

## LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES INITIAL PROJECTS FOR 2022 WITHOUT WALLS (WOW) FESTIVAL AT ARTS DISTRICT LIBERTY STATION, APRIL 21 – 24

*Popular Festival To Feature Immersive, Interactive and Site-Based Projects from Australia, Canada, Mexico, Plus Acclaimed Local Groups, Including Blindspot Collective, San Diego Opera and More*

**Beginning in 2022, WOW Festival Will Become an Annual Event**

La Jolla, CA – La Jolla Playhouse is pleased to announce several initial projects for its **2022 Without Walls (WOW) Festival**. The WOW Festival will take place **April 21 – 24** at **ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station**, home of the Playhouse's 2019 WOW Festival and the Pop-Up WOW event in August 2021. Like previous WOW Festivals, the 2022 event will feature four action-packed days of theatre, dance and music, with more than 20 productions by acclaimed local, national and international artists occurring simultaneously throughout the weekend.

The WOW Festival creates a cultural and artistic hub in the city, where patrons can gather to experience WOW performances, engage in lively discussions about the work, and enjoy the many food and drink options on offer at Liberty Station. Tickets for WOW Festival productions, ranging from free to \$20, will go on sale in March. For more information, visit [wowfestival.org](http://wowfestival.org).

The appetite for WOW has grown tremendously since the program's inception in 2011 – from audiences and artists alike – and the Playhouse is expanding the program to offer even more of this exciting, interactive work in the community. Beginning in 2022, the Playhouse will produce the WOW Festival annually, making it a staple of the San Diego events calendar for local, national and international audiences. As further part of this growth, the Playhouse recently appointed **Mia Fiorella** to the new position of Director of Experiences and Activations. She will join Playhouse Producing Associate **Amy Ashton** in overseeing the Without Walls series.

“Without Walls has truly become part of the core of the Playhouse, and it has been a dream of mine to make the WOW Festival an annual event in San Diego. By moving to a yearly festival, we are taking another step toward making La Jolla Playhouse and San Diego the premier destination for this type of site-inspired, immersive, engaging work. I'm so pleased to have Mia Fiorella take on this new position, focused on spearheading WOW's ongoing evolution. Her role, alongside festival producer Amy Ashton, will give us the opportunity to meet the growing demand for these uniquely thrilling offerings,” said **Christopher Ashley**, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse. “This initial line-up for our 2022 outing showcases an extraordinary group of artists from San Diego and around the globe, including such popular past WOW Festival participants as CORPUS, Polyglot and Blindspot Collective. There will be experiences that appeal to patrons of all ages, and it's a joy to be back at Liberty Station to celebrate our community's theatrical adventurousness and rich cultural diversity.”

La Jolla Playhouse's **Without Walls (WOW)** series has become one of San Diego's most popular and acclaimed performance programs. This signature Playhouse initiative is designed to break the barriers of traditional theatre, offering immersive and site-inspired works that venture beyond the physical confines of the Playhouse facilities. Over the last ten years, the Playhouse has been commissioning and presenting this series of immersive, site-inspired and virtual productions throughout the San Diego community, including eight stand-alone productions, fourteen Digital WOW pieces, and four WOW Festivals.

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Initial projects for the 2022 WOW Festival include: **Ants**, from the Australia-based **Polyglot Theatre** (2019 WOW Festival's *Boats*; 2013 WOW Festival's *We Built This City*); **Ascension**, from **San Diego Opera**; **Black Séance**, a world premiere from the San Diego-based **Blindspot Collective** (Playhouse's 2020/21 Resident Theatre Company; Pop-Up WOW's *when the bubble bursts*; Digital WOW's *Walks of Life*; 2019 WOW Festival's *Hall Pass*); **La Bulle**, from the Toronto-based **CORPUS** (2015 WOW Festival's *A Flock of Flyers*); **The Frontera Project**, from the Mexico-based **Tijuana Hace Teatro** and NYC's **New Feet Productions**; **Lessons in Temperament**, from Canada's **Outside the March**; **Monuments**, from Australia-based artist **Craig Walsh**; and **On Her Shoulders We Stand**, from the San Diego-based **Tu Yo Theater**, plus a devised piece created by students in the **San Diego Unified School District's 2022 Honors Theatre Program**. Additional projects – including works by several ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station-based arts groups – will be announced shortly, along with performance schedules and COVID protocols.

**Mia Fiorella** joined the marketing team at La Jolla Playhouse in 2011 and helped launch the very first Without Walls (WOW) show, *Susurrus*, at the San Diego Botanical Garden, and the inaugural WOW Festival in 2013. She also helped develop and produce several WOW projects, including *Accomplice: San Diego*, *The Car Plays* and *Binge*, as well as several Digital WOW productions. Additionally, Mia worked on marketing such hit Playhouse shows as *Come From Away*, *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*, *Blueprints to Freedom*, *Junk* and *Miss You Like Hell*, along with all WOW projects. Her passion is bringing audiences and artists together to share stories, cultures and experiences. She previously worked as the Audience Development Manager at The Old Globe, and in Chicago as a Publicist with John Iltis & Cheryl Lewin Associates and as Marketing & Publicity Director for The Noble Fool Theatre and Trinity Irish Dance Company.

**Amy C. Ashton** joined La Jolla Playhouse in 2020 as Producing Associate, where she has produced several projects, including the Digital WOW series and the Pop-Up WOW event last summer. She served for seven seasons as Managing Director of Colt Coeur Theatre Company, developing and producing eight world premieres, including *Dry Land* by Ruby Rae Spiegel, as well as the East Coast premiere of *Eureka Day*, by Jonathan Spector. She produced site-specific and immersive projects, such as *Empire Travel Agency*, *KPOP* and *Does It Hurt When I Do This?* with Woodshed Collective. She previously served as Artistic Associate at Roundabout Theatre and The Civilians. She also produced the 2015 Prototype Festival production of *Kansas City Choir Boy*, starring Courtney Love and Todd Almond, and the 2017 NYMF production of *The Demise*.

**La Jolla Playhouse** is a place where artists and audiences come together to create what's new and next in the American theatre, from Tony Award-winning productions, to imaginative programs for young audiences, to interactive experiences outside our theatre walls. Founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer, the Playhouse is currently led by Tony Award winner Christopher Ashley, the Rich Family Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, and Managing Director Debby Buchholz. The Playhouse is internationally renowned for the development of new plays and musicals, including mounting 105 world premieres, commissioning 60 new works, and sending 33 productions to Broadway – including the hit musical *Come From Away* – garnering a total of 38 Tony Awards, as well as the 1993 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

**ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station** is San Diego's largest Arts & Cultural District, located in historic buildings at the former Naval Training Center in the Liberty Station neighborhood, near Downtown on San Diego Bay. With 100 park-like acres, the ARTS DISTRICT is home to nearly 145 museums and galleries, artist studios, dance companies, fine dining, creative retail and other organizations that showcase San Diego's creative community and provide innovative experiences for the public.

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## WOW Festival Projects

### ***Ants***

From Polyglot Theatre (Australia)

*Ants* is an interactive performance which has giant Ants bringing children together in an unusual landscaping project. Faced with three big insects and hundreds of giant breadcrumbs, children are irresistibly drawn in and must figure out what the Ants want them to do. Gradually, a world of meaning unfolds, illustrating the human desire for order by transforming any public space with lines and patterns. *Ants* is an enchanting investigation into the nature of work and children's relationship with their environment.

*For this engagement, Polyglot Theatre is working in partnership with Inlet Dance Theatre to deliver Ants.*

### ***Ascension***

From San Diego Opera (San Diego)

*Ascension* showcases two female opera singers walking through the park areas of Liberty Station, singing a cappella two choral pieces by composer Dr. Melissa Dunphy and librettist Jacqueline Goldfinger, which encompass the Spirit of American Liberty for which Liberty Station was named. The first song, "Halcyon Days," is about finding hope in the depth of despair and rising up to make life better. The second song, "Set Myself Free," is about the freedom women found in America, and was originally written and performed in NYC as a celebration of the 19th Amendment. The singers will begin as early 20<sup>th</sup> century Suffragettes and throughout the performance slowly shed their outfit to reveal 21<sup>st</sup> century garb, physically showing the passage of time and the evolution of the American dream. The songs will be sung while the performers walk a route within the Station that highlights the places/plaques at the station commemorating American history.

### ***Black Séance***

From Blindspot Collective (San Diego)

*Black Séance* mingles magic and mixed drinks for an intoxicating, immersive experience that celebrates Black icons. Ushered into a dark, back-alley bar like those you might find in New Orleans, patrons are invited to participate in a transformative ritual that finds Francis, their bartender and amateur magician, channeling some of his heroes. Frederick Douglass, Josephine Baker, and James Baldwin are invoked as Francis investigates his mysterious family history. While encountering the humor and humanity of figures like Eartha Kitt or Redd Foxx through their own words, one never knows who will make an appearance and who will ghost in this visceral examination of generational trauma and triumph.

### ***La Bulle***

From CORPUS (Canada)

*La Bulle* offers a theatrical setting where there is nowhere to hide: an absurd situation, fully exploited by a lucid and lunar Pierrot. Through mime, dance, text, even drawing, he tries to connect with his audience. Dressed in the archetypal black and white costume and make-up, he manages to create bonds, alas all ephemeral, with those who are willing to give him a little time. He embraces solitude whole-heartedly, and swims freely like a fish in water in the realm of dreams. Poetry and humor are always at his side, true to CORPUS' vocation. Conceived long before COVID, the show was already exploring the theme of social distancing before it became a concern for all. This new work also speaks of an equally contemporary paradox: private space in full transparency.

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### ***The Frontera Project***

From Tijuana Hace Teatro (Mexico) and New Feet Productions (NYC)

*The Frontera Project* is an interactive, bilingual theater experience created and performed by a company of Mexican and US artists. They use theater, music, movement and play to actively engage the audience in a compassionate, often joyous conversation about life at the US/Mexico Border. *The Frontera Project* does not tell one Big Story. Rather, they build a mosaic of many small stories that celebrate the richness and contradictions of Fronterizo life. Specifically focused on Tijuana/San Diego, the piece explores the varied experiences of people on both sides of the Border – for audiences who may never have been there themselves. Their mission is to create the possibility for recognition across difference – of perspective, identity, experience, sparking a dialogue about what divides us, and what we share. Making that connection is crossing a border.

### ***Lessons in Temperament***

From Outside the March (Canada)

Written and performed by musician and theatre-maker James Smith, and directed and developed by Outside the March Artistic Director Mitchell Cushman, *Lessons in Temperament* is the story of four neuro-diverse brothers, told through a theatrical escape into the art and science of piano tuning. It is impossible to perfectly tune a piano – something that Smith knows all too well. A few years ago he taught himself how to tune pianos as an additional source of income between gigs. Through pursuing this work, Smith discovered something even more valuable – the perfect metaphor through which to process the mental complexities of his family. Between James and his brothers, they have had life-long journeys with OCD, autism, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Throughout the piece, Smith shares the story of his family, while getting the piano in front of him beautifully and imperfectly in tune. Catch this award-winning play's return to the stage, hot on the heels of its recent feature film adaptation.

### ***Monuments***

From Craig Walsh (Australia)

Monuments is a site-responsive projection installation that represent a haunting synergy between the human form, natural environment and the act of viewing. Nighttime video projections transform trees into sculptural monuments, surveying the immediate environment. The piece aims to challenge traditional expectations of public monuments and the selective history represented in our civic spaces. Cleverly deconstructing its own definition by humanizing the monument, there is a temporary fusion of everyday individuals with other living species occupying shared areas. Undermining the permanent historical and public art models so often controlled by subjective motivations, Monuments recognizes the infinite contributions that influence our understanding of place. Built for the great outdoors, the piece celebrates individuals in the community through large-scale portraits projected onto trees in a public space.

### ***On Her Shoulders We Stand***

From TuYo Theater (San Diego)

Explore the revolution of WW2 and the forging of new definitions and identities; the factories and battlefields of WWII fundamentally shifted the narratives about Latinas in the US. Before the war these women were outsiders whose language, food and cultural traditions marked them as other, but this unprecedented reorienting created the space for Latinas to enter into the cultural ethos as never before possible in the US. These women stood with their country, a country unready to claim them as its own, and joined the war effort at home and abroad, they dipped their shoulders down and bore into the fight. This multi-sensory theatrical experience takes patrons through a series of interconnected spaces to experience a performance focused on hidden community stories, immersing them in a world of historical memory, using the power of names to understand the role of Latinas in World War II.

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## **SDUSD 2022 Honors Theatre Devised Project**

La Jolla Playhouse is partnering with the VAPA office of San Diego Unified School District to facilitate and produce the 2022 Honors Theatre Devised Physical Theatre Project. The project brings students together from the 33 SDUSD high schools to devise an original piece of theatre, to premiere at the 2022 WOW Festival. Students are guided by La Jolla Playhouse Teaching Artists, Production Staff, Marketing staff, and by SDUSD School teachers and administrators.

### About the Artists

**Blindspot Collective** develops transformative theatre that amplifies marginalized voices, illuminates untold stories, bridges disparate experiences, and energizes vulnerable communities. Previous collaborations with La Jolla Playhouse include *Hall Pass*, *Walks of Life*, and *when the bubble bursts*, as well as currently serving as the theater company in residence. Since its founding in 2017, Blindspot Collective has collaborated with The Old Globe; Diversionary Theatre; ARTS (A Reason to Survive); UC San Diego; and other community partners to develop projects that meaningfully engage audiences and artists in the blindspot of society. The company has received acclaim for its original work, including site-specific events, forum theatre, new musicals, and verbatim plays. Blindspot Collective was the first theatre company to be awarded a performing arts residency at the San Diego International Airport and was selected "Theater of the Year" in 2020 by the San Diego Union-Tribune.

Co-founded by Sylvie Bouchard and artistic director David Danzon, Canada's **CORPUS** is known for its precise and surrealist humour that combines movement with theatrical imagery. CORPUS' unique and engaging performances are presented in both traditional and unusual locations for large and diverse audiences. Created in 1997, CORPUS now has 15 pieces in its repertoire and has presented over 2500 performances at venues and events across Canada and around the world in 35 countries on five continents.

**New Feet Productions** is dedicated to developing and producing new and classical work that ripples with theatrical language and invention. In collaboration with Tijuana Hace Teatro, New Feet developed and produced *The Frontera Project*, which premiered in September 2021 at Touchstone Theatre's Festival UnBound in Bethlehem, PA. In 2018, New Feet produced *Arden/Everywhere*, Jessica Bauman's reimagining of Shakespeare's "As You Like It" as a refugee story, with a company of professionals and non-professionals from the refugee and immigrant communities in New York City. Jessica Bauman founded New Feet Productions in 2007 in order to develop *Into the Hazard (Henry 5)*, her six-actor adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, which premiered off-Broadway. New Feet has produced or co-produced the world premieres of *Milk* by Emily DeVoti, *All Day Suckers* by Susan Dworkin, and *Leave the Balcony Open* by Maya MacDonald. New Feet co-produced journalist Jack Hitt's solo performance *Making Up the Truth*, which premiered at the International Festival of Arts and Ideas in New Haven in 2011, and was featured in the 2012 Spoleto Festival.

**Outside the March** creates unforgettable immersive encounters—redefining the experience of theatre for a new generation of audiences. Heading into their twelfth season, they have become Canada's leading immersive theatre company, with 22 productions, nine world premieres, 16 Canadian premieres, success with national and internationally touring and several film adaptations. Their work has received numerous honors, including a dozen Dora Awards and a dozen Toronto Theatre Critics Awards. They work to harness theatre's secret weapon—the power of presence unique to live performance that can't be streamed or downloaded. Their immersive experiences are communal, site-engaged and fuse the epic with the intimate, all with the goal of implicating our audiences in the stories that we share.

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**Polyglot Theatre** is a world-renowned contemporary theatre company based in Melbourne, Australia, making exceptional arts experiences for children and families. Their unique brand of theatre encompasses a wide variety of forms, and is shared with audiences everywhere, from the world's most prestigious theatres to the football grounds of regional Australia. Polyglot's artistic and philosophical approach of child-centered practice has earned their strong reputation internationally as a leader in the theatre for young audiences (TYA) sector, celebrated for creating distinctive, participatory works that are playful and conceptually rigorous. Access is central to Polyglot's work, driven by the right of all children to experience growth and resilience through creative play.

Created in 1950 as the San Diego Opera Guild, and incorporated in 1965 under the name **San Diego Opera**, the mission of the Company is to deliver exceptional performances and exciting, accessible programs to diverse audiences, focusing on community partnerships, and the transformative and expressive power of the human voice. Since 2015, the Company has been led by General Director David Bennett and continues to present grand style operas with world-renowned singers at the Civic Theatre in addition to smaller, more innovative works through the Company's *détour* Series.

**Tijuana Hace Teatro's** work has covered both the theater for adults and young people, including the world premieres of *The Frontera Project* (2021), *Sometimes Dogs Smile* (2019), *There Are Also Flies In The Moon* (2018), *Reef* (2017), among others. Their work has been seen at festivals, seminars and conferences in China, Denmark, Spain, Armenia, U.S. and Mexico. They also originated the THT Bina-tional Spectators School, an audience engagement program that unites 10 theaters on the Tijuana (MEX) / San Diego (USA) border; the *THT High School Festival*; and the THT Workshop acting training program. They are part of *México en Escena*, a program funded by the *Sistema de Apoyos a la Creación y Proyectos Culturales* of the Federal Secretary of Culture.

**TuYo Theater** was founded in 2017 by Daniel Jáquez, Patrice Amon, Crystal Mercado, Bernardo Mazón, Peter Cirino, and Evelyn Diaz Cruz. Led by Co-Artistic Directors Patrice Amon and Peter Cirino, TuYo Theatre's mission is to create and produce theatre in the San Diego area that tells stories from and by diverse Latinx perspectives. TuYo is committed to professional artistic rigor, forging authentic connections, developing community artists, and furthering the discourses that affect our community.

**Craig Walsh** has, over the last 30 years, become widely known for his pioneering works including innovative approaches to projection mapping in unconventional sites. His site-responsive works have animated natural environments and features such as trees, rivers and mountains, as well as public art projects in urban and architectural space. He is also renowned for his site interventions at live events, including iconic works at music festivals across Australia and internationally. Craig's work remains distinctive for its conceptual underpinnings and deftly woven narrative. Over recent years he has extended his digital arts expertise into work with diverse communities, enabling large-scale participation as collaborators in contemporary art projects such as *Home Gwangju* (South Korea, 2012), *Traces — Blue* (Setouchi, Japan, 2013), and *FIVE* (DADAA Inc., Western Australia, 2013 -14).

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