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Modern verse translation of Shakespeare's 'King Lear' opens at Cal Shakes, Sept. 7; Ting to step down after 7 years at helm

Submitted by Kevin Kopja



Eric Ting Photo courtesy Cal Shakes

California Shakespeare Theater (Cal Shakes) announced the full cast and creative team for "Lear," the world premiere modern verse translation of William Shakespeare's "King Lear" by playwright and Oakland-native Marcus Gardley ('black odyssey' at Cal Shakes).

Co-directed by Cal Shakes' Artistic Director Eric Ting and Aurora Theater Company's Associate Artistic Director Dawn Monique Williams - and starring James A. Williams in the titular role - "Lear" is presented in partnership with Oakland Theater Project and Play On Shakespeare. "Lear" performs at the Bruns Memorial Amphitheater (100 California Shakespeare Theater Way, Orinda) Sept. 7-Oct. 2.

Set in San Francisco's Fillmore District from the eminent domain crisis through to the subsequent displacement of the 1960s, "Lear" is Gardley's deeply personal deconstruction of the classic story of power, betrayal, and madness. The production - infused with live jazz music accompaniment composed by Resident Artistic Director at SF Jazz, Marcus Shelby - reckons with uncomfortable legacies, with the consequences of our actions, and with the vulnerability and ultimate resilience of the human heart to find its way back again.

"Translating 'King Lear' was a dream as it is my favorite Shakespearean drama," Gardley said. "I am elated to be able to share this timeless story with the Bay Area and to have two of my favorite directors at the helm - Eric Ting and Dawn Monique Williams. We have the honor of presenting this epic and placing it in The Bay at a pivotal time in our community's history. The Bay Area is the perfect location for 'Lear' because of

themes concerning class, the wealth gap, and the importance of family, community, and legacy. I am certain that audiences will have an incredible time experiencing 'Lear.' It has been a long time since 'black odyssey' and it's great to be back home doing another classic!"

"My time at Cal Shakes as much as anything has been defined by the community of artists that have graced our stage," said Cal Shakes Artistic Director and "Lear" Co-Director Eric Ting. "I consider it the greatest gift to welcome Marcus Gardley back with his stunning re-imagining of 'King Lear,' and to collaborate with the extraordinary Dawn Monique Williams as Co-Director! It's sure to be an exquisite conclusion to my tenure at Cal Shakes and I hope a real celebration of this craft-this community - we call theater."

Adds Co-Director Dawn Monique Williams: "Marcus Gardley is one of the greatest playwrights of our time. His stunning poetry and limitless dramatic imagination bring such heart to his work. As the president of Shakespeare's fan club, I can think of no better marriage than that of these two Bards. This? 'Lear' all at once delights in wit, shatters the heart, and asks us all to take care of home."

Production of "Lear" is supported by Oaklandish and The National Endowment for the Arts, with Student Discover Matinees supported by Shakespeare in American Communities, a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest. Single tickets (ranging from \$35-\$70) are available online at calshakes.org or by calling 510-548-9666 (Tuesday through Friday from 2 to 6 p.m.). Ticket prices are subject to change without notice.

For information on Cal Shakes' COVID safety policies, visit <https://calshakes.org/cal-shakes-covid-19-safety-precautions/>.

For more information, visit calshakes.org.

Cal Shakes Artistic Director Eric Ting to depart after 7 years at helm

Submitted by Kevin Kopjak

California Shakespeare Theater's (Cal Shakes) board of directors announced on July 20 that Artistic Director Eric Ting will depart the Bay Area nonprofit theater organization following the conclusion of the 2022 season. The board of directors has formed a transition committee to begin the important work of overseeing the artistic leadership evolution.

"The pandemic shifted the circumstances of so many lives. Mine was no exception," said Ting. "Amidst the move to remote work, my family relocated back to New York City; and as so many of our theaters now slowly return to the vital work of live and in-person performance, the time has come for me to step down so

I can be with them full-time. There are so many individuals who have lifted up our work at Cal Shakes to extraordinary heights, but I want to especially recognize the efforts of Co-Board Presidents Kate Stechsulte and Tracey Walthall, and our incredible Managing Director Sarah Williams for helping to shepherd this theater through the tumult of the pandemic and all that's to come."

Adds Ting: "The real testament to any endeavor is not how much you change a thing, but how much you are changed by it. I leave Cal Shakes reshaped by its artists, staff, board, community and civic partners, patrons and funders, and above all, our audiences who I've had the great honor of being in company with these past seven years. I've learned what it means to truly serve a community through art, to listen through complexity and resist urgency, to create spaces where we can exist in the glory of our full selves. And through it all, I've held close the unwavering faith in the power of stories to unite us not in our common experience, but in the strength of our differences."

"Eric's visionary leadership and unparalleled artistry has made a lasting impact on Cal Shakes and the Bay Area theater community," said Cal Shakes Managing Director Sarah Williams. "He inspires me - and so many others - to use the power of theater to challenge our preconceived notions so that we might imagine a more equitable world. I can't think of a better way to celebrate Eric's incredible artistry on the stage and close out his tenure at Cal Shakes than with our production of Marcus Gardley's 'Lear.'"

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