



**PRESS RELEASE
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**AURORA THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS
IKE HOLTER'S *EXIT STRATEGY*
AUGUST 30 - SEPTEMBER 29 (OPENS: SEPT. 5)**

BERKELEY, CA (July 30, 2019) Aurora Theatre Company opens its dynamic 28th season with the Bay Area Premiere of Ike Holter's **EXIT STRATEGY**. Aurora's new Artistic Director **Josh Costello** will direct this powerful examination of the Chicago public school system.

The cast features **Michael J. Asberry** (*Satellites*), **Tre'Vonne Bell**, **Gabriella Fanuele**, **Margo Hall** (*Trouble In Mind*), **Sam Jackson** (*Splendour*), **Ed Gonzalez Moreno**, **Adam Niemann**.

EXIT STRATEGY runs August 30 - September 29 (**Opens: September 5**).

Five Chicago public school teachers, their frazzled vice-principal and a defiant but motivated student take on a failing school system in Ike Holter's sensational new play, *Exit Strategy*. Fierce, funny, and charged with anger, the sharply written play follows the motley crew as they band together to save the demolition of their school and regain the optimism and courage they thought they'd lost forever.

DC Metro Theatre Arts called **EXIT STRATEGY** "a call to arms... beautifully dangerous, deeply felt in each shocking discovery...*Exit Strategy* challenges and inspires, questioning what's worth fighting for and how to lead that fight."

Award-winning American playwright **Ike Holter**'s breakout play *Hit the Wall* made Chicago Tribune's "Top 10 Plays of 2012" list. His other plays include *B-Side Studio* (2013), *Sender* (2016), *The Wolf at the End of the Block* (2017), *The Light Fantastic* (2018) and *Lottery Day* (2019). Holter is the recipient of the 2017 Windham–Campbell Literature Prize for drama.

Newly appointed Artistic Director **JOSH COSTELLO** joined Aurora in 2012 as Literary Manager & Artistic Associate; he was appointed Artistic Director in 2019 following a national search. At Aurora, he has directed *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Detroit*, *Wittenberg*, *The Heir Apparent*, and the world premiere of Jonathan Spector's *Eureka Day* (Glickman, Theatre Bay Area, Rella Lossy, and Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards for Best New Play of 2018). His world premiere production of Aaron Loeb's *Ideation* with SF Playhouse (Glickman Award, TBA Award for Outstanding Direction) moved to Off-Broadway at 59E59 and was named a New York Times Critic's Pick. Other directing credits include his adaptation of Cory Doctorow's *Little Brother* at Custom Made Theatre Company, *My Children! My Africa!* at Marin Theatre Company, and *House of Lucky* at Magic Theatre. Costello holds a BFA in Theatre from Boston University, and an MFA in Directing from the University of Washington, Seattle.

Costello has assembled a talented cast for **EXIT STRATEGY**.

Michael J. Asberry is delighted to return to the Aurora stage, where he previously appeared in *Satellites*. His stage credits include the Sacramento Theatre Company, Capital Stage Company, Artists Rep, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, Shotgun Players, and African American Shakes. Film and television credits include *San Andreas* (Warner Brothers); *Chance* (Hulu); *Trauma* (NBC); and *Nash Bridges* (CBS).

Tre'Vonne Bell makes his Aurora debut. Bell was most recently seen in *Kill Move Paradise* at Shotgun Players. Other stage credits include TheatreFirst, Golden Thread, and Custom Made. In 2018, he was nominated for best actor in a leading role by Theatre Bay Area. Bell's film credits include the independent film *Deadline* and *The Pursuit of Happyness* (Columbia).

Gabriella Fanuele also makes her Aurora debut. Stage credits include Arkansas Rep, The Muny, Cherry Lane Theatre, and Shakespeare's Globe London. TV and film credits include *Law & Order*, *Tio Papi*, *The Ministers* with Harvey Keitel and John Leguizamo. Fanuele is a recent graduate of Mason Gross School of the Arts Acting Conservatory at Rutgers University.

Also making his Aurora debut is Bay Area-based actor **Ed Gonzalez Moreno**. Stage credits include Magic Theatre, SF Shakespeare Festival, Marin Shakespeare Company, The Cutting Ball Theatre, SF Playhouse, New Conservatory Theatre Center, TheatreFirst, and Custom Made.

Moreno spent the beginning of 2019 understudying for Berkeley Rep in *Metamorphoses* and Cal Shakes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Margo Hall returns to Aurora where she was most recently in *Trouble in Mind*. She is an award-winning actor, director, playwright, and educator. Stage credits include Cal Shakes, Marin Theatre Company, A.C.T., SF Playhouse. She is a founding member of Campo Santo, and has directed, performed, and collaborated on several new plays with artists such as Naomi Iizuka, Jessica Hagedorn, Phillip Kan Gotanda, and Octavio Solis.

San Francisco-based actor **Sam Jackson** returns to Aurora where she was most recently seen in 2017's *Splendour*. Her most recent credits include *Kings* and *KILL THE DEBBIE DOWNERS! KILL THEM! KILL THEM! KILL THEM OFF!* at Shotgun Players. Other stage credits include Berkeley Playhouse, New Conservatory Theatre Center, and 6 New Plays.

Adam Niemann makes his Aurora Theatre Company debut. Recent credits include Berkeley Playhouse, New Conservatory Theatre Center, Shotgun Players, Cutting Ball Theatre, Ray of Light Theatre, Custom Made Theatre, and FaultLine Theatre. Adam also co-wrote the time-traveling two-man musical *JFK 'n Me*, with collaborator and best friend, Weston Scott. Learn more at coolwebsite.pizza.

The creative team for **EXIT STRATEGY** includes **James McGregor**--Stage Manager; **Kate Boyd**--Set; **Maggie Whitaker**--Costumes; **Stephanie Johnson**--Lighting; and **James Ard**--Sound.

Aurora is inaugurating its new Community Partners Program with Berkeley High School and the Berkeley Federation of Teachers, teaming up around the production of **EXIT STRATEGY**. This play about the final days of a crumbling Chicago public school and the teachers and students who mount a last-ditch effort to save it is the perfect subject for this new program, which pairs Aurora with a different organization for each of our productions. Berkeley High faculty members are providing first-hand information about union negotiations and city-vs-school conflicts to Aurora's creative team, deepening an understanding of the story, and Aurora is providing discounted tickets to Berkeley teachers as well as a free student matinee performance for BHS students. This relationship between Berkeley High and Aurora builds on the theatre's existing student matinee program and will lead to continued collaborations and discoveries going forward.

CALENDAR EDITORS

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DATES

Previews: Friday 8/30 and Saturday 8/31 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, 9/1 at 2 p.m. only.

Tuesday, 9/3 and Wednesday, 9/4 at 7 p.m.

Open: **Thursday, September 5**

Close: **Sunday, September 29**

Shows: Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m.

Sunday at 2 p.m. & 7 p.m.

WHERE Aurora Theatre Company | 2081 Addison Street | Berkeley, CA

TICKETS For single tickets (\$35-\$70) or subscriptions (\$111-\$396), the public can call **(510) 843-4822** or visit www.auroratheatre.org.

PRE PRODUCTION IMAGES <http://bit.ly/ESAuroraPress>

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