

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Contact: Susie Falk, Managing Director  
510.809.3292 | [press@calshakes.org](mailto:press@calshakes.org)

## **CALIFORNIA SHAKESPEARE THEATER OPENS ITS 2017 SEASON WITH *AS YOU LIKE IT*, May 24-June 18**

*Director Desdemona Chiang makes her Cal Shakes debut, infusing Shakespeare's romantic comedy with the vibrant, complicated, and shifting energy of the Bay Area.*

**Berkeley, CA, April 26** – California Shakespeare Theater begins its 43<sup>rd</sup> Season with Shakespeare's gender-bending comedy, *As You Like It*. In director **Desdemona Chiang's** all new production, adaptable and resilient Rosalind must leave everything she knows behind to find her true family. Disguised as a boy named Ganymede, she and her cousin Celia journey through the forests of Arden with the jester Touchstone, meeting both long-lost and newfound friends. Realizing that family is not just for those related by blood, she sheds her identity and transforms her relationships, discovering who she is along the way. **Low-priced previews take place May 24-26; Opening Night is May 27, and performances continue through June 18 at the Bruns Amphitheater.** Press night will be held Saturday, May 27, at 8 pm. Tickets (**ranging from \$20-\$92**) are available through the Cal Shakes Box Office at 510.548.9666 or by visiting [www.calshakes.org](http://www.calshakes.org). *Ticket prices are subject to change without notice.*

"Our 2017 season is opening with Desdemona Chiang's thought-provoking reimagination of that most quintessential of Shakespearean journeys," says Cal Shakes Artistic Director, **Eric Ting**. "*As You Like It* is ultimately a story of leaving everything you know behind, interrogating the very things that define 'you' to the rest of world, leading you to a new self in ways you'd never imagined before. In my time here in the Bay Area, I've been struck by how this community is a beacon for those seeking to redefine themselves—for those seeking to expand their sense of 'family.' We all have amazing journeys of self-discovery and I'm looking forward to Bay Area audiences reflecting on their own paths through one of Shakespeare's great characters, Rosalind."

**Desdemona Chiang**, winner of the 2016 **Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Theatre**, makes her Cal Shakes debut with this production. "I'm thrilled to be directing at Cal Shakes for the first time, particularly under Eric's new leadership," she says. "It's an exciting time in the company, and I think an opportunity to explore Shakespeare's work through more current and immediate social lenses. I actually worked at Cal Shakes briefly over ten years ago as an assistant in Artistic Learning, and have directed for the summer camps, so in a way, this project is also like coming back to visit old family."

As part of Cal Shakes' ongoing efforts to engage with community partners around issues in our plays, we are partnering with community-based nonprofits Rainbow Community Center and Youth Uprising to engage with non-binary, genderqueer, and/or gender nonconforming youth (18-24) for Story Circles around journeys of finding home. The director and selected members of the cast will share food and stories with community members about how they've come to understand and articulate their gender identities, and how they've found and built community, touching on biological family, chosen family, and intimate relationships. The story circles will not be open to the public; however, there will be a public exhibit at the Bruns Amphitheater during the run of *As You Like It*.

"*As You Like It* has always been a coming-of-age story to me. It is a journey of joy, danger, and liberation, where the strange becomes familiar and disguise leads to revelation," says director Desdemona Chiang. "In our production, Shakespeare's Forest of Arden is re-imagined from a pastoral landscape to an abandoned urban jungle occupied by displaced and disparate people. They are survivors who breed connection from banishment, love from tragedy, and ultimately create community and home in this unlikely and surprising place."

This reimagining lead Ting and Chiang on a broad search when casting the pivotal role of Rosalind, performed by **Jessika D. Williams in her Cal Shakes debut**. Says Chiang, "traditionally, the Rosalind arc is 'I must pretend to be a boy, it's very difficult, and what a relief it is to be a girl again.' I like the idea that dressing like a boy actually feels surprisingly right to her. It's not about disguise...these new clothes are a liberation rather than a restriction. This character is both Rosalind and Ganymede—she is true to both parts of herself."

Williams joins Cal Shakes from the East Coast where she has been seen at American Shakespeare Center (Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Goneril in *King Lear*, and Elizabeth in *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*, among others); Shakespeare Forum (*Love Labour's Lost*); and Blessed Unrest (*Eurydice's Dream*, conceived by Jessica Burr); and from the UK, where she was seen at the National Theatre of Scotland, Lincoln Performing Arts Centre, and Headlong/Almeida Theater, among others. She has also been seen on BBC Television (*Dr. Who*) and Scottish TV (*Taggart*). She trained at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and Interlochen Arts Academy.

Cal Shakes veteran and Bay Area favorite, **James Carpenter**—returning from his turn as Iago in last season's *Othello*—plays Rosalind's father and uncle, Duke Senior and Duke Frederick, respectively.

Rounding out the cast for *As You Like It* are: **Maryssa Wanlass as Celia** (Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* and Lady Macduff in *Macbeth* at San Francisco Shakespeare Festival); **Patrick Russell as Orlando** (*Noises Off*, *Red Velvet*, and *Trouble Cometh* at San Francisco Playhouse, *A Bright New Boise* and *Wilder Times* at Aurora Theatre Company, and *King Charles III* and *Once in a Lifetime* at A.C.T., among others); **Craig Marker as Oliver** (*King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Macbeth* at Cal Shakes, *Invisible Hand* and *Anne Boleyn* at Marin Theatre Company, *Deathtrap*, *Clybourne Park*, and *Arms and the Man* at Center Rep, among others); **Warren David Keith as Touchstone** (*The Winter's Tale*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Henry IV* (pts 1&2) at Cal Shakes, *What We're Up Against*, *Mauritius*, and *The Rules of Charity* at Magic Theatre, *The First Grade* and *The Devil's Disciple* at Aurora Theatre, *War Music* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* at A.C.T., among others); **Patty Gallagher as Audrey** (*Comedy of Errors* and *Happy Days* at Cal Shakes, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Santa Cruz Shakespeare, and *Conference of the Birds* at Folger Shakespeare Theatre, among others); **William Hodgson as Silvius** (*It Can't Happen Here* at Berkeley Rep, *I am My Own Wife* at Ubuntu Theater Project, *An Octoroon* at Mixed Blood, among others); **Jomar Tagatac as Jaques** (*Life is a Dream* at Cal Shakes, *Jesus in India*, *The Happy Ones*, and *Every 5 Minutes* at The Magic Theater, *You For Me For You* at Crowded Fire Theater); and **Lisa Hori-Garcia as Phebe** (*Freedomland* and *Schooled*, among others at SF Mime Troupe, *Holiday High Jinx* at Word for Word, *The Tooth of Crime* at Camp Santo/A.C.T.). Hodgson, Hori-Garcia, Russell, and Wanlass also make their Cal Shakes debuts with this production.

The creative team for *As You Like It* includes scenic designer **Nina Ball**, whose previous designs for Cal Shakes include *Othello*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Comedy Of Errors*; costume designer **Melissa Torchia**, whose work for Cal Shakes includes *You Never Can Tell* (BATCC Award Nominee), *King Lear*, and *The Verona Project*; lighting designer **Masha Tsimring**, whose work has been seen at InterAct Theatre (*Grounded* by George Brant), Chautauqua Theatre Co. (*In The Next Room, [or the Vibrator Play]* by Sarah Ruhl), and locally at Marin Theatre Company (*The Way West*) and Crowded Fire (*Good Goods, Drip*); and sound designer **Sharath Patel**, whose work has been heard at A Contemporary Theater (*The Royale* by Marco Ramirez), Yale Repertory Theater (*The People Next Door* by Henry Adams), and Artists Repertory Theater (*The Mother F\*\*ker With the Hat* by Stephen Adly Guirgis, *Tribes* by Nina Raine), among others. This production of *As You Like It* marks Cal Shakes debuts for both Tsimring and Patel.

**Desdemona Chiang** (Director) is a stage director based in Seattle and the San Francisco Bay Area, and is a co-founder of Azeotrope (Seattle). Directing credits include *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), *Constellations* by Nick Payne (Seattle Repertory Theatre), *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller; *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation...* by Jackie Sibblies Drury; *4,000 Miles* by Amy Herzog; *Hairspray*, music

by Marc Shaiman, lyrics by Scott Wittman and Shaiman, book by Mark O'Donnell and Thomas Meehan (Playmakers Repertory Company), *Rapture, Blister, Burn* by Gina Gionfriddo (Aurora Theatre Company), *The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure* (Seattle Shakespeare Company), *Heart Shaped Nebula* by Marisela Traviño Orta (Shotgun Players), *Edith Can Shoot Things and Hit Them* by A. Rey Pamatmat and *The Hundred Flowers Project* by Christopher Chen (Denham Award Finalist, Crowded Fire Theatre Company), *Sound* by Don Nguyen (co-production with Seattle's ACT Theatre), *25 Saints* by Joshua Rollins (co-production with Seattle's ACT Theatre), *Grotesque Playground Injuries* by Rajiv Joseph, *Jesus Hopped the A Train* by Stephen Adly Guirgis (co-production with Seattle's ACT Theatre), and *Red Light Winter* by Adam Rapp (Azeotrope); *Bread & Circuses* (an evening of short plays), *Crevice* by Lauren D. Yee, *Disassembly* by Steven Yockey, *MilkMilkLemonade* by Joshua Conkel, *Ching Chong Chinaman* by Lauren D. Yee, *Money & Run Episode 4: Go Straight, No Chaser* by Wayne Rawley, and *Crumble (Lay Me Down, Justin Timberlake)* by Sheila Callaghan (Impact Theatre). She serves as adjunct Faculty at Cornish College of the Arts. She is a Gregory Award Recipient for Outstanding Direction.

Single tickets for *As You Like It* range from **\$20 to \$92**, with discounts available for seniors, youth, students, military families, persons age 30 and under, and groups. Prices, dates, titles, and artists are subject to change. For information or to charge tickets by phone with VISA, MasterCard, or American Express, call the Cal Shakes Box Office at 510.548.9666. Additional information and online ticketing are available at [www.calshakes.org](http://www.calshakes.org).

California Shakespeare Theater's 2017 season is supported in part by the generosity of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, the Dean & Margaret Leshner Foundation, The Bernard Osher Foundation, and The Shubert Foundation. Corporate partners include BART, City National Bank, John Muir Health, Meyer Sound, Peet's Coffee, and *San Francisco* magazine.

## **ABOUT CAL SHAKES**

California Shakespeare Theater (Cal Shakes), under the leadership of Artistic Director Eric Ting and Managing Director Susie Falk, is now in its 43rd season as a nationally-recognized leader in drawing on the power of authentic, inclusive storytelling to create more vibrant communities. Serving more than 43,000 people annually, Cal Shakes invites people from all walks of life to make deeply-felt connections with our shared humanity through its work onstage, in schools, and with people in non-traditional settings throughout the Bay Area who have little or no access to theater. In 2016 Cal Shakes celebrated the 25th anniversary of its artistic home, the magnificent Bruns Amphitheater, named "one of the most beautiful outdoor performing spaces in America" by the *Wall Street Journal*. For more information, visit [www.calshakes.org](http://www.calshakes.org).

**FAST FACTS ABOUT *AS YOU LIKE IT***

WHAT	California Shakespeare Theater's production of <i>As You Like It</i>
WHO	by William Shakespeare directed by Desdemona Chiang  Designed by Nina Ball (scenic designer), Melissa Torchia (costume designer), Masha Tsimring (lighting designer), and Sharath Patel (sound designer).  Featuring: James Carpenter, Patty Gallagher, Lisa Hori-Garcia, William Hodgson, Warren David Keith, Craig Marker, Patrick Russell, Jomar Tagatac, and Jessika D. Williams.
WHEN	May 24–June 18, 2017 Previews May 24, 25, and 26 at 8pm Press Opening May 27 at 8pm Tuesdays through Thursdays at 7:30pm Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm Saturday Matinee June 17 at 2pm Sunday Matinees at 4pm Grounds open two hours prior to show time for picnicking. Café and full bar are available onsite.
WHERE	Bruns Amphitheater, 100 California Shakespeare Theater Way, Orinda, CA 94563 (just off Highway 24 at the California Shakespeare Theater Way/Wilder Rd. exit, one mile east of the Caldecott Tunnel.)  Complimentary shuttle from Orinda BART beginning 2 hours before curtain. Complimentary parking onsite.
TICKETS	Single tickets range from \$20 to \$92, with discounts available for seniors, students, persons age 30 and under, and groups. Cal Shakes makes twenty tickets available for \$20 on a first-come,

first-served basis for every performance throughout the season. Call Cal Shakes' Box Office at 510.548.9666 between noon and 2pm to purchase. Prices subject to change.

All tickets are available through the California Shakespeare Theater Box Office, 701 Heinz Avenue, Berkeley CA, 510.548.9666, online at [www.calshakes.org](http://www.calshakes.org), or at the Bruns box office on the day of the performance (pending availability).

**GROUPS**            Groups of 10 or more save \$10 off the adult single ticket price; complimentary ticket available for groups of 15+. For more information, call 510.809.3290.

**INFO**                [www.calshakes.org](http://www.calshakes.org)

### ***AS YOU LIKE IT* Special Events**

#### **First Look, Saturday, May 20, 7-9pm, Bruns Amphitheater**

Get a First Look at the production and hear from members of the artistic team days before performances begin. Artistic Director Eric Ting will moderate a Q&A with the director, followed by an opportunity to watch technical rehearsal.

#### **Pay-What-You-Can Preview, Wednesday, May 24, 8pm**

The first preview of each show is a special Pay-What-You-Can performance. Tickets are first-come, first-served, and available beginning at 6pm day of show only; to purchase, call the Cal Shakes Box Office at 510.548.9666 or visit the Bruns Amphitheater Box Office. Supply is limited.

#### **Opening Night Post-Show Party, May 27, following the performance**

Experience the excitement of the opening night performance and then mingle with the cast and creative team at a complimentary post-show party.

#### **Post-Show Talkbacks, Tuesday May 30, Thursday, June 1, and Wednesday, June 7**

Stay after the show for a discussion with a member of the artistic staff in the Plaza.

#### **Open-captioned performance, Wednesday, May 31, 7:30pm**

Special seating and open-captioning for hearing-impaired patrons, who can read the text and dialogue on a digital screen. Purchase tickets for 'section A' online at [www.calshakes.org](http://www.calshakes.org) or call the Box Office at 510.548.9666. For groups of 10 or more, email [groups@calshakes.org](mailto:groups@calshakes.org) or call 510.809.3290.

**Meet the Artists, Sundays, May 28 and June 11, following the 4pm performance**

Audience members enjoy an opportunity to engage in a lively discussion about the production with cast members following select 4pm matinee performances. Free and open to all.

**InSight Matinee, Sunday, June 4, following the 4pm matinee**

Explore the world of the play through an informal dialogue with the production's dramaturg following select 4pm performances. Free and open to all.

**Family Shakespeare Performance, June 17, 12:30pm event; 2pm performance**

Families are invited to bring their kids to our 2pm matinee on June 17. Special discounted kids' tickets (\$20) available with the purchase of a full-priced adult ticket. Pre-show activities include a visit with a teaching artist. Recommended for 7<sup>th</sup> grade and up.

**Grove Talks, 45 minutes before each performance**

Led by resident Grove Talk speakers, these free, informal 20-minute talks are held on site 45 minutes before each and every performance in the ADA-accessible Grove Talk grove, offering invaluable insight into the play and the production.

###