



MARIN THEATRE PRESENTS

TORCH SONG

May 9 – June 2, 2024

MILL VALLEY, CA (15 April 2024) — **Marin Theatre** closes out its 2023/24 season with *Torch Song*, the seminal comic drama by **Harvey Fierstein**, directed by **Evren Odcikin**. An adaptation of Fierstein’s 1982 play *Torch Song Trilogy*, this newly revised two-act *Torch Song*, called “Spectacular. An energizing joy, as stimulating as four shots of espresso” by *The New York Times*, focuses on Arnold Beckoff, a lovelorn Jewish drag queen wielding the pithy wit of a Fran Lebowitz, is looking for love in New York City. By turns hilarious and touching, this rollicking work finds Arnold stumbling through modern life, wallowing in cynical despair at ever finding a husband, a child, and a pair of bunny slippers that fit. An unexpected visit from his disapproving mother from Miami reminds Arnold that what he really needs is respect. For this production, Marin Theatre has assembled a stellar cast that includes **Dean Linnard, Nancy Carlin, Joe Ayers, Patrick Andrew Jones, Edric Young, and Kina Kantor**. *Torch Song* will be performed **May 9 - June 2, 2024** (*Press Opening: Tuesday, May 14*) at Marin Theatre, 397 Miller Avenue, Mill Valley. Tickets (\$39.50 - \$65.50 + fees) are available at MarinTheatre.org or by calling **415-388-5208**.

When *Torch Song Trilogy* opened in its original three-act version in June 1982, it took Broadway by storm, captivating mainstream theatergoers and critics, and running for three years. Audiences embraced the story’s universal message of the human need for acceptance, while throwing open doors for the LGBTQ+ community who for the first time experienced a Broadway production that was shining an uplifting light on gay culture. The fast-paced drama and its flamboyantly dramatic, wickedly funny lead offered up scenes such as a hilarious bar back-room sex hookup, as well as messy relationship and mother-son dynamics, the longing for parenthood, and a description of a brutal hate crime that is still sadly topical today. It starred the author, who received Tony Awards for Best Actor and Best Play, with the inimitable Estelle Getty as his mother. Such was the seismic cultural shift of a Broadway mega-hit centered on gay life, that it

has been argued that without Harvey Fierstein leading the way, there would never have been mainstream television shows such as “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy,” “Will & Grace,” “Modern Family,” “Transparent,” and “RuPaul’s Drag Race.” Wrote critic Mel Gussow in *The New York Times*, “The lonely but far-from-forlorn hero of Harvey Fierstein’s ‘Torch Song Trilogy’ is a die-hard romantic who takes his heart, soul and fatalism from the 1920s ballads that give the work its title and its tone. At the end of a long, infinitely rewarding evening in the company of Arnold and his family and friends, he confesses with a sigh that he has always wanted exactly the life that his mother has had — ‘with certain minor alterations.’” *Torch Song* in its new abbreviated form returned to Broadway in 2018, directed by Moisés Kaufman, starring Michael Urie and Mercedes Ruehl, in a triumphant production that was hailed again by *The New York Times* as “A seriously entertaining interpretation of living large as a proactive defense against feeling small.” *Entertainment Weekly* noted the show, “brings laughter and tears simultaneously. It's impossible not to feel electricity in the theater,” while *The Hollywood Reporter* called it “profoundly moving.”

The cast for this production features **Dean Linnard**, making his MTC debut as Arnold Beckoff. Linnard has been seen in the Bay Area in *Born With Teeth* (Aurora Theatre Company), *Octet* (Berkeley Rep), *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Good Person of Szechwan*, *The Winter’s Tale* (California Shakespeare Theater), *Twelfth Night*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (Marin Shakespeare Company), *Bad Jews*, *Hand to God* (Left Edge Theatre). He received San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle (SFBATCC) Awards for *Groundhog Day: The Musical* and *Indecent* at San Francisco Playhouse. New York credits include the world premiere of Dave Harris’ *Tambo & Bones* at Playwrights Horizons.

Appearing as Mrs. Beckoff, Arnold’s mother, is **Nancy Carlin**, returning to MTC where she appeared in *All in the Timing* and *My Old Lady*. Carlin is well known to theatre audiences around the Bay for her frequent appearances at A.C.T., Berkeley Rep, California Shakespeare Theater, San Francisco Playhouse, and most recently, at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley in *Steel Magnolias*. Beyond the Bay, she has been seen at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Shakespeare Santa Cruz, among others.

Featured as Ed, a closeted schoolteacher with whom Arnold attempts a relationship, is **Patrick Andrew Jones**, who has been seen on stages across the country and around the Bay, including A.R.T./NY, The Lark, Hudson Stage, The Brick, The Kraine Theater, San Francisco Playhouse, Capital Repertory Theatre, Pacific Repertory Theater, Berkeley Rep, A.C.T., Livermore Shakespeare Festival, and Teatro Delle Due (Italian tour). His film and television credits include “The Worst Best Man Ever,” “The Traumatist,” “The Food That Built America” “Empires,” and “Diarra from Detroit.”

Appearing as Laurel, the woman Ed marries, is **Kina Kantor** who has performed with the Magic Theatre, Berkeley Rep, A.C.T., TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, San Francisco Mime Troupe, San Francisco Playhouse, Bindlestiff Studio, Theatre Rhinoceros, and The Rueff at The Strand Theatre.

Edric Young plays Alan, a handsome young model. Young has been seen locally with African-American Shakespeare Company, Half Moon Bay Shakespeare Company, San Francisco Playhouse, Theatre Rhinoceros, and Stanford Asian American Theater Project.

Joe Ayers will portray David, a troubled gay teenager. Ayer’s credits include work on and offstage at companies such as Asolo Rep, American Stage, A.C.T, California Shakespeare Theater, San Francisco Playhouse, Berkeley Playhouse, Los Altos Stage Company, and New Canon Theatre Company.

Director **Evren Odcikin** is a Turkish-American director, writer, and arts leader with a commitment to advocating for historically excluded stories and voices in the American theatre. His directing credits include work at Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF), Northern Stage, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, PlayCo, American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.), Guthrie Theater, Berkeley Rep, Geva, South Coast Rep, the Kennedy Center, The Lark, InterAct, Cleveland Public Theatre, Playwrights Foundation, Golden Thread, Crowded Fire Theater, and Magic Theatre, amongst many others. As a playwright and translator, he has been commissioned and produced by California Shakespeare Theater, NYU Abu Dhabi, Golden Thread, Crowded Fire Theatre, and Custom Made Theatre Co. In 2023, he served as the interim artistic director at OSF, where he had been the associate artistic director and director of artistic programming since

2019. Recognitions include a “Theatre Worker You Should Know” feature in *American Theatre* magazine; a National Director’s Fellowship from the O’Neill, National New Play Network, the Kennedy Center, and Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation; and a TITAN Award from Theatre Bay Area.

The design team bringing this production of *Torch Song* to life on stage will include **Sarah Phykitt** (set design), **Ray Oppenheimer** (lighting design), **Lana Palmer** (sound design), and **Jessie Amoroso** (costume design).

ABOUT MARIN THEATRE

Marin Theatre was founded in 1966 when 35 Mill Valley residents came together under the leadership of Sali Lieberman to create the Mill Valley Center for the Performing Arts (MVCPA). The nonprofit organization brought arts as diverse as film, theatre, poetry, dance and concerts of classical, jazz and folk music to Marin County for a decade. After a number of successful community theatre productions, MVCPA began to exclusively produce and present theatre performances in 1977. The group staged critically acclaimed, award-winning plays in a golf clubhouse, a veterans' auditorium, and several schools and parks. MVCPA changed its name to Marin Theatre Company in 1984, beginning of a period of extraordinary growth. By 1987, MTC had become a professional theatre company, opening its own theatre complex and joining with other local theatres to negotiate the first regional Actors’ Equity contract in the Bay Area. MTC then created a new play program to support emerging American playwrights, launching a New Works developmental workshop and public reading series in 2004 and establishing two new play prizes in 2007. MTC joined both the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and the National New Play Network (NNPN) in 2008. Now rechristened **Marin Theatre**, the company is the leading professional theatre in the North Bay and the premier mid-sized theatre in the Bay Area. In the fall of 2023, **Lance Gardner** was appointed artistic director. Gardner is well known to Bay Area audiences for his many leading appearances on stage at Marin Theatre Company, as well as at Berkeley Rep, California Shakespeare Theater, Magic Theatre, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, and others. He served as president of the Board of Trustees at Aurora Theatre Company, and was live event producer at *KQED*, launching a series of public events for the acclaimed public broadcasting company, before assuming this role at Marin Theatre.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: **Marin Theatre** closes out its 2023/24 season with *Torch Song*, the seminal comic drama by **Harvey Fierstein**, directed by **Evren Odcikin**. An adaptation of Fierstein’s 1982 play *Torch Song Trilogy*, this newly revised two-act *Torch Song*, called “Spectacular” by *The New York Times*, focuses on Arnold Beckoff, a lovelorn Jewish drag queen wielding the pithy wit of a Fran Lebowitz, is looking for love in New York City. By turns hilarious and touching, this rollicking work finds Arnold stumbling through modern life, wallowing in cynical despair at ever finding a husband, a child, and a pair of bunny slippers that fit. An unexpected visit from his disapproving mother from Miami reminds Arnold that what he really needs is respect.

WHEN: **May 9 - June 2, 2024**
Previews: May 9 - May 12, 2024
(7:30pm Thurs, May 9 - Sat, May 11; 4:00pm, Sun, May 12)
Press Opening: 7:30pm, Tuesday, May 14
Closes: June 2, 2024

SHOWS: Wednesdays-Fridays: 7:30pm
Saturdays: 2:00pm & 7:30pm
Sundays: 2:00pm
Thursday, May 30 – 1:00pm

WHERE: **Marin Theatre**, 397 Miller Avenue, Mill Valley, CA 94941

TICKETS: \$39.50 - \$65.50 + fees

INFO: Information and tickets are available at **MarinTheatre.org** or by calling **415-388-5208**

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here: <https://cbpr.co/press/torch-song/>