

ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Nicole Lane
nlane@artistsrep.org
503.241.9807x102(o) | 360.601.4298(c)

Artists Rep presents Portland Premiere

The Understudy

A laugh-out-loud comedy about the underbelly of the theatre biz

WHO: Artists Repertory Theatre
WHAT: *The Understudy*
WHEN: September 8 – October 4, 2015
WHERE: Artists Repertory Theatre, Alder Stage, 1515 SW Morrison Street, Portland
TICKETS: \$48 regular price; \$25 previews, students, under 25

- Pay-What-You-Can First Preview performance September 8
- Preview performances: September 8-11
- Opening Night: September 12
- Regular run: through October 4
- Buy Tickets: 503.241.1278 or www.artistsrep.org

SHOW IMAGE: Attached

PRODUCTION PHOTOS AVAILABLE: September 8, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Portland, Oregon | August 18, 2015. Artists Repertory Theatre opens its 2015/16 season with *The Understudy*, a witty look behind the curtain from prominent American playwright and the creator of TV's *Smash*, Theresa Rebeck. An Off-Broadway and regional theatre hit, *The Understudy* earns its place to kick off of the new season with a comedic and existential look backstage at what it takes when "the show must go on."

An understudy rehearsal for a fictional Kafka play on Broadway teeters on the edge of reality when Harry – the understudy for Jake, who is the understudy for Bruce, a Hollywood action star about to land a multimillion-dollar part – must work with the ill-fated production's exasperated stage manager whose life he ruined long ago. *The Understudy* is a raucously funny existential exposé on human motivation that examines the underbelly of the theatre business and the personal drama behind the curtain.

"There aren't many plays I read about the work we do, as theatre artists, that strike in me such a surprisingly poignant chord," said Director Michael Mendelson. "What hit me most was the universality of the story and the human condition Ms. Rebeck sets out to tackle: the need and desire to be seen, acknowledged, loved. This story might have played out in an office building, an apartment, indeed anyplace where we find people who have dreams that seem unattainable."

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The show features a dynamic set that, at times, seems like an additional character in the production—one with quite a sense of humor. As Scenic Designer Megan Wilkerson said at the play's first rehearsal, "It's not every day a scenic designer gets to make jokes with scenery."

DIRECTOR

Michael Mendelson is the Artistic Associate and a Resident Artist here at Artists Rep and the Artistic Director of Portland Shakespeare Project. Well known in Portland as an actor, director and teacher, he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Wayne State University and a Master of Fine Arts from University of Washington's Professional Actors Training Program. While in New York City, he studied with Tanya Berezin. Michael directed and starred in *Mistakes Were Made* for Artists Rep. Other directing credits include *The Tempest*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It* and *Lear's Follies* for Portland Shakespeare Project, *Love's Labour's Lost* (Northwest Classical Theatre Company), *Stones In His Pockets* (Public House Theatre), *As Is* (Key Productions), *The Meaning of Prayer* (Verbatim Productions) and staged readings of *Botticelli* (Profile Theatre) and *Dinner With Friends* (Mt. Hood Repertory Theatre). His acting credits at Artists Rep include Charles Condomine in *Blithe Spirit*, Christopher in *Tribes* and Walter in *The Price*, also *The Quality of Life*, *Ten Chimneys*, *Red Herring*, *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Carol*, *God of Carnage*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Superior Donuts*, *Othello*, *Design for Living*, *Holidazed*, *Becky's New Car*, *Three Sisters*, *Eurydice*, *House, Garden, Orson's Shadow*, *Mr. Marmalade* and *Theater District*. Other local credits include work with Oregon Shakespeare Festival/Portland, Profile Theatre, Miracle Theatre, Northwest Classical Theatre Company, triangle productions!, Tygres Heart Shakespeare, Portland Center Stage, A Contemporary Theatre, Reader's Theatre Repertory and New Rose Theatre. New York credits include Revolving Shakespeare Company, Theatre 1010, The Normal Heart (Lincoln Center/Clark Studio Theatre), Genesis Guild and The Barrow Group. Regional credits include work at PCPA Theatrefest, Paper Mill Playhouse, A Contemporary Theatre, Saint Michael's Playhouse, Penobscot Theatre Company, Arkansas Repertory Theatre, First Stage Milwaukee, Idaho Rep, Attic Theater and Wisconsin, Utah and Berkeley Shakespeare Festivals.

PLAYWRIGHT

Theresa Rebeck is a widely produced playwright both in the United States and abroad. Past New York productions of her work include *Mauritius* at the Biltmore Theatre in a Manhattan Theater Club Production; *The Scene*, *The Water's Edge*, *Loose Knit*, *The Family of Mann*, and *Spike Heels* at Second Stage; *Bad Dates*, *The Butterfly Collection*, and *Our House* at Playwrights Horizons; *View of the Dome* at New York Theatre Workshop; and *The Understudy* at the Roundabout. *Omnium Gatherum* (co-written, finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 2003) was featured at the Humana Festival, and had a commercial run at the Variety Arts Theatre. She has won the National Theatre Conference Award, The William Inge New Voices Playwriting Award, an IRNE Award for Best New Play, and the Elliot Norton Award for various works. She has published two novels through Shaye Areheart/Random House and has taught writing at Brandeis University and Columbia University.

CAST

Ayanna Berkshire*^—Roxanne

Gavin Hoffman*—Harry

Jared Q. Miller*—Jake

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CREATIVE TEAM

Megan Wilkerson**^—Scenic Designer
Kristeen Willis Crosser^—Lighting Designer
Sarah Gahagan—Costume Designer
Rodolfo Ortega^—Composer/Sound Designer
Will Bailey—Properties Master

STAGE MANAGEMENT & CREW

Jory Bowers*—Stage Manager
Michael Stahler —Production Assistant
Tori Zanalari—Production Assistant
Phillip Johnson—Board Op

* *Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers*

** *Represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 of the IATSE.*

^ *Artists Rep Resident Artist*

ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

Portland's premiere mid-size regional theatre company is led by Artistic Director Dámaso Rodriguez and Managing Director Sarah Horton. Founded in 1982, Artists Repertory Theatre is the longest-running professional theatre company in Portland. For the 2015/16 season Artists Rep will offer eight bold and entertaining plays written by internationally acclaimed playwrights and guided by esteemed directors. Artists Rep productions will feature the work of a core group of accomplished Resident Artists, each with a shared history and a shorthand for collaboration, working alongside guest artists from Portland and beyond. Artists Rep is also home to the ArtsHub, a program which offers residencies within Artists Rep's facility to smaller and emerging arts organizations with subsidized administrative, performance and rehearsal space, as well other infrastructural services. The Artists Rep facility serves as a community arts center, where performance venues and other public spaces are continually buzzing with activity.

Artists Rep's mission is to engage diverse audiences in fresh, thought-provoking and intimate theatre. We are committed to world-class acting, directing, design and stagecraft that support new playwriting and aspire to embody great literature, moving audiences to truly feel — to *experience* — storytelling in a way that only the best live theatre can.

The 2015/16 Artists Repertory Theatre season is presented by Ronni Lacroute/WillaKenzie Estate. *The Understudy* is presented at Artists Rep with support from John and Jan Swanson, and Karl and Linda Boekelheide. Our season media sponsors are The Oregonian and KINK. Other season support comes from the Regional Arts Culture Council, Oregon Community Foundation, Collins Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation and Work for Art.

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