THEATREWORKS SILICON VALLEY ANNOUNCES FULL CASTING FOR THE WORLD PREMIERE OF

A DISTINCT SOCIETY

PRESENTED IN ASSOCIATION WITH PIONEER THEATRE COMPANY
By Kareem Fahmy
Directed by Giovanna Sardelli
April 5-30, 2023 *(opening night: April 8)*
MOUNTAIN VIEW CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA (8 March 2023) — **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley** announces full casting for World Premiere of ***A Distinct Society***, presented in association with **Pioneer Theatre Company**. In this moving play by **Kareem Fahmy**, a quiet library that straddles the United States and Canada becomes the battlefield for border control. As an Iranian family separated by the Muslim travel ban seeks refuge within its doors, the library's occupants grapple with the power of the law versus the powers of the heart. An audience favorite from the 2021 TheatreWorks New Works Festival Online, TheatreWorks Artistic Associate and Director of New Works **Giovanna Sardelli** will direct this drama celebrating the human spirit during crises that divide. ***A Distinct Society*** will be presented **April 5-30, 2023** (*press opening: April 8*) at Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro Street, Mountain View. For tickets (starting at $30) and more information the public may visit **TheatreWorks.org** or call **(877)-662-8978.**

A Distinct Society received praise at **Pioneer Theatre Company**, where *The Utah Review* deemed it "superb on all counts." *Front Row Reviewers* called it "one of those rare plays that should be labeled: 'important.' It says something from such an uncommon point-of-view, through a powerfully different lens, that needs to be experienced by audiences everywhere. We need this play."

TheatreWorks is committed to creating an environment that is accessible for all audiences in its community. American Sign Language interpretation will be available at the performance of ***A Distinct Society*** at **7:30pm Tuesday, April 18, 2023**. In partnership with c2 Caption Coalition, TheatreWorks will offer open captioning (a screen displaying all dialogue and a description of sound effects) for the performances of ***A Distinct Society*** at **2pm** & **7pm Sunday, April 23, 2023** and **2pm Wednesday, April 26, 2023**. TheatreWorks is partnering with Gravity Access Services in offering audio descriptions to assist patrons who are visually impaired. This service, which includes a pre-show talk, will be

available **8pm Friday, April 28, 2023; 8pm Saturday, April 29, 2023;** and **2pm Sunday, April 30, 2023**. (To utilize audio description, patrons should pre-register at **(877)-662-8978** after purchasing tickets). Assisted listening devices are offered at every performance with no advance registration required. For more information about accessibility programs at TheatreWorks the public may visit **TheatreWorks.org/venues/accessibility/**

TheatreWorks is also dedicated to engaging audiences through community programming and arts engagement, furthering its mission to develop programming that invests and amplifies the voices and experiences of the theatre company's diverse communities. For each of the shows in the 2022/23 season, TheatreWorks will host In Conversation events, a series of free community events allowing community members to be in conversation with artists and the works onstage. In Conversation events will be staged for ***A Distinct Society*** after the 2pm matinees on **Saturday, April 15, 2023** and **Saturday, April 22, 2023**. Investing in the voices of the future, TheatreWorks will present a student matinee of ***A Distinct Society*** at **11am Thursday, April 27, 2023**.

COVID-19 health and safety procedures will be announced closer to the date of the performance. For up to date information the public may visit **TheatreWorks.org/safetyupdate/**

Director Sardelli has assembled a marvelous cast for this premiere. Seen in TheatreWorks' streamed production of *Pandora* and in TheatreWorks' New Works Festival reading of *Describe the Night,* **Carrie Paff** (she/her) makes her main stage debut as Manon Desjardins, the French-Canadian head librarian of the Haskell Free Library. Paff also performed this role in the Pioneer Theatre Company production of ***A Distinct Society***. She has appeared Off-Broadway with Theatre for a New Audience and 59E59. Her regional theatre credits include roles with American Conservatory Theater, San Francisco Playhouse, ACT Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, Aurora Theatre Company, Magic Theatre, San Jose Repertory Theatre, and Marin Theatre Company. She can be heard in Pixar's *Finding Dory*, *The Good Dinosaur*, and *Lamp Life.*

James Rana (he/him) makes his TheatreWorks debut as Peyman Gilani, an Iranian cardiac surgeon hoping to visit his daughter in the library. Seen on Broadway and in the National Tour of *The Band's Visit*, Rana was also featured in tours with Royal Shakespeare Company and Bonn Biennale. He has performed Off-Broadway at Ensemble Studio Theatre, Classical Theatre of Harlem, Worth Street Theatre, Red Bull Theatre, and Pan Asian Repertory Theatre. His regional theatre performances include

roles with Contemporary American Theatre Festival, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Princeton Repertory Theatre, and East Lynne Theater Company. Rana's film and TV credits include NBC TV's "Law & Order: SVU," "Chicago Fire," "Third Watch," "One Life to Live," and "Late Night with Conan O'Brien;" CBS TV's "Madam Secretary," and "As the World Turns;" and the films *The War Within* and *The Assassin*. Note: **James Rana** replaces the previously announced Barzin Akhavan in this role.

Vaneh Assadourian (she/her) makes her TheatreWorks debut as Shirin Gilani, a medical student in America whose father is across the border in Canada. Assadourian is a Los Angeles-based Actor and Director born and raised in Tehran, Iran. Seen as Shirin in *A Distinct Society* at Pioneer Theatre Company, she has also performed at The Geffen Playhouse, Hammer Museum, Skylight Theatre Company, Latino Theatre Company, Theatricum Botanicum, and Circle X Theatre. Her voice can be heard as a narrator for Apple News + and on numerous audiobooks on Audible.

Kenny Scott (he/him) makes his TheatreWorks debut as Bruce Laird, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer. An artistic company member of Oakland Theater Project and Shotgun Players, Scott has appeared in productions at Marin Theatre Company, Magic Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, Z Space, Crowded Fire Theater, Cutting Ball Theater, and New Conservatory Theatre Center.

Daniel Allitt (he/him) makes his TheatreWorks debut as Declan Sheehan, a teenager who finds refuge in the library. Allitt has performed with Rutgers Theatre Company and Shakespeare's Globe as well as a workshop with Playwrights Horizons. His film and TV credits include the short film *Twarriors* and Investigation Discovery's "Evil Lives Here."

A Distinct Society features scenic design by **Jo Winiarski**, costume design by **Dina El-Aziz**, lighting design by **Pamila Z. Gray**, and sound design by **Elton Bradman. Taylor McQuesten** serves as stage manager with **Emily Anderson Wolf** as Assistant Stage Manager.

Kareem Fahmy (Playwright) is a Canadian-born playwright and director of Egyptian descent. His plays, which include *American Fast*, *A Distinct Society*, *The Triumphant*, *Pareidolia*, *The In-Between*, and an adaptation of the acclaimed Egyptian novel *The Yacoubian Building*, have been developed at theatres nationwide. His fellowships/Residencies include Sundance Theatre Lab, TCG Rising Leader of Color, Oregon Shakespeare Festival (Phil Killian Directing Fellow), The O'Neill (National Directors Fellow), Second Stage Theater (Van Lier Directing Fellow), Soho Repertory Theatre (Writer/Director

Lab), Lincoln Center (Directors Lab), New York Theater Workshop (Emerging Artist Fellow). Fahmy is the co-founder of the Middle Eastern American Writers Lab at The Lark and of Maia Directors, a consulting group for organizations and artists engaging with stories from the Middle East. Fahmy received an MFA in Directing from Columbia University.

TheatreWorks Artistic Associate and Director of New Works **Giovanna Sardelli's** (Director) many directing credits at TheatreWorks include last season's World Premiere play *Nan and the Lower Body* and *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* as well as the March 2020 Northern California Premiere of *They Promised Her the Moon*, Pulitzer Prize finalist Rajiv Joseph's *Archduke* (2019), *FINKS* (2018), *The Velocity of Autumn* and *Crimes of the Heart* (2016), Joseph's *The Lake Effect* (2015), *Somewhere* by Matthew Lopez (2013), and the World Premiere of Joseph's *The North Pool* (2011). She is an award-winning director who has worked on numerous plays by Rajiv Joseph including the World Premiere of *Archduke* (Mark Taper Forum) and *Guards at the Taj* (Geffen Playhouse; 2016 Ovation Award for Best Production of a Play) and the World Premiere of the Obie Award winning play *Describe The Night* (2014 New Works Festival, Alley Theatre, Atlantic Theater Company in NYC). She has directed World Premieres of plays by Theresa Rebeck, Lynn Rosen, Joe Gilford, Jeff Augustine, Lauren Yee, Zayd Dohrn, Melissa Ross, Lila Rose Kaplan, Matthew Lopez, and Zoe Kazan among others. Sardelli directed "Marvel's Squirrel Girl: The Unbeatable Radio Show!," a podcast series by Marvel Entertainment and Sirius XM.

TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, led by Artistic Director **Tim Bond** and Executive Director **Debbie Chinn**, presents a wide variety of contemporary plays and musicals, revitalizes great works of the past, and serves more than 100,000 patrons per year. 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.

Media sponsor for TheatreWorks Silicon Valley's 2022/23 season is San Francisco Chronicle.

For Calendar Editors:

WHAT: **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley** will present the World Premiere of ***A Distinct Society*****,** presented in association with **Pioneer Theatre Company.** In this moving play by **Kareem Fahmy**, a quiet library that straddles the United States and Canada becomes the battlefield for border control. As an Iranian family separated by the Muslim travel ban seeks refuge within its doors, the library's occupants grapple with the power of the law versus the powers of the heart. An audience favorite from the 2021 TheatreWorks New Works Festival Online, TheatreWorks Artistic Associate and Director of New Works **Giovanna Sardelli** will direct this drama celebrating the human spirit during crises that divide.

WHEN: Previews: Wednesday, April 5 – Friday, April 7, 2023
Opening: Saturday, April 8, 2023
Closes: Sunday, April 30, 2023

SHOWS: Previews: 8:00pm
Tuesdays: 7:30pm
Wednesdays: 2:00pm, 7:30pm
Thursdays & Fridays: 8:00pm
Saturdays: 2:00pm, 8:00pm
Sundays: 2:00pm, 7:00pm

ACCESS: **ASL Interpretation:** 7:30pm Tuesday, April 18, 2023
Open Captioning: 2pm and 7pm on Sunday, April 23, 2023; 2pm Wednesday, April 26, 2023
Audio Description: 8pm Friday, April 28, 2023; 8pm Saturday, April 29, 2023; 2pm Sunday, April 30, 2023
Please register in advance, as service includes a pre-show talk thirty minutes before the performance.
Assisted Listening Devices available at every performance

EVENTS: **In Conversations** (*free of cost, open to community*): After the 2pm matinees on Saturday, April 15, 2023 and Saturday, April 22, 2023
Student Matinee: 11am Thursday, April 27, 2023

WHERE: **Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts.** 500 Castro Street, Mountain View

TICKETS: Ticket prices start at $30; savings available for educators, seniors, and patrons 35 and under. Pricing subject to change.

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

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available: http://cbpr.co/press/adistinctsociety