC nominee); Broadway By the Bay's *The Music Man* (TBA finalist), *West Side Story* (TBA Award), and *In the Heights* (TBA Award); and Ray of Light Theatre's *Lizzie* (SFBATCC nominee), among many others.

Bill English (Director) (he/him) is the co-founder and Artistic Director of **San Francisco Playhouse**. Alongside co-founder Susi Damilano, he has guided its growth from a bare-bones storefront to the second-largest nonprofit theatre company in San Francisco. English designed the Playhouse's first theatre space at 536 Sutter Street and reconfigured its current space from a 700-seat hall into the current gracious and intimate 199-seat venue. Over the last twenty years, he has served as director, actor, scenic designer, and sound designer, winning SFBATCC nominations or awards in each of those categories. Bill is also an accomplished musician and builder. Milestone accomplishments include introducing Pulitzer Prize winner Stephen Adly Guirgis to the Bay Area by directing three of his plays; commissioning over thirty playwrights including Theresa Rebeck, Aaron Loeb, Lauren Gunderson, Lauren Yee, and Christopher Chen; and developing World Premieres from workshops to Sandbox Series to Mainstage Season to Off-Broadway (including the Off-Broadway transfers of *Ideation* and *Bauer*), and presenting the very first production of *Grounded* by George Brant which later played at the Public Theater. He coined the phrase “the empathy gym,” which drives everything at the Playhouse.

About the creators

Shaina Taub (music and lyrics, co-adaptor) (she/her) is a New York-based songwriter and performer. She has won the Jonathan Larson Grant, the Fred Ebb Award, and the Billie Burke Ziegfeld Award, and has an ongoing concert residency at Joe's Pub. Her musical adaptation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* dazzled critics and audiences alike at San Francisco Playhouse last season, which was called “an exhilarating triumph” by *BroadwayWorld* and received the highest rating from *San Francisco Chronicle*, calling it “local theater at its best.” Taub has starred in her musical adaptations of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* at the Public Theater's Delacorte in Central Park, commissioned for their groundbreaking Public Works initiative. Her musical *Suffs* was a smash hit Off-Broadway this year and she wrote lyrics for the musical of *The Devil Wears Prada*, with music by Sir Elton John. Taub's work was featured in Lincoln Center's American Songbook concert series, and she recently made her Carnegie Hall debut performing her music with the New York Pops. She wrote songs for and co-starred in Bill Irwin and David Shiner's *Old Hats*, directed by Tina Landau at the Signature Theatre and American Conservatory Theater. She earned a Lucille Lortel Award nomination as Mary in the off-Broadway run of *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*, and appeared in the original cast of *Hadestown* at New York Theatre Workshop. Her songs have been performed by Audra McDonald and Sutton Foster, and she wrote the theme song for Julie Andrews' Netflix series “Julie's Greenroom,” performed by Sara Bareilles. She has released two albums, *Visitors* and *Die Happy*.

Laurie Woolery (co-adaptor) (she/her) is a director, playwright, educator, facilitator, and producer. She has worked at the Public Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Yale Repertory, Trinity Repertory, Goodman Theater, Cornerstone Theater Company, South Coast Repertory, Mark Taper Forum, Denver Center, Los Angeles Philharmonic, East West Players, Los Angeles Theatre Center, Inge Center for the Arts, Plaza de la Raza/RedCAT, Ricardo Montalban Theatre, Deaf-West Theatre, Highways Performance Space, Sundance Playwrights Lab, and Sundance Children's Theater. Woolery has directed world premieres of plays by Tanya Saracho, Mary Kathryn Nagle, Charise Castro Smith, Marisela Trevino Orta, Aditi Kapil, K.J. Sanchez, Julie Marie Myatt, Cody Henderson, Allison Carey, and others. Currently, Woolery is the Director of Public Works at The Public Theater, an initiative that seeks to engage the people of New York by making them creators and not just spectators. Woolery partnered with Trinity Repertory Theater to deepen their artistic work with the Latinx community in the larger Rhode Island area and to launch Teatro en El Verano, a program that tours bi-lingual Shakespeare plays back into community. As a playwright, Woolery's plays have been produced around the country. Her solo play *Salvadorian Moon/African Sky* was commissioned by Cornerstone Theater Company and performed in their citywide Festival of Faith. Woolery has also worked with South Coast Repertory Theatre, and Hollygrove Children's Home. She serves on the Board of the Latinx Producers Action Network, Latinx Commons, is a founding member of The Sol Project in New York and recipient of the Fuller Road Fellowship for Women Directors of Color.

About San Francisco Playhouse

Founded by **Bill English** and **Susi Damilano** in 2003, **San Francisco Playhouse** has been described by *The New York Times* as “a company that stages some of the most consistently high-quality work around” and deemed “ever adventurous” by *The Mercury News*. Located in the heart of the Union Square Theater District, **San Francisco Playhouse** is the city's premier Off-Broadway company, an intimate alternative to the larger more traditional Union Square theater fare. The Playhouse provides audiences the opportunity to experience professional theater with top-notch actors and world-class design in a setting where they are close to the action. The company has received multiple awards for overall productions, acting, and design, including the SF Weekly Best Theatre Award and the Bay Guardian's Best Off-Broadway Theatre Award, as well as three consecutive Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards for Best Entire Production in the Bay Area. *KQED/NPR* recently described the company: “San Francisco Playhouse is one of the few theaters in the Bay Area that has a mission that actually shows up

on stage. Artistic director Bill English's commitment to empathy as a guiding philosophical and aesthetic force is admirable and by living that mission, fascinating things happen onstage." The Playhouse is committed to providing a creative home and inspiring environment where actors, directors, writers, designers, and theater lovers converge to create and experience dramatic works that celebrate the human spirit.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: **San Francisco Playhouse** continues its 20th Anniversary season with the imaginative and exhilarating hit musical adaptation of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, helmed by San Francisco Playhouse's Artistic Director **Bill English** with music direction by **Dave Dobrusky** and choreography by **Nicole Helfer**. This rollicking tale follows exiles making a new life in a strange new place, further complicated by lovers-in-disguise, features an original folk-pop score by one of the most exciting new voices in musical theater, **Shaina Taub** (Off-Broadway's *Suffs*, *Twelfth Night* seen at San Francisco Playhouse last season, and the upcoming *The Devil Wears Prada* musical with Sir Elton John). Taub teamed up with The Public Theater's Director of Public Works **Laurie Woolery** to transform the Bard's beloved comedy into an exuberant testament to acceptance and diversity, serving as an apt reminder of what's possible in today's divisive era. Forced from their homes, Duke Senior and his followers escape to the idyllic Forest of Arden, where all are welcomed and embraced. Lost amidst the trees, the refugees find community under the stars, assisted by a lively cast of characters including a waggish court clown, a melancholy philosopher, down-to-earth locals, and several amorous pairs of would-be lovers. Recently presented by The Public Theater's Public Works program after dazzling audiences in 2017, *The New York Times* lauded this musical adaptation as "rollicking, poignant and flat-out delightful. This '*As You Like It*' offers a utopian vision of a society that favors acceptance over division, honesty over obfuscation, grace over meanness."

WHEN: Previews: Thursday, November 17 – Tuesday, November 22, 2022
Opening: Wednesday, November 23, 2022
Closes: Saturday, January 14, 2023

SHOWS: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays: 7pm
Fridays & Saturdays: 3pm & 8pm
Sundays: 2pm & 7pm

WHERE: San Francisco Playhouse (450 Post Street, San Francisco)

TICKETS: For tickets (\$15-\$100) or more information, the public may visit sfplayhouse.org or call the box office at 415-677-9596.

PRESS: Contact Lauren Goldfarb, Carla Befera & Co.
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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos will be available soon: <http://cbpr.co/press/asyoulikeit>