

## THEATREWORKS SILICON VALLEY ANNOUNCES FINANCIAL CRISIS, LAUNCHES “SAVE THEATREWORKS NOW” EFFORT

PALO ALTO, CA (9 August 2023) – **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley**, the nationally acclaimed theatre company founded in Palo Alto in 1970, has announced the devastating after-effects of the COVID pandemic have **put its continuation at serious risk**. The company reached a zenith in 2019, when it was recognized with the theatre world’s highest honor, the Regional Theatre Tony Award, and embarked on a victorious 50th Anniversary Season of plays and musicals. But the abrupt pandemic shutdown in March 2020, followed by years of virtual and hybrid performances and a slow return of audiences, has led to unexpected and substantial shortfalls in subscription and single ticket revenue. Today TheatreWorks announced it must raise \$3 million by November 2023 in order to complete its 53rd season, which is scheduled to run October 2023 through June 2024 at the Lucie Stern Theatre in Palo Alto, and the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts.

In accordance with the widely reported nationwide crisis in which major theatre companies across the US are curtailing or ceasing operations, TheatreWorks has seen an alarming downturn in subscribers and single ticket buyers, as well as decreases in foundation and individual donations. Said Executive Director **Debbie Chinn**, “We have now reached a danger point. We were fortunate in having COVID funding to sustain operations during the pandemic, but those funds came with the proviso that they be spent during that period to keep people at work. Those emergency sources were spent according to federal regulations, and despite our best efforts to bounce back from this crisis, we are now looking at a dire shortfall in income. We have been and continue to make hard decisions, including deep financial cuts within the company, but frankly, without significant additional funding, we will be unable to continue operations.”

Says newly appointed Artistic Director **Giovanna Sardelli**, “The time is now. TheatreWorks has been such a valuable resource to the community for more than 50 years, presenting top-quality productions of classics and modern plays and musicals, as well as creating new works that have

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become hits on our own stage, across the country, on Broadway, and in London. From its earliest days, the company has been a leader in supporting playwrights and composers, and now enjoys a national reputation as one of the country's foremost homes for nurturing new work. More than that, TheatreWorks has been a place for all members of its vibrant community, engaging and reflecting back its rich diversity. Education has also been a hallmark of TheatreWorks' thriving community, with robust school programs that brought young people into the theatre through student matinees, brought topical plays and accompanying study guides into the schools, and offered winter break and summer classes for youth. We need to pull out all the stops to ensure we can continue this work and look to grow, as we increase community partnerships with other arts organizations such as Montalvo Arts Center, with Silicon Valley innovators, and others."

TheatreWorks Board Chair **Mark Greenstein** adds, "TheatreWorks Silicon Valley is one of this region's leading arts organizations and it finds itself in an unprecedented situation. Years of careful stewardship were not enough to overcome the serious blows caused by the pandemic. It would be criminal to see this extraordinary public asset go away – we need our community to step up and show its support to save TheatreWorks now."

Among the initiatives for funding, TheatreWorks is asking for donations large and small in support of the theatre and is further urging the greater community to show their support through subscribing to this season's productions. Adds Sardelli, "Subscribe if you want to help save TheatreWorks. You can buy tickets to six shows for as little as \$132 (only \$22 per show) – it's really a bargain! And if you are a current subscriber, double down: if you have two subscriptions, buy two more and bring some friends--or donate the tickets back and we will fill those seats with students and members of underserved communities."

TheatreWorks is scheduled to launch its 53rd season in October with the West Coast Premiere of Heidi Armbruster's *Mrs. Christie*, directed by Sardelli. Exploring what happened to Agatha Christie during the 11 days she vanished from public sight early in her career, Sardelli describes the show as "TheatreWorks doing what it does best. This play is everything people love: mystery, comedy, heart. It's a smart, funny show that celebrates the strength of women. It isn't your grandmother's Agatha Christie, but if you bring her, she will love it. I predict it will be

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done around the country after this production, and our audiences will be among the first to see it.”

The company’s New Works Festival, now in its 20th anniversary, will proceed as planned with readings and events scheduled for August 11-20, 2023 at Palo Alto’s Lucie Stern Theatre.

Since its founding in 1970, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley has become one of the nation’s leaders in cultivating and producing new musicals and plays, developing and premiering 72 works by new and veteran artists, and presenting 171 Regional Premieres. Prior to the pandemic closures, TheatreWorks inspired more than 100,000 people per year with creative and engaging experiences. TheatreWorks is dedicated to creating works that celebrate the human spirit, and reflect the diversity of its community, with a proud history of inclusive casting, and selecting or creating works that shine a light on the experiences of the diverse populations of the Bay Area. Also among TheatreWorks’ community services are the Children’s Healing Project at Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital which serves children in long-term care and their siblings, as well as its theatre program at Stanford’s Ronald McDonald House for children in families seeking lifesaving hospital treatments.

The company’s New Works Festival and its Writers’ Retreat programs attract authors and composers of national stature (Rajiv Joseph, Stephen Schwartz, Beth Henley, Paul Gordon, Marsha Norman, Christopher Chen, Henry Krieger, Duncan Sheik, Jules Feiffer, Rehana Lew Mirza, Dipika Guha, Joe DiPietro, and Andrew Lippa, among many others), providing an artistic home in which America’s theatre artists can create new works. In addition, the company has developed scores of works which have gone on to both regional and Off-Broadway productions. Among its home-grown hits have been the musicals *Emma*, *Pride & Prejudice*, *The Four Immigrants: A Musical Manga*, and *Daddy Long Legs*, among others, and plays including *The Loudest Man on Earth*, *The North Pool*, *Summer of ’42*, and more.

It was at TheatreWorks that the 2010 Best Musical Tony Award-winner *Memphis* was first workshopped and received its World Premiere. Stephen Schwartz’s musical *The Prince of Egypt*, based on the DreamWorks movie of the same name, also made its World Premiere at TheatreWorks before debuting in London’s West End in 2020.

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For additional information on this campaign, subscribing or making donations, can be found at **theatreworks.org**.

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